

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

January 24, 2021

Sanctity of Life Sunday

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, we just thank you and praise you that we are washed in the blood of the lamb. We thank you for that blood. We thank you for making a pathway for us, giving us the ability to come before you and to enjoy what you've given to us. And Lord, this morning we just again, we come before you, we have your book, we have the presence of your Holy Spirit, we have the opportunity to come together corporately whether by television or whether actually in person and so we pray this day this morning you would give us the presence of your Spirit in a way that makes this of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well for the last 37 years, the Sunday nearest to the 22nd of January has been declared Sanctity of Life Sunday. This is a Sunday that's been set aside on that day to recognize the attack on the sanctity of life that occurred on that very day. On January 22nd, 1973, the Supreme Court made abortion legal. And for 48 years now the United States has been locked in a war that includes our politics, it includes our culture, and most importantly, it

includes our spirits. On the one hand we have almost half of the nation that insists that a woman's right to control her own body includes the right to determine whether or not to abort the baby that she's carrying. While on the other hand, the other half of the country insists that all life is sacred from conception to death including the life of a child in the womb of its mother. Even the way I phrase those differences is a source of deep divide as well. The pro-choice side never refers to life in the womb as a baby and never actually describes the conflict according to what it actually is, the taking of a baby's life. The entire argument has been re-cast as a fight for women's sovereignty over her own body and for the ability to make her own choices with regard to her pregnancy verses those who would take those rights away in the guise of protecting fetuses. So right from the start we see two vastly different paradigms. The pro-life side is arguing for life itself. The pro-choice side is arguing for sovereignty and the right to choose. Both sides are fighting from two different perspectives and both sides have heard both sides of this argument over and over again. So I want to argue this morning for a renewed commitment to what I believe is the only tactic for believers that will work, because I believe our only hope of ever winning this war is through prayer. I want to lay out why I believe this is so by taking us to one of the most profoundly evil incidents ever recorded in the Old Testament that involved children.

The Syrian army had attacked Israel in Samaria by surrounding the city, cutting off all of its supplies, all the supplies going in or out and the result was starvation. This is *2 Kings 6*. It says: *And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver.*

The city was in the throes of a famine so severe that something as repulsive as a donkey's head was sold at a premium, and there were people clamoring to partake in a meal of dove's dung. There was literally mass starvation everywhere. Verse 26 says: *Now as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, "Help, my lord, O king!" And he said, "If the LORD will not help you, how shall I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the winepress?"* Both the winepress and the threshing floor was symbolic of God's judgment. As one commentator said, the king basically was saying, look, we're between a rock and a hard place and if God's not going to help us, what makes you think a king can do anything else? Verse 28 says: *And the king asked her, "What is your trouble?" She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' So we boiled my son and ate him. And on the next day I said to her, 'Give your son, that we may eat him.' But she has hidden her son." When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes.*

Now the king here was probably King Jehoash, his response was one of anguish and anger, it was anger directed towards Elisha the prophet who he felt had some responsibility for the terrible situation that they were in. There's no doubt that the situation they were in was awful but there's also no doubt that the moral territory that they were now in was without precedence. The woman who was complaining had lost all semblance of understanding how hideous her complaint actually was. I mean the story's reported as an actual historical event and it sounds like it came out of some twisted mind of a 21st century Hollywood movie producer. The woman approaches the king because she wants to report that she has been victimized. She's been taken advantage of, someone has done her wrong. She's completely unaware of the monster that she has become. She's lost even last the vestige of a connection to something human. And what she's embracing is not even subhuman, you might call it sub animal. You'd be hard pressed to find animals acting that wickedly yet she has absolutely no sense of the moral pit that she's coming from. So how does she get there? I mean how does anyone get to a place where cannibalizing your own child doesn't even figure into your moral construct? How do you get to a place where you still have a form of a moral structure but it's been so thoroughly reconfigured to produce in a person a sense of moral outrage that since she's been willing to boil and eat her own child she's entitled to boil and eat someone else's? And why

would God put something as hideous as this in his book? Well, I suggest to you that God knows a little something about the moral freefall that occurs when there's no checks or balances governing your moral view of the world. See, all it really takes is enough outside pressure and all the pretense of right and wrong disappears, sacrificed on the altar of pragmatic necessity. I want to suggest to you this morning that this woman could well symbolize our culture today. I'm not saying this to be a flame thrower, I'm not saying this to be insulting but merely to point out that the moral underpinnings of the abortion movement, just like this woman, have also been sacrificed on the altar of pragmatic necessity, and that it, too, has no ability to perceive how far it has fallen. Now am I actually suggesting that abortion is morally as hideous as this tale of cannibalism? No, I'm not really saying that. What I actually want to say this morning, what I want to try to prove to you this morning that it is significantly worse, not so you can point moral fingers of outrage but so that we can recognize that earthly responses like argument and debate simply will not work on a culture that is under siege feeding on donkey's heads and pigeon dung. The only solution to that I believe is spiritual.

