

Luke 12:22-32 - *Jesus said to his disciples, “For that reason I tell you, **stop worrying** about your life, about what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Certainly life is **more** than food, and the body is **more** than clothing. Consider the **ravens**: They do not sow or reap; they have no warehouse or barn; and yet God **feeds** them. How much more valuable are **you** than birds! And who of you by **worrying** can add a single **moment** to his lifespan? Since you are not able to do this little thing, why do you worry about the **rest**? Consider how the wild **flowers** grow. They do not labor or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was dressed like one of these. If this is how God clothes the **grass** in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the **furnace**, how much more will he clothe **you**, you of little faith? Do not constantly chase after what you will **eat** or what you will **drink**. Do not be **worried** about it. To be sure, the **nations** of the **world** chase after all of these things, but your Father knows that you need them. Instead, continue to seek the kingdom of **God**, and all these **things** will be added to you. **Do not be afraid**, little flock, because your Father is pleased to **give** you the kingdom.”*

Stop **worrying** - don't be **afraid**. That's pretty easy to **say**, but it's **not** very easy to **do**. Today's text is about **God's attitude** toward those whom He has brought into His kingdom, and **our attitude** as well. In one simple verse the Lord Jesus takes us into the very **heart** of His heavenly Father in such a way that our fears **dissolve**, and are replaced with a firm **resolve**, that **nothing** can take the kingdom of God away from us. That kind of **faith** is what the **reformation** of the church back in the days of Martin Luther was all about. At that time, a solid **conviction** was **reborn** in the hearts of God's people - the conviction that they were **saved** for all eternity because of the actions of our Lord **Jesus Christ**, and that even the Devil himself couldn't do anything to **change** their position. That's the confidence we also seek for **ourselves**; and it **becomes** ours as we take to heart this message from the LORD: **Do Not Be Afraid**, little flock, because Jesus is our **Good Shepherd**, and our Father is **pleased** to **give** us the kingdom.

Jesus tells us: **Do Not Be Afraid**, because Jesus knows how **easily** fear can enter into our hearts. To a varying degree we're all **struggling** with the things which are going on in our **nation** - whether it's the question of **election integrity**, the **economic** storm, **open borders**, the **forced** vaccinations, the **mask** mandates, or any of the **other** executive orders

which have been issued in the course of the past year or so. But in reality, those issues are the **least** of our problems, because we all have to deal with **spiritual** problems as well - and those **spiritual problems** will affect us for all **eternity**. Those spiritual problems are **different** for **each** of us as individuals. Maybe we're **afraid** that our relationship with **God** isn't what it **should** be - or maybe we're **afraid** that our sins are so **great** that they can't possibly be **forgiven** - or maybe we're **afraid** that **Judgment Day** could easily be right around the corner. No matter **what** it is that we're **afraid** of, we're **afraid** because we're all **guilty** - guilty of disobeying **God's** holy commands. We've **misused** His name, we've been **greedy** and **selfish**, we haven't shown God the **reverence** that He rightly **deserves**, we've harbored unholy **thoughts** and **desires** in our minds, and that list could go **on** and **on**. There can be **no doubt** that we have **sinned** against our Lord - and His Law **teaches** us that the **wrath** of God comes to those who have **sinned**. So we certainly **should be** afraid.

Now of course as God's children, we **also** know that there is **forgiveness** to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ - the Lamb of God who was **crucified** to purchase forgiveness for the sins of the entire **world**. Nevertheless, it only takes a quick look at ourselves in the **mirror** of God's **Law** - one quick look at any one of those **sins** we have committed **over** and **over** - and **fear** rises in our hearts once again. When we look at our daily lives, it's so **easy** for **doubts** and **fears** to take hold of us, and to **wonder** if God is really on our side. And then if we add in all the **evil** things we see in the world **around** us, and the ever-growing influence of **Satan** strongly at work - as he takes **immorality** and **godlessness** to new depths - as he increases **ridicule** and **scorn** for the Christian faith - and as even the believing **Church** appears to be getting smaller and smaller - the **fear** arises in us that maybe in the end, we'll end up **losing** God's kingdom.

That's when we need to remember the **Gospel** - and to remember that **Jesus** is in **control**. Jesus has told us **Do Not Be Afraid**, because we are **His** little flock. We are His **sheep**, and He is our **shepherd** - the **Good Shepherd**. We **belong** to Him because Jesus **purchased** us to be His own with the **blood** that He shed on Calvary's **cross**. No one **took** His life away from Him, but rather, Jesus willingly **laid down** His life for us. Of His own **free will**, Jesus suffered **death** in order to remove the burden of **sin** from our shoulders, and to bring us **back** to His Father again. Our God has a **shepherd's** heart and He stands **guard** over His sheep to provide for **all** of

our needs, as David wrote in the 23rd Psalm, *“The LORD is my shepherd. I lack nothing.”*

Jesus says, **Do Not Be Afraid**, because our **Father** is pleased to **give** us the kingdom. God **is** our Father, and we are His dear **children**. We know that **earthly** fathers know how to give **good** gifts to their children. They provide us with our **home** and **family** life - they give us **clothing** and **food** - they take us to the **doctor** when we're sick - in fact, they take care of all kinds of needs that we often aren't even **aware** of. So, if **earthly** fathers are capable of doing such **great** things, we should be assured that our **heavenly** Father **can** and **does** give even **greater** gifts to His children - not **just** things like food, clothing, and medical care, but **spiritual** gifts which will last into **eternity**.

