

# 12<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

AUGUST 11, 2013

## YOU ARE A ROYAL CHILD

Pastor Jim Dunn

(I am indebted to Jeffrey Gibbs' thoughts on *the reign of God* as written in his commentary on *Matthew* in the *Concordia Commentary Series* and on his interpretation of the parallel version of this text in *Matthew 6:25-34*, as written in the same commentary; also in the sermon is a quote of N.T. Wright as quoted by Glenn Nielsen in an article he wrote for *Lutheran Forum*)

### Luke 12:22-34

#### Do Not Be Anxious

**22** And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. **23** For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! **25** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **26** If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? **27** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **28** But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! **29** And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. **30** For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. **31** Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

**32** "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

“Fear not, for it is your Father’s pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

An advertisement states, “Who’s your daddy? The answer is at your drugstore.” What does that even mean?

Well, it was revealed through a recent survey that 1 in every 10 fathers in the U.S. questions whether his child is really his. The survey was conducted on behalf of a company called Identigene. Since 2008, Identigene has been selling DNA test kits at your local drugstore. They cost \$29.99, but the lab fee is an extra whopping \$129.00. Yet, half a million of them have been sold. That’s a lot of uncertainty about paternity.

The reigning monarch of Monaco, Prince Albert, son of Grace Kelly may have purchased three of those test kits. He has had two children out of wedlock, confirmed. And a third woman, Bea Fiedler, once claimed that Prince Albert was the father of her son, Daniel – although Prince Albert has denied it.

Would God do that? Would God deny that the people of this planet are His children? Our very presence here this morning in this place of worship says, “No, God cares about us as a Father for His children.” But do we still become anxious, fearful, worried about whether He values us, much less dare to claim to be sons and daughters of the King...of the Universe?

*Daddy Wasn't There* is the title of a song from a hit movie released several years ago. It’s a song about an absentee father. Now, it seems like sacrilege to apply that song title to God. Yet, to Christians out there in the world, it may seem at times as if the King of the Universe is an absentee father. Now, Jesus did draw these fantastical pictures of birds working in a wheat field to gain a harvest to store in a barn so they have something to eat. And of flowers sitting at looms, spinning cloth for clothes to wear. Then, He commented, Of course birds and flowers don’t do that. And God still provides for them. “Of how much more value are you to God than birds!” (Luke 12:24-27)

Yet, His proverb speaks of things in general. “There is yet the mystery of God’s dealings with this broken world, which allows wars and natural disasters to occur here and there. Jesus’ followers, both then and now, have seen birds starving or being devoured by predators, or have seen lilies dried up in the heat of drought. Jesus also warned His followers that they would find themselves in situations of persecution in which they would experience physical deprivation. And so Christian children have been known to starve to death.” (Gibbs) Christian mothers have been abused and raped by predators during time of war. Natural disasters like drought and tornado have torn Christians from one another’s arms. To those who endured such things, God may have seemed at times like an absentee father. At those times, were Christians anxious, fearful, or worried about whether they had any value at all, much less dared to claim to be children of the King of the Universe?

Anxious. Fearful. Worried. About your children or grandchildren, about your spouse, about your church, about your health, about the health of loved ones, about your job or your job search, about your relationship with God, about the suffering in the world. Anxious. Fearful. Worried. Jesus didn’t ask His followers, “Are you anxious, fearful, or worried?” He didn’t have to. At times you lack confidence that God will come through with whatever it is you need. At such times, whether He can be depended on is **up in the air** in your mind. You feel about as valuable to Him as a broken leg. So, instead of carrying yourself as a child of the King, you become anxious, fearful, worried. At other times you let your worth become tied to your accomplishments. You let your worth get tied to your cooking, your sermons, your batting average, your financial portfolio, etc. You let what you do, how well you do it, and how others critique your performance determine your value. Then, how you feel about yourself is **up in the air** because it’s based on whatever your critics think from one moment to the next. So, instead of carrying yourself as a child of the King, you become anxious, fearful, worried.

At such times, how you feel about God or how you feel about yourself is up in the air. That’s exactly the meaning of the word Jesus uses here in Luke 12:29, translated as “worried.”

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This Greek word for “worried” means literally “up in the air, raised from the ground, suspended or hovering in mid-air.” Hovering between hope and fear. Torn between hope and fear. That’s a pretty good description of worry. Up in the air as to whether to trust God to come through. Up in the air as to whether to believe you are of value. But up in the air has another meaning for you. Up in the air, raised from the ground, suspended in mid-air...upon a cross.

In his famous painting titled St. John of the Cross-, surrealist painter Salvador Dali emphasized the suspended, mid-air aspect of the crucifixion. It was painted from the point of view not of looking up at the cross but of looking down from above. Seeing the top of Jesus’ head and looking down as Jesus did, as He hung suspended in mid-air, raised from the ground. In that place where you are up in the air, torn between hope and fear, worried and anxious, there, Jesus was hung.

Jesus is your hope in time of worry. The giving of Himself for you is your hope that God will come through. The offering up of the one, true royal Child of the King of the Universe for you was for the purpose of declaring how greatly God values you, declaring you an heir of His kingdom through faith. As Jesus said, “Fear not little flock, for it was your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

To have you be part of God’s reign, as His royal child. “The reign of God that even in this broken world was breaking through wherever Jesus went. Wherever He went, He fed the starving and calmed natural disasters. He returned the dead into the arms of their loved ones. Wherever He went, the brokenness of the world was held at bay. His miracles were not merely to prove He was the Son of the King. They were proofs that the full, final, complete reign of the King of the Universe was already beginning to be revealed. He will break in finally and completely on that Day when our bodies are raised from the dust and all creation is healed.” (Gibbs)

Jesus’ rising from the dead gives value to those things you do in faith, though they appear small to your critics. “Every act of love and gratitude, every work of art or music inspired by the love of God or the beauty of His creation, every minute you

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spend teaching a child to read or to walk or to love Jesus, every act of nurture, comfort, support for fellow human beings or for fellow nonhuman creatures, every prayer, every embrace will find its way through the resurrection of Jesus into the new heavens and new earth that God will one day make.” (N.T. Wright as quoted by Glenn Nielsen)

Jesus suspended from a cross and risen from the grave speaks these tender words to you: “Do not be anxious.” (Luke 12:22) Remember that you live your life under the care and reign of your Father the King. Yes, there is still brokenness. Is your Father content with that? Look at the empty tomb. Should you be content with that? Seek the reign of God. Act upon the hope that is yours in Jesus. Love, work, teach, nurture, comfort, support, pray, embrace. Carry yourself as a child of the King, for, in Jesus, the King of the Universe has claimed you as His own child.

Amen