And to do that I want to go back to another Old Testament account that we're all familiar with. It's a long story but bear with me because you're going to be recognizing it and you're probably going

to be familiar with many of the details. This is a story from 2 Samuel 11. It says: *In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"* Now David knew for certain that not only was Bathsheba married and therefore off limits but she was married to one of David's most loyal and trusted military servants. We pick up at verse 4: *So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."* So David sent word to Joab, *"Send me Uriah the Hittite."* And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, *"Go down to your house and wash your feet."* And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. Now the first great sin here is adultery. The second one, this is the one we're looking at now, is one of deception. This is an

attempted cover-up. David hoped that by bringing Uriah and Bathsheba together physically he could literally cover his tracks as any resulting child would be considered to be Uriah's. Verse 9: *But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house, David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house? Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. Well the next great sin was to take advantage of Uriah's trust by getting him drunk hoping that that would induce him to sleep with his wife. Verse 13: And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. Now David adds betrayal and murder to his sins. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." And as Joab was besieging*

the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died.

Mission accomplished. What is the difference between these two stories? The woman under siege and David both want what they want and they both lack the capacity to care what it costs. But something is vastly different in David's case. I mean these are both tales of hideous moral failings but David's tale differs in one significant way. You see David in spite of his great sin was one of God's chosen servants. He had the Spirit of God within him. It's the most important characteristic of anyone who claims he's a believer. Absent God's Holy Spirit you have a person who will not submit to God's law because he cannot. His mind is already cast in a certain way. God says this person's flesh is hostile to God. God says in fact in *Romans 8: For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* God's saying there's really only two categories of people in this entire world. There are those who belong to the kingdom who have his Holy Spirit and

there are those who are outside of the kingdom who are hostile to that Spirit. Those who are in the kingdom who have the Spirit of God within them have an outside source within them convicting them of sin. Jesus made that clear in *John 16* when he refers to the Holy Spirit as the helper. This is what Jesus said, he said:

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

You see it was God's Holy Spirit within David and not David himself who convicted him of his sin with Bathsheba. Just listen to the Psalm of David about this very incident. Listen to the title that he gives. This is *Psalm 51*. He says: *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. David says: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Down to verse 9, he says: Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy*

Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

You see, David and the woman under siege represent two different responses to great sins. I mean David acknowledged that he's not only sinned against Uriah but he has sinned first and foremost against God himself. He's utterly crushed by the realization of the depth of his sin. David represents the convicting power of the Holy Spirit on believers. The woman under siege represents the reaction of the world to sin. She acknowledges only that she's been unfairly denied the right to eat her neighbor's child after having given up hers. And absent God's Holy Spirit's convicting power she has no ability to even comprehend the depths of her depravity. It's been taken away incrementally in steps so small that she never even noticed its absence. The king still has a vestige of a conscience left and so he reacts in verse 30, he says: *When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes.* That's something that you do when you have deep, deep grief, and you are repulsed. Well the fact that the woman would even approach the king with this issue shows the level of depravity that she has sunk down to. Well the difference between David and the woman under siege is that David had the Spirit of God within him and this poor woman apparently did not. Both of them had absolutely hideous sins and in only one of them do we find an account of the

conviction of the Holy Spirit. In David we find that no matter how hideous the sin, God is willing to forgive. In the woman under siege, however, we find in the absence of the presence of the Holy Spirit, there's no check, there's no stopping, there's no slowing the downward spiral, only an ever increasing ability to excuse the inexcusable even to the point of boiling and eating your own offspring.

So how does this apply to the issue of abortion? Well the *Encyclopedia Britannica* stated this, said: "The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Roe versus Wade* in 1973 that unduly restrictive state regulation of abortion was unconstitutional, in effect legalizing abortion for any reason for women in the first three months of pregnancy." That was 48 years ago. Today abortion is completely legal for any reason whatsoever during the entire length of a pregnancy up until the day of birth. It has taken 48 years. But I submit to you that spiritually speaking we as a culture are also under siege by the enemy. And now we, too, routinely make choices so grotesque and evil as this woman under siege made all with the same stunningly similar lack of comprehension of our own evil.

