

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 12/18/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, December 19, you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those who are children who are orphaned or in foster care. Ask GOD to provide loving homes for them and caregivers who affirm their value and potential.*

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I saw an article that satirically suggested that the solution to the abortion issue is to revoke the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution that gave women the right to vote. The author facetiously claims that if women hadn't been given a voice, we wouldn't be having this ongoing debate. I don't share that to open any kind of discussion on the topic of abortion. Rather, the article got me thinking about how we men had to "give" women equal status, something that for most of history men have suppressed. For that matter, there are plenty of other changes that reveal the power that some have had over others and have over time ceded, sometimes willingly and sometimes reluctantly. Yet, this is not how GOD intended the world to be.

One of the common things I find in scripture is GOD'S efforts to elevate and empower those who have been placed in lesser roles by others. One group in particular for whom this happens is women. The gospels very much inform us about GOD'S attempts to give women a greater role in history. One such reference that is often cited is that it was to women that JESUS first appeared and who were the ones chosen to be the first to announce the resurrection.

In this season leading up to Christmas, there is another that often goes unnoticed, but I think is revealing of GOD'S intent and even shows some humor on GOD'S part. We can see this by noting the silence of the men in the pre-Christmas story. Zachariah can't speak as his voice is taken from him until his son, John the Baptizer is born. Joseph doesn't speak, even when the angel comes to tell him about Mary's pregnancy. On the other hand, Mary talks with the angel, Gabriel, and then speaks the wonderful words of the Magnificat, proclaiming the greatness of the LORD. Elizabeth blesses Mary for the child she is carrying.

It is the women who are the voices of Advent as we approach the birth of the SAVIOR. It is the women who in various ways tell the story of the coming CHRIST. I'm not sure why the men who wrote the Bible told the story in this way, other than the fact that it is the way it happened. They could have changed it or slipped over it. But through GOD'S inspiration, women are raised up and show us GOD'S intent for women and for all people. GOD can and does work through everyone. We may try to silence some voices, but in doing so, we need to recognize that this is not what GOD intended or desires. GOD loves all and works through all. When we force some to take a lesser place, we have sinned against GOD'S plan for creation. Instead, let us celebrate the voices, then and now, of women and all who do the work of the LORD.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey