



Trust the Father's Heart

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Luke 12:27-34

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Last Sunday morning on my way down to church, the “low fuel” light appeared on my dashboard. I pulled into a service station in the Fox Mill shopping center. Near my car was a pick-up truck with lawn-mowing equipment in the back. Beside the truck was a man clearly dressed for a day’s labor. A little girl, about 4 years old, stood next to him. I watched as the father tenderly bent down, and carefully put a mask on her face. After adjusting it behind her ears, he took her hand, and they together walked into the convenience store.

I wondered if his little girl was going to spend the day with him, and, if so, what family circumstances might have made that necessary.

I wondered if this father ever had a day off, a Sabbath.

And I wondered if that early morning view of a father and child was a gift from God, a glimpse into the Father’s heart of love.

This morning’s Scripture! Let’s first unpack it using a medical framework. After all, Jesus likened himself to a physician!

Diagnosis: We worry.

Underlying cause: We are afraid.

Prescription: Trust the Father’s heart.

Prognosis: Recovery possible!

What's the context for our passage? Jesus has just told the crowds a parable. A farmer's crops were so bountiful, that he built extra barns to contain the surplus. Self-storage unit, anyone? Or how about stockpiling hand sanitizer and toilet paper?

The parable does not end well. The farmer dies, rich in things, but impoverished in his soul.

That parable is Jesus' backdrop for our Scripture. Jesus is *not* saying that we shouldn't have sufficient food and clothing. In fact, we know that Jesus weeps over the desperate lack of basic human necessities in devastated nations such as Haiti. [Join our "Christ and Culture" learning community right after the 9 a.m. service as we livestream with mission partners in Haiti.] Only one miracle is found in all four gospels. It's the feeding of the multitudes... motivated by Jesus' hallmark compassion.

So what's the problem?

The problem, Jesus says, is when our legitimate concerns morph into worry—because unchecked worry can lead to fear. We are afraid that there won't be enough...not just for our material needs, but for *all* of our seemingly bottomless human needs: love, security, meaning. We are also afraid that we, ourselves, are not enough, that there is something fundamentally unlovable about us. And, if we are

honest, we are sometimes afraid that even God may not be enough for all we face in this life.

This is not a new problem.

After 400 years of being enslaved under the pharaohs, God rescued Israel. For the next month, our church along with others in Vienna, is celebrating the Liberty Amendments, the four amendments to our nation's constitution that ratified the full personhood and inclusion of all people. God, of course, would never have ransomed Israel only to let them die of starvation, thirst, and exposure in the wilderness. God supernaturally provided bread from heaven called *manna*, as well as quail. If it were not a Sunday, we could flock – pun intended – to Chick-fil-A for chicken on a biscuit, quail on manna.

But trusting the heart of God was difficult for Israel. God had said through Moses: “My children, you do not have to worry. I’ll provide what you need every, single day. And once a week I’m going to give you double, so that you can focus more on me during my gift to you of a weekly Sabbath, a day set apart for worship, for rest” (Exodus 16).

But that kind of trust was not yet a well-worn path for young Israel. So they hoarded the manna...and found it riddled with worms the next morning.

Several thousand years later, Jesus taught his disciples something similar:

“Your Father already knows your needs.”

“[Your Father] will give you everything you need.”

“So don’t be afraid, little flock.”

“It gives the Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.”

Friends, the heart of the Father is good. The heart of the Father is kind. Psalm 103: “The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are” (Psalm 103:13-14).

Our neediness is no match for the all-sufficiency of the Father. Philippians 4:19: “And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

We *can* trust the heart of the Father. The Father is good.

By contrast, the record of biblical fathers is a mixed bag. Noah’s sons had to cover him in his drunken nakedness. Abraham sent one of his two sons away. Jacob played favorites with his 12 sons; and we barely hear about his only daughter, Dinah. King David failed to address broken relationships within his family; the result included death.

But Scripture *also* tells us of selfless and caring fathers: New Testament Joseph put his own reputation on the line so that his adopted son, Jesus, could be born. Zebedee freed his sons, James and John, to leave the family fishing business, so that they could follow Jesus. And Jairus, a prestigious synagogue leader, fell at Jesus' feet, not giving a wit how desperate he appeared, and begged Jesus to heal his dying 12-year-old daughter.

The record of our *human* fathers is just as complicated. Some fathers are profoundly faithful and sacrificial. Others are more self-centered. And still other fathers have injured their children. *Lord, come.*

This Father's Day is a celebratory occasion for some; but it's an ambivalent holiday for others; and it's a source of heartache and yearning for still others. *Lord, come.*

Even the most amazingly committed earthly father will fall short. And because our perceptions of God can be entangled with our experiences of our earthly parents, we often need to do the work of ferreting out who God *truly* is.

Only God, the one Jesus called his *Abba Father*, is completely worthy of our trust. Friends, to affirm this is to *choose* again and again to walk by faith, not fickle feelings. The Holy Spirit is ready *to help us believe* what the Bible says from cover to cover: that the heart of the Father is trustworthy.

As we grow—even starting with small steps—into trusting the heart of the Father, we receive Jesus’ promised peace. Worry and fear do lessen. We know greater contentment. We mature in our capacity to bear the wildly varying and often unpredictable circumstances of our lives.

How does this happen? This is possible when we choose to place our confidence not in our contingent circumstances, but in the unchanging character of our God. How does this happen? Will you decide right now that you are going to daily invest time in three foundational, tried-and-true practices: thankful worship, reading *and* meditating on God’s Word, and prayer? Draw near to God, and you can count on God drawing near to you.

And then what happens? We look outside of ourselves! We live with hands that are open, available. We wake up more to the needs all around us. We actively seek opportunities to give ourselves and our resources away! We become generous people! We care about what breaks the heart of God. In a beautiful, continuous ebb and flow like the ocean waves, we seek God’s Kingdom, and God delights in bringing the Kingdom to us. And the overflow *blesses* this church, this community, and God’s world. Isn’t *this* whom God longs for us to be?

So I close by not withholding truth on this Father’s Day. My heart is pierced by what my two daughters and my son-

in-law have lost in the death of their father. My family holds simultaneous thankfulness and sorrow. But my comfort, my hope—*your comfort, your hope*—is that the heart of our Father God is tender, kind, and full of compassion. Our God *is* a “Good, Good Father.” Let’s worship our God and receive *all* that is ours in Christ...and then let’s share it. In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.