Two years ago I reported about a video that I'd seen taken on a college campus. A group of students, pro-life students had come to the campus. They set up signs decrying abortion. They showed

incredibly brutal and graphic pictures of clearly recognizable babies who had been torn to pieces during the process. The intent was to shock people into seeing the horror of what actually takes place in an abortion, something that Planned Parenthood and all those other organizations desperately do not want you to see. And the video was about ten minutes long but it wasn't at all about the dialogue that took place between two different groups of people. The discussion itself lasted about 10 to 15 seconds before it was replaced literally by a screaming mob. They were twerking, they were screaming, they were F-bombing, they were spitting on and physically assaulting the pro-life students. This was no longer a discussion of one view versus another. In the eyes of the mob this was a good-verses-evil confrontation and clearly the pro-life students were now the side that represented evil. I now look at that video and I saw the woman under siege and she's now screaming how unfair it was to be shown these pictures. And I wondered how is it in a place supposedly dedicated to an exchange of ideas that we've come to this?

I have a good friend and a fellow board member at the pregnancy center. She's training to be a doula. Now doula's a person who's trained in all different aspects of delivering babies. My friend said that much of her training now involves social justice concepts that have almost nothing to do with obstetrics. She said that she

was in one of her classes and recently she walked into the room and there was a number of women there weeping. They were weeping about an evil that had just been unleashed, so they thought, by the fact that a number of southern states had passed heartbeat legislation which attempts to prohibit abortion once a baby's heartbeat had been discovered. She's explaining to me and I was absolutely incredulous, and so I asked her how is it that women who are in training to deliver babies would be weeping over legislation designed to protect the very lives of those babies? She said, "This is how far we've come." I thought of the prophesy fulfilled in the book of Matthew when Herod, seeking to destroy the baby Jesus, he kills all the male children in Bethlehem. *Matthew 2* says: *Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."* Our 21st century version is doulas now weeping at any attempt at curtailing exactly what it was that Herod was doing.

So once again I see this woman under siege addressing what she sees as a cosmic injustice and it begs the question: How did we get here? How does a woman get to place where she feels moral outrage only at the fact that she doesn't get to eat her neighbor's child, having given up her own child as a food source? I've said repeatedly you get there through incrementalism, by taking multiple

tiny steps towards evil, steps that are so small as to be imperceptible. Absent the Holy Spirit you do that by suppressing the truth of God in unrighteousness. Just remember God says that's the natural state of mankind. Again he says: *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* I've said it before and I've said it many times, there are cosmic rules that are set in motion when you suppress the truth. Not only do you lose the ability to perceive the truth that is sitting there right in front of your eyes, you also begin to lose the ability to hear any truth at all. Jesus put it this way in *Luke 8*. He said: *"Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."* What Jesus is saying that every time you are confronted with the truth and you suppress and reject that truth, you begin to lose the ability not just to take in that truth but all truth. *"Even what he thinks he has will be taken away."* Do you ever wonder why the pro-choice side remains unconvinced regardless the evidence? There's a principle of spiritual blindness at work here. You know sadly in my line of work as a pastor, I see this all the time. You know if you spend a lifetime denying truths that are as self-evident as the nose on your face, you'll find at in time you've lost the ability to perceive any truth. The problem is like most sins, these effects

take place incrementally, usually in stages too small to be immediately noticed. And what God does to make us notice it is he sends us someone prophetic, a divine intervention, if you will. When David was caught up with the sin of Bathsheba, God sent him the prophet Nathan. He brought him to the place where he could actually see his own wickedness. God sent an outsider who was willing to shout out a warning. Well, the problem today is that by the time those prophets are shouting that warning, the incremental suppression of truth has already shut down the ability to hear. I mean the Israelites had prophets who warned them repeatedly and repeatedly paid a price for warning them. Jesus described how he related to that, how he related to his contemporary's response of these prophets. Listen to Jesus' words. Jesus says: *"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town."* See those folks on the college campus who were screaming, twerking, cursing and spitting on the pro-lifers, they were simply reenacting a response to prophetic warnings that we see over and over again. It was yet another divine intervention, another one that failed. And God has sent us national figures who were prophetic voices over and over again. One was Mother Teresa. I mean it was decades ago when Mother Teresa addressed President Clinton and Vice President

