

Expecting God's Unexpected

A Message from Justice For All Director, Steve Wagner



Christmas 2021

Dear Friend,

They expected God to send a conquering king, someone who would set things right between the nation of Israel and the Roman Empire. Jesus constantly turned people's eyes to an unseen world of unseen rulers.

They expected a visible ruler. Jesus appeared invisibly as an embryo in Mary's womb. Then he walked among them humbly, exercising undisputable wisdom and power not to secure a visible throne but to conquer unseen demons and to destroy lofty opinions raised against the knowledge of God (see II Cor. 10:5).

They expected the Messiah to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem, respected by everyone for his power. Jesus was lifted high...on a cross, hanged as criminal, disgusting to Jew and Gentile alike.

During Advent and Christmas we pause and re-live that first season of expectation, when the Messiah had not yet appeared. I'd like to suggest we also try to recapture that sense of what those in the first century were expecting. They had a narrative they had built, detailing the way God would be working "any day now." They were sure of it. And then God moved, deliberately, decisively to do something utterly different.

It's a sort of cautionary tale for us. Be careful of those things you expect with certainty. For God is at work, and his mind is many times quite different than our own.

Along with many others, I listened to the Supreme Court's December 1 oral arguments on the *Dobbs* case. *Dobbs* concerns the Mississippi ban on abortion after 15 weeks which is causing the Supreme Court to consider overruling its landmark cases protecting legal abortion, *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992). I reviewed the thoughts of various commentators before and after. Many expect the Court to overturn *Roe* and *Casey*. Many pro-life advocates are quivering with excitement about the potential that many states could then move forward with stronger restrictions against abortion.

Add to this the Supreme Court's recent decision on Texas SB8, effectively allowing the



Help JFA "Expect God's Unexpected" in 2022

Thank you for your faithful support of Justice For All. There's still time to give an end-of-year gift. Go to www.jfaweb.org/donate or postmark your gift by December 31, 2021.

Pictured above is JFA's regular dialogue team after outreach at the University of Oklahoma in October (Paul Kulas, Tammy Cook, Jeremy Gorr, Rebekah Dyer, Kristina Massa, Kaitlyn Donihue, Mary St. Hilaire, Jon Wagner, Bella O'Neill, Andrea Thenhaus; Missing: Steve Wagner).

Please pray with us for every event and every conversation we create, looking with trusting expectation to see what results God is pleased to bring from them, even if he surprises us. **Merry Christmas!**



Training Christians to Create a Different Kind of Conversation about Unintended Pregnancy and Abortion

[jfaweb.org](https://www.jfaweb.org)



@trainthousands



@picturejusticeforall



316.683.6426

law to continue to stand as it has since September 1, causing many Texas abortionists to cease doing abortions after a heartbeat is detected (at approximately six weeks from last menstrual period, or four weeks from fertilization – note that the heartbeat arises at about three weeks from fertilization but normally can't be detected at that point). Many pro-life advocates in other states are monitoring the Texas situation and hoping to utilize the same type of law to curtail many abortions in their own states.

To be sure, even if the Supreme Court's decisions in these cases result in the saving of one human being's life, we will rejoice. Nothing I say in what follows is meant to take away from this.

Let's remember the cautionary tale of the Messiah expected and the Messiah come: *be careful of those visible outcomes you expect with certainty.*

It is the same with these Supreme Court cases. Be careful of the visible outcomes you expect with certainty. Sure, the words of some commentators could turn out to be wise, even prophetic. *Roe* and *Casey* may be on their way out. The Texas law may survive other challenges and prove to be an effective strategy to stop abortions. These things may all be true. But God – God may be moving in spite of expectations to bring about some other results we can't even imagine.

We look back at our first century Jewish counterparts and caution them in retrospect to look not for what they had come to expect from their Messiah and God's plan and the meaning of redemption. We caution them to instead "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (see Matt. 6:33). We caution them to "set their mind on the things of God and not on the things of man" (see Mark 8:31-33). We caution them to humbly pray for the strength to wait on the Lord, to know him more deeply, to do his will in *this day*, regardless of the visible outcomes he brings tomorrow. In short, we caution them to "walk by faith, not by sight" (see II Cor. 5:7).

In the same way, I encourage each of us to pray for the strength to seek to know God in this time, to be with him, even as we earnestly desire for all unborn children to be protected from violence. Our task is not to divine the decisions of the Supreme Court with a certainty we cannot reasonably have about the future; our task is to keep ourselves doing the things we know with certainty God has given us to do today.

The Gospel accounts and the Book of Acts tell the story vividly. Over and over again, the Jews were surprised by the way God was working out his plan. Perhaps we might even say that surprise is the dominant theme of those books.

I suspect that *surprise* will also continue to be the dominant theme of our work seeking justice for all. I don't know what God will do with the law in 2022, but I am rather certain of one thing: *He will surprise me.*

So let us then keep our eyes fixed on God, earnestly seeking what he would have us do in this day. Let us earnestly seek to be with him in his work and to enjoy his decision *to be with us* in his Son, Immanuel, *God with us*.

With this in mind, our team is gearing up to keep doing in 2022 those things we believe God has uniquely gifted us to do. We will seek to change hearts and minds so that abortion is unthinkable, and so that love for women and children is kindled into thoughtful action that is unstoppable. We will train as many people as we can to create as many conversations as they can, in hopes of seeing God change the world in a way only he can.

Thank you for standing with us but also kneeling with us before the Father, as we tie all of our expectations and hopes to him and the surprising ways he is working in our midst.

Expecting God's unexpected with you,



Steve Wagner
Executive Director