

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jonah knew that God was **'gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in disaster'** (Jonah 4:2b) by nature. It was why he didn't want to go to Nineveh in the first place. He went. Traveling but one-day into the city Jonah proclaimed a simple message, ***"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"***

The people of Nineveh believed God! In acts of visible repentance – fasting and the wearing of sackcloth – they gave a visual, observable representation of God's powerful Word acting upon their hearts. Even the great king of Nineveh issued proclamations and published decrees that all should repent with a hope; ***"Who knows? God may relent and turn from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish."*** (Jonah 3:9)

At the end of Jonah, we get this wonderful little vignette where Jonah is brooding over what God has done. As he sits sulking, God lets a plant grow to shade Jonah which pleases him. God then sends a worm to eat the plant. Next the sun rises and scorching east wind and sun beat down on Jonah till he is faint. Now, Jonah is angry enough to die. Jonah pities the one small plant that shaded and benefited him. Finally, God reveals the depth of His own heart saying: ***You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"*** (Jonah 4:10)

Had Jonah missed the mark when it comes to God's precious gift of life?
Absolutely!

On Life Sunday, Lutherans for Life proclaims the Word of Law and Gospel regarding all the ways you have missed the mark in treatment of God's precious gift of life! Specifically, our theme is "From Invisible to Indispensable". It comes from **1 Corinthians 12:22: "On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be**

weaker are indispensable ...". From invisible to indispensable, the Lord Jesus Christ heals all your sorrows and infirmities. He defends the vulnerable and rescues the lost. His Word calls you in repentance to life everlasting. God makes you indispensable as He loves you eternally in Christ your Lord. This Christ does for everyone in the world. This God does for you – individually! On the cross, God shows His love for you by dying in your place, making you 'indispensable'!

In our Collect of the Day we prayed for the Lord to 'look mercifully upon our infirmities' and to 'stretch forth the hand of ... majesty to heal and defend us'. How quick you are to ask the Lord to help with your own invisibility, that the Lord would see your infirmities and look with mercy upon them. How slow you are to see and visualize the needs of your neighbor, to look upon their infirmities and offer yourselves in aid to heal and defend them. Some who suffer even remain invisible to your observation and concern. Some you choose to keep invisible. You do this by avoiding difficult discussions. You fear public sentiment and being ostracized by society over the Word of the Lord.

Consider the mountains that have been moved since early 2020 to heal and defend your life against a virus causing Covid-19. If God was moved over the 120,000 lives of Ninevah, He is certainly moved over the loss of 2,077, 347 lives worldwide as of Jan. 20th. Every life is precious to God. No life is invisible to God or indispensable to God, therefore, they are not invisible or indispensable to us as well. We mourn each and every life claimed praying God to mercifully heal our infirmities and stretch forth His hand of majesty to heal and defend us.

Clearly the world mourns the visible loss of 2 million souls worldwide to Covid. Their deaths are not invisible to us. They are broadcast on every TV daily. They are posted on every business sign reminding us to wear masks – 'For our protection and for the protection of others'. Every life matters and we are willing to turn heaven and earth upside down to save the one.

But do we know the invisible count of souls lost to abortion? Do you even know the numbers of invisible children conceived in the womb who were lost to the sin of abortion worldwide in 2020?
(take numbers)

From Breitbart News – Abortion was once again the number-one cause of death globally in 2020, with a record 42.7 million unborn babies killed in the womb, according to data provided by Worldometer.

Compare these ‘invisible conceived’ to the visible victims that also fill our thoughts:

Deaths from cancer worldwide – 8.2 million

Deaths from smoking – 5 million

Deaths from HIV/AIDS – 1.7 million

This year already, from Jan 1-20th, 2, 292, 383 invisible children, children whom God knit together in their mother’s wombs, have met untimely deaths through abortion.

The economies of the world have been shut down over the visible deaths of 2 million victims of Covid. Social distancing, mask mandates, and work from home strategies honor the 2 million visible victims of Covid. Restaurant take-out is the new norm we support in honor of the 2 million visible victims of Covid. What have you done to end the tragedy of the invisible victims of abortion?

Our mission at Lutherans for Life is to equip Lutherans to be Gospel-motivated voices for life! The invisible victims of sin and a fallen world are all around us. The sick and infirm require our visible care and concern. The disabled give us the opportunity to visibly support and encourage life to the full. The aging and elderly, nearing the end of their visible life on earth do not suddenly become ‘invisible’ in a time of their greatest need! They do not become ‘dispensable’ simply because they have outlived their usefulness to society. Instead, Gospel-motivations allow us to exercise our works of righteousness in Christ. We care for them. We pray with them. We spend time with them and listen to their stories and wisdom. We encourage them in the same life of Christ that encourages and sustains us.

Gospel-motivation empowers us to aid and support the pregnant teen no matter what the circumstances. We provide for the Pregnancy Resource Centers. We promote the adoption agencies and give funds to support their adoption scholarships. We teach and educate about the Abortion Pill Reversal to help those

in immediate risk of sacrificing a child to the altars of choice. Most importantly, we share the Gospel of Christ's love and forgiveness for any woman or man – of any age – caught up in the tragedy of abortion. Hurting, suffering, experiencing the struggles and after-effects of abortion they need to hear that God relents His fierce anger through the death and resurrection of His Son. No sin is too big that God cannot forgive through the Gospel! In repentance, the sin of abortion is wiped away. God heals our infirmities and defends us from the accusation of the world, the devil, and our own sinful thoughts. In Christ – the Gospel prevails. Death is undone. Forgiveness prevails. Life prevails.

The message of Lutherans for Life is the message of God's love, not just for the world **but for the one!** You see, as powerful as the number of Covid deaths are to motivate us to action, God's love **for the one** motivates Him to action! He is not only the God of the 99 sheep. He is especially the God of the one lost sheep; the one lost coin; and the one prodigal son!

At the cross, God acts for the one; God acts for you! You are indispensable. For God so loved YOU that He sent His only Son that when YOU believe in Him YOU shall not perish but have eternal life! The Word of God brings you to Jesus' cross.

You are not invisible to our Lord. Looking down from the cross as Christ dies with YOUR sins upon Him, He cries to His Father in heaven, "Father, forgive Jeff for he knows not what he does!" Now put your name in that same statement! ***"Father, forgive _____ for he/she knows not what they do!"*** You are indispensable and that is why God sent His only Son into your flesh. He came to die for YOU! He came to forgive YOUR sins; to heal YOUR infirmities; to defend YOUR life and give YOU the hope of life everlasting with Him in eternal glory.

Because every life matters to God, we proclaim the same message of Jesus: ***"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*** This matters as much to child with Down Syndrome as it does to the pregnant teen contemplating a chemical abortion. It matters as much to the infirm, shut-in grandmother as it does to the cancer riddled business executive who are both contemplating how to end their lives. Though all these souls may be invisible to the world, dispensable to the world – to Christ they matter! ***"On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable ..."***

Wherever there is life in this fallen, sinful world, that life is at risk and in need of rescue. The message of the cross – the death and resurrection of God’s own Son – is the rescue and hope of the kingdom of God at hand for the world and especially for YOU!

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