Al Gore. It is still in my mind the definition, the absolute definition of what that means to speak truth to power. There's this tiny impoverished elderly woman addressing the most powerful people in the entire world. And the president made the mistake of inviting her to a presidential prayer breakfast whereupon she blistered the president and our culture of abortion. I want to read you once more that account. I've done this before but this bears repeating. This is an account of what took place that morning. It was written by the columnist Peggy Noonan who was actually there, and she better than anybody captures exactly what I'm trying to communicate about suppressing the truth in unrighteousness and how that works. This is her column describing that day when Mother Teresa addressed that group.

She said: "I was applauding at my table, and most of my tablemates were standing, and I turned to look at what the friendly and intelligent woman to my right was doing. We had had a nice conversation before the speaking began. She was a lawyer, the wife of a member of the Clinton administration, a modern and attractive blond-haired woman in her late forties or early fifties. She was not applauding. She was staring straight ahead, impassively, if you can call white lips and a stricken expression impassive. Now, Mother Teresa is not perhaps schooled in the ways of world capitals and perhaps did not know that having said her piece and won the

moment she was supposed to go back to the airier, less dramatic assertions on which we all agree. Instead she said this:

'[Abortion] is really a war against the child, and I hate the killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself. And if we accept that the mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another? How do we persuade a woman not to have an abortion? As always, we must persuade her with love. The father of that child, however, must also give until it hurts. By abortion, the mother does not learn to live, but kills even her own child to solve her problem. And by abortion, the father is taught that he does not have to take any responsibility at all for the child he has brought into that world. So that father is likely to put other women into the same trouble. So abortion just leads to more abortion. Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love one another but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion.'

Well Peggy concludes, she writes: "Again applause, and I looked once more to the woman on my right. As the applause spread she sat back in her chair and folded her hands on her lap. Then she briskly reached for her purse and took out a notepad. She took out a slim gold pen. It gleamed in the ballroom lights. She started writing down words. I couldn't resist, I peered as un-obviously as

I could to see what she was writing. 'Shop Rite,' it said on the hospital-white pad. 'Cleaners.' She was making a To Do list. That was how she detached from the moment. She did not like what she had just heard but she couldn't walk out, couldn't boo, so she made a little list of things to do. I looked toward the dias. Hillary Clinton was still staring straight ahead, unmoving. I imagined her looking at my tablemate and yelling over, 'Don't forget the Tide.'"

That incident took place 27 years ago. I want you to imagine what would have happened if Mother Teresa gave her speech on a college campus today. In 27 years we've gone from writing grocery lists to push away the discomfort of our wickedness to screaming, spitting, twerking and cursing those who still speak that same truth. This is how far we've come. Or is it? I mean at the beginning of this message I made an assertion that our present day attitude toward abortion is actually more wicked than a woman eating her own child. Well let me suggest to you why I made that assertion. See, the woman under siege gave up her baby as food because she was starving. There was an army outside intent on killing her and it was besieging her city and all around her people were literally dying of starvation. Now the Guttmacher Institute, which is an ally of Planned Parenthood itself, compiled statistics on why women today give up their babies here in the United States. This is what

they stated -- quote -- "the reasons most frequently cited were that having a child would interfere with a woman's education, work or ability to care for dependents, 74 percent; that she could not afford a baby now, 73 percent; and that she did not want to be a single mother who was having relationship problems." So I'll leave it for you to decide which is worse, taking the life of your child because you are starving or taking the life of your child because you don't want to interfere with your education, your work, your income, or your relationships. It would be easy at this point to just point to more statistics, more stories that would produce more and more outrage about how awful abortion is and I would just be preaching to the choir. The point that I really want to make here is the difference between the awful sin of David and the awful sin of the woman under siege. The difference is that one party was given the ability to see how awful their sin was and the other was not. Both parties had followed the incremental trail that the enemy always uses to take us from one level of sin to the next. As James tells us in *James 1*, he said: *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* We can easily see both parties' journey from desire to sin and from sin to death. We know both parties had prophetic warnings about the dangers they were in, I mean Israel had Elisha, David had Nathan. The difference between David's

