

Dear People who have life in Jesus,

Perhaps you have heard of Alpha Pregnancy Counseling Center. Our WELS Churches in the area have banded together to carry out a special ministry. We are doing work for Jesus helping women who are in need since 2004. Christians advocating for life and not just the life of the unborn. They care about the mother, her physical and spiritual life. So they talk about Jesus and his saving love.

This is not the only life issue that concerns Christians. There are concerns about life issues regarding the very elderly and those who are ill. Some people would advocate that it is humane and cost effective to simply euthanize or put to death those who are sick and dying.

In the Holy Scriptures God speaks. He speaks to the sanctity of life. It is precious to him. Life physical and spiritual is also important to God's people. So I want to encourage you to...**Be a Lutheran for Life.** By that I mean that you are a Christian Lutheran who is concerned about life issues. God's view and his word will move us to pray for and to advocate for life. I will use the words of St. Paul to Timothy to help us do this.

1. Lutherans pray for life.

It was, I believe, last year, that I received a letter for Alpha Pregnancy Counseling center. A woman who lives in the Surprise, El Mirage area had visited Alpha Pregnancy. She received counseling and said it would be okay if a pastor called her. Since I am the closest pastor, I received her phone number. I called and left a message, but I did not hear from her. I would have liked to talk to her about Jesus. I did pray that the Lord would bless her and help her. That is one thing I could do for this lady I have not met. Prayer is something that St. Paul encourages. He calls on Christians to pray. We want to pray for life.

A. Prayer is talking to God. God is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. He has given us life. We can talk to him. We pray. But what do we say? The Apostle Paul has some suggestions for Timothy and for us.

1. **“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people...”** Petitions are needs. He knows

what we need, but asking him is trusting that he is the one who can take care of our petitions. **Prayers** is a general term that includes the idea of reverence. We aren't bossing God around, but asking our Lord and Master to help us. **Intercession** according to *The People's Bible* is when we ask for our needs and others with "child-like confidence." **Thanksgiving** should be in our hearts as we pray, because God has answered our prayers before and he will hear our prayers now.

2. The apostle also suggests we pray, "**for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.**"

(2) When there is good government and stability, then the citizens can live peaceful and quiet lives. For Christians that means we are free to serve our God. God's people have a mission.

What is that we are trying to do?

B. We can live a holy and godly life helping our neighbor in their body and life. The reason we do this is, so they can also have spiritual life with God.

1. When we help someone, they may ask us, why are you helping me? In the world people may not help, or they do so for selfish reasons. We can answer, "*My God is a God of life. He wants me to do everything to help people in their life.*" Our helping will often open the door to witness about spiritual and eternal life.

2. St. Paul tells us, "**This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**" (3,4) God wants to save people because all people are dying. That fact that all humans die indicates that our relationship with the God who gave us life is broken. We stand under God's condemnation for our sins. One example of our sinfulness is when we don't hold life as sacred. Callous words and actions may shorten or harm a person's life. St. John says in his first letter, "**Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer.**" (4:19) The good news is that God gives new life in the forgiveness of sins. All who believe in God's promise of forgiveness and salvation have life in God and someday eternal life.

C. In 1 Thessalonians St. Paul encourages us to "**Pray continually.**" (5:17) We can help others by praying for their physical well-being. This often what we do with our prayer list in the bulletin. You can have your own prayer list at home. Pray for those with Alzheimer's disease. In Christian Life Resources states that by 2050 up to 16 million people may have Alzheimers. Millions also suffer hearing and vision loss. Those are a few examples.

Pray not only for physical healing, but pray that the Lord would give and strengthen spiritual life. People need to know that God is Savior and he gives eternal life. We pray that he would bring people to know salvation. This is what God wants.

There is more for us to do.

2. Lutherans proclaim life in Jesus.

I was visiting at the home of one our members who is elderly and can't come to church. The person was talking about aches and pains and how it would be nice not to have to deal with almost constant pain. I mentioned that when we live in heaven there will be no more aches and pains. The person gave me a big smile. I could tell they were looking forward to it. The Lord gave me that opportunity to proclaim life. That is what we Lutherans do. We proclaim life.

A. The life that we proclaim comes from Jesus.

1. St. Paul says, **“there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus...”** (5) A mediator stands between two people or two parties. Jesus stood between us and God.

2. The separation between us and God is caused by sin. When God forgives sins he didn't forget about them. The fact that we physically die because of sins indicates that sin comes at a high price. The forgiveness of sins comes at a high price.

3. Jesus was able to mediate between us and God and bring us forgiveness of sins. The way he did this was to make himself the ransom price for everyone's sins. (6) Remember St. Paul's words today in Romans 5, **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”** (8,9) We are forgiven through Jesus' sufferings and death. When we face God someday, there is no wrath just smiles.

B. As godly people who love life, we don't need the apostle to tell us to proclaim life in Jesus. This greatest of gifts we want to share with others.

1. Never-the-less, he reminds his first century audience and us what happened after Jesus died and rose again. What had happened was witnessed by the first disciples. They in turn shared it with others. St. Paul had heard about Christ, but he did not understand. So Jesus appeared to him and

showed him this new life. Then he testifies that Jesus himself had made him a herald, an apostle and a teacher. He witnessed for Jesus.

2. Thank God that someone felt compelled to talk to us about Jesus.

Somebody you know proclaimed the message of life and as a result you are a Christian who has the gift of life. Today we are the heralds, ambassadors and teachers. We proclaim life in Jesus with our family, friends, neighbors and wherever we have the opportunity.

C. This is good. Who wants to sit around until Jesus returns? We have work to do. Life issues, health issues often provide the perfect opportunity to speak of Jesus. There is a need that presents itself. When babies are born we can talk about baptism. Maybe you can share a tract about Baptism from church. When someone is sick and weak, we can show our appreciation for life by offering to help and doing something for that person. If they are not receiving spiritual care, maybe you can arrange for a pastor to make a visit.

One thing you can do is to keep the Alpha Crises Pregnancy Center in your prayers. According to their *Year End Report* they answered 230 hotline phone calls, they received 93 referrals from friends and friends and other referrals came through other means. They shared God's love with 526 people and 300 were taught about Baptism. That is a ministry that proclaims life. You can support the center with your prayers and offerings.

Conclusion: We Lutherans are for life because it is precious to God and it is precious to us. Pray for life, speak up for life. I end with the words of the hymnist Francis Havargal, "*Take my life and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my moments and my days; Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*"

(CW: 469 stanza 1) Amen.