

December 2022



NEW DIRECTION Mustard Seed

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Dear Friends

This beautiful piece of artwork was given to me a few years back as a gift by the artist. I was so taken by the powerful image of Jesus as the Lamb of God/ the Lion of Judah. As of late, due to a dark season we have been walking through with a few of the mothers of the Mustard Seed, I have found myself many times a day, glancing over to this piece of artwork. It is a needed and true reminder of Jesus in the midst of the spiritual war as the Victorious One.

CeliaTabitha.com

For the longest time I had an image etched in my mind of the birth of Jesus being in a peaceful setting. Mary and Joseph, the babe in the manger, sweet barn animals forming a warm hedge. *“Silent night. Holy Night. All is calm. All is bright.”*

The true image is one of Jesus being birthed in a city which was in the throes of chaos. Mary and Joseph took the difficult journey, along with the many others who were ordered to Bethlehem by the decree of Augustus Caesar for census. Overly crowded conditions, individuals weary and hungry from days of travel.



The greater historical context, important to note, is this was during a time, when for many years, there was widespread oppression and terror: darkness under the iron fisted rule of political leaders.

The story of a coming Messiah is found in the book of Isaiah, written 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. It is important for me to remember, and to remind the mothers, that in the midst of their current suffering and injustice, we can rest assured the Author of Life is actively involved, ever weaving the continuation of His story in history. God's timing is perfect. It was at the perfect time, according to His perfect plan that Jesus was born. His life, death and resurrection were all according to a perfect schedule.

The women who are clients of the Mustard Seed, all have the same thing in common: they are coming out of a season of tyranny and oppression with their children, only to face continuing adversity through the court system. At this time we are working with 17 single mothers/36 children. Eleven of these are active cases for the protection of mothers and children. Some of these are in the third year of family court. Three of these cases are dealing with identified sexual abuse by the father: children ages 6-11.

Each has their own, unique story of having lived in a chronic state of instability and unrest. The common thread is that darkness entered their family circle, undermining a sense of safety and wellbeing. We have the privilege of hearing their stories and coming to know them in a deeper way as we walk with them through this piece of their journeys. Many of you have financially contributed to their various needs: legal representation, housing, utilities, repairs to homes, safe vehicles, emergency needs, Christmas. Thank you for sowing so generously into these families. You have never met them. They have never met you. But they do know there are many who are financially investing in the process of them becoming free and strong. They, and we, are grateful for you.

Most citizens are not aware of the tenacious battle that must be fought, in court, on behalf of these mothers and children. As much as we would love to believe family court is to be about equity and the presentation of fact and truth, we are finding there to be a stark reality to the contrary.

Far too often the court has dismissed honest disclosures of abuse shared with professionals by the children. The modus operandi is to accuse the mother of "coaching the children to say these things." Consequently the mother is deemed the guilty. It is shocking to be present in these court hearings. Even when there are trained professionals who testify to the veracity of a child's disclosure, a judge will, more often than not, say "every child needs both mother and father in their lives in order to be emotionally healthy". Even if, this father is not safe. Even though a child expresses fear of having to be with the father a judge will decree the father's rights to relationship with the child.

God's perfect design is for children to have a loving home; both mommy and daddy. This is according to His perfect design in a perfect world. Obviously we

don't live in a perfect world. We live in a broken world in which some children are egregiously abused by a parent. Should not the call of a civilized society be to protect such a child from further harm by this parent?

As we do research and speak to folks in other parts of the country, it is apparent this problem of posturing against protective mothers is epidemic in family courts throughout America. A report was submitted to the United Nations (Aug 1, 2021) about this ill treatment of women in the United States. Sad isn't it? That it has become so common in this land of the free and the home of the brave that such a report should be submitted to the United Nations!! Below are bullet points from this report which echo what we have witnessed over these past years as we walk with women and children.

There is a reckless dismissal and doubt of child physical and sexual abuse claims brought by protective mothers.

There is systemic discouragement of protective mothers from bringing legitimate child abuse or domestic violence reports to the court's attention including from judges, evaluator, family law practitioners and others.

Protective mothers and domestic violence victims are told that bringing such concerns to the attention of the judge will hurt their case and, are therefore, expressively discouraged from doing so by attorneys.

There is a use of excessive filings and various vexatious litigation by abusive fathers and their attorneys to harass and control domestic violence victims, to financially strangle them and to gain leverage to avoid child support.

There are cross claims of parental alienation being lodged against protective mothers asserting child abuse claims as a weapon to cast doubt on their credibility.

An abuser's history of domestic violence is discounted and not considered for child custody considerations.

Women's abuse allegations are summarily dismissed and women being unduly presumed to be fabricating false abuse allegations and influencing children to make false abuse claims.

Children being placed in custody and/or unsupervised visitation settings with fathers with documented incidents of domestic violence against the mother or abuse claims against the child.

Rushed, inadequate and superficial investigation by custody evaluators and guardians ad litem including outright refusal to interview certain witnesses.

Custody being taken away from protective mothers who bring abuse allegations to court.

Harmful and traumatizing reunification programs and counseling being ordered by the court in response to allegations of parental alienation.

We are currently in the thick of every single bullet point addressed above. Little did we ever dream that on the cusp of turning 70 years old we would be called to enter into the middle of such battles alongside these ladies and children. But it is God's narrative. Not our own. And He has allowed us to be a part of these families' lives for such a time as this. We consider this an honor.

Thank you for the role you have played in this battle.

Merry CHRISTMAS

*Bridget and Dave and
Everyone Else of Mustard Seed Project.*

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” *Isaiah 9:6*

Jesus speaking in the Temple: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”
(prophesied of Jesus in Isaiah 61:1 and spoken by Jesus in the temple (Luke 4:18))

“They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor.” *Isaiah 61:3 (those whom the Lord has redeemed)*



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