response and the woman under siege is the difference between people who have the Spirit of God and those who do not. We have Jesus' own words that rejecting truth causes one's ability to perceive truth to become diminished. And whether it's an individual or a culture, the principle remains the same. It becomes more and more difficult for logic and reason to change the course of somebody who's used to resisting truth. Incrementally people in cultures reach a point of no return. And when it comes to the sanctity of life, I firmly believe that we are now well past that point. The truth of who God is and what life in the womb is has been argued over and over now for almost fifty years. Logic and reason have tried their very best but they now find themselves trying to reason with a woman upset with her neighbors because they've eaten her son and she can't eat theirs. I mean for years now we thought that things couldn't get more wicked than they were. Somehow or other every year we manage to find a new bottom of a new barrel. How many times have you heard me spout statistics or stories of circumstances and situations that makes your blood boil, makes you wonder how people can't see the evil that's right there in front of their faces? Fact is at this point I don't believe they can. Those who do not have the Spirit of God, they have only logic and reason to help them change their course and that just doesn't work any more. Couple that with a diminished ability to perceive truth due to rejecting truth and you have a situation where objective

truth means little or nothing. But that doesn't mean that we are without resources. In fact what it may mean is that this is the best circumstance we could ever find ourselves in. You see for years we thought we could argue and demonstrate and persuade people about how evil abortion is. And like I said, I think it's time that we realize we're past that point. So what do we do? I think we do what God's people have always done. We lament. Lamenting is what followers of Jesus Christ do when they recognize the hopelessness of the sin they or their people have been captured by, when they realize that their corporate souls have been stolen from them incrementally, one little piece at a time. They do that because they have the Spirit of the living God living within them. It is He who convicts them. I mean David moved by the Holy Spirit lamented his own personal wickedness. Again *Psalm 32*. David says: *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.* That was David speaking personally.

Daniel, also moved by the Holy Spirit, lamented his culture's sin corporately even though he was by far the less guilty. Daniel's prayer is a model for all of us as to what our prayer needs to be. Listen to what Daniel prayed in *Daniel 9*. He said: *So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land. "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame -- the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you. Daniel wasn't the one guilty of these sins but he was a member of a culture that was guilty and so he corporately identified with his culture in his confession. Janice and I do the same thing every day as we pray. We say Lord, forgive us our wickedness. We have redefined your creative order in the area of sexuality, we have mocked your design in the area of gender, we have defied you directly by slaughtering the life you*

alone can grant while it is still in the womb, we call good evil and evil good, and yet we still demand that you bless us. Like Daniel, like Jeremiah, like the Jews, we lament. And we pray those prayers knowing another prayer that God has asked us to pray which you all have heard, it's *2 Chronicles 7:14*. God says: *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

What's truly astounding to me in this prayer is the graciousness, the long suffering of God. It doesn't matter how wicked, it doesn't matter how far, it doesn't matter how deeply we descend, God is still there and he's still anxious to forgive. If abortion is a sin in your past, understand that we have a God who left heaven itself and came to earth to live out a perfect human life so that he could offer that life on a cross in exchange for that very sin if we would only by faith accept him as Lord. The forgiveness that David longed for was freely given and the only reason that David longed for it was because the Spirit of God within him prompted him. God's Holy Spirit is going to move in the hearts of people given over to this wickedness only when we commit to prayer. So what I'm saying is this: I'm saying I'm pretty much done with trying to reason and argue. I'm pretty much done with trying to research and debate and come up with answers to what is essentially

a woman under siege demanding the right to eat her neighbor's children. That doesn't mean I won't engage you if you ask but I no longer believe it's going to change your heart at all. That's not a statement of defeat. Rather it's a statement of acknowledgment of what should have been made long ago, and it's that the only one who can surely change the hearts and minds of the people is God. And it's only when God brings us individually and collectively to the point of absolute despair when it comes to turning the hearts of the people who won't be turned because they can't be turned absent the presence of God's Holy Spirit, it's only then that we will genuinely take up a biblical lament and it's only then that prayers will have power. So let's pray.

Father, I want to pray this morning that you give us the ability to pray. I want to pray that you give us this morning the ability to grieve. I want us to feel like Daniel felt. I want us to just ache over the awfulness of the evil that surrounds us. I don't want us to push it aside, I don't want us to just think, well, it's just the way life is, just the way the culture is, I want us to bear personal responsibility for the corporate evil that surrounds us. I want it to move us. I want us to be people who pray that prayer that you say over and over again, if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive

their sins and heal their land. Lord, that's exactly what we want and we have failed you in our prayer life. So I pray this morning that you would convict us, move us to become people of prayer, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.