For example, when God gave us the **Holy Spirit** at the time of our **baptism**, He gave us the **kingdom of God**. What's that kingdom of God **like**? The Apostle Paul told the Romans, *“The kingdom of God is **not** a matter of eating and drinking, but of **righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**”* First of all, that **righteousness** isn't something which we have **earned** or **deserved**. Again Paul told the Romans, *“This righteousness **from God** comes through **faith** in Jesus Christ **to all and over all who believe.**”* Jesus put Himself in **our** shoes, lived a **perfect** life, suffered the **punishment** of our sins, and then **rose** from the dead to be our living **Lord** and **Savior**. It's by **faith** in Jesus that we are now able to stand **forgiven**, and perfectly **righteous** before our heavenly Father.

Secondly, God has given us **peace**. Unfortunately, when most people hear that, they're looking for peace in **this world**, and they're **frustrated**, because that's **never** going to happen. The world will **always** fight against the **LORD** and His **people**. As long as we live in this world we will be the Church **militant** - the **fighting** Church. Again it's Paul who **clarified** that statement for us when he told the Romans, *“Since we have been justified by **faith**, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Peace with **God** is **better** than peace with this world, because not only has it already been **given** to us as a free **gift**, but also, it's a gift which will **last forever**.

And thirdly, God has given us **joy** in the Holy Spirit - joy in the hope of the heavenly **glory** of God. So, **Do Not Be Afraid**, little flock, because our Father has been pleased to **give** us the kingdom.

But we should **also** note that our Father is **pleased** to give us the kingdom. It wasn't that somebody **twisted** God's arm, and **made** Him give us the kingdom. It wasn't that God said, "Well, all right, I'll do it if I **have** to." And it wasn't done to **pay us back** for the good things **we** had done for **God**, because there's **nothing** we have offered God which is capable of **earning** His kingdom. No, God's kingdom became ours entirely as an act of His **grace**. God **loved** us because of His Son, **Jesus**. He was **pleased** to **give** us the kingdom. Paul told the Ephesians, "*He chose us in Christ **before the foundation of the world**, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight ... according to the plan of him who works out everything in keeping with the purpose of **his will**.*" God **chose** us before the foundation of the world, so there is **no way** that His choice could have been based on anything **we** have done. In keeping with **His will**, God sent His **Son** to be our Savior - He brought us into **His family** through the water of Holy **Baptism** - and He has **blessed** us with the **Holy Spirit** through His **Word** and **Sacrament**, to keep our faith in Him **strong** and **healthy**.

These wonderful **blessings** from God drive away **all** of our **fears** - the fear of losing our **job** and **income** - the fear of losing our **family** and **friends** - the fear of suffering **sickness** and **death** - even the fear that Satan is amassing an enormous army of **followers** who are intent on **destroying** the Christian Church and everything we **stand** for and **believe** in. Those fears **disappear** when we focus on the **words** and **promises** of **Jesus**. God told His **Old Testament** people, "*Don't be **afraid**, for those who are with **us** are **more** than those who are with **them**.*" And God told His **New Testament** people, "*The one in **you** is **greater** than the one in the **world**.*" And as we confessed earlier in the words of our Psalm for the Day - Psalm 46, "*God is our **refuge** and **strength**, an ever-present **help** in trouble. Therefore, we will **not fear**, though the **earth** give way and the **mountains** fall into the heart of the sea ... The **mighty Lord** is with **us**; the **God of Jacob** is our **fortress**.*"

Martin Luther and his fellow believers had confidence in the very same **words** and **promises** of God during the days of the Reformation over 500 years ago - as they endured the **terror** of the invading Islamic armies, and as they fought against the **false teachings** of the Roman Catholic church. And countless **others** had confidence in the very same **words** and **promises** of God **since** then - as they fought against the evils of **their** day. So **Do Not Be Afraid**, little flock, because our Father is pleased to **give** us

the kingdom. And so we live by **faith** - with the **assurance** that our sins have all been **forgiven** - and with the **certainty** that **heaven** is our eternal home. May we always stand **firm** in our **faith**, and in the **words** and **promises** of God. The kingdom's **ours** forever. Amen.