

The blessing of children
Psalm 128
October 3, 2021

If you look up this Psalm in the Lutheran Study Bible, you will see the heading for this Psalm. It reads, "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord."

We normally think of fear as a bad thing, thinking something bad awaits and yet even though the bad is possible, we have many fears that keep us from doing wrong. We have a healthy fear of not crossing that centerline as we are meeting other cars or trucks. You would not go around a train crossing bar for fear you wouldn't make it across the tracks before that high speed train would cross your path.

There may have been some fear before you got the China virus shot and now there may be fear of the government or of your place of work even if you don't know if it will be good or bad for you to get it.

The thing of it is, who are you to fear? The Psalmist doesn't talk of fear of enemies, or of beasts or of some other foreboding obstacle but of the fear of the Lord.

Is the Lord to be feared? Yes, sure He is, because He is all powerful, holy and in spite of our being sinners, He loves you. He did come to earth to save all people because of His love for us. The Lord could literally take our breath away any time He felt like it and He would have every right to and yet He is wanting to bless you, to have you labor and to eat the fruits of those labors.

The Lord wants to bless those who fear Him and sitting down to eat of those labors is great but as some of you know, it isn't the best to have a great meal before you, the result of your labors and you are alone at the table. Most don't even want to go to all the work of preparing something that great if they are going to eat it alone. No, it is so much better to sit down with people all around the table, people who you care about who get to enjoy it with you. Yes, as many of us say the blessing of Jesus coming to the table with us, to be our guest we want Him present to enjoy our joy of a good meal even if it will only be a few hours before our stomachs will be wanting more, even if it is tasty left overs.

When we say that prayer and ask Jesus to be our guest, who is included with the OUR? Most of the time it is those of our family. The Psalmist writes what the Lord wanted him to write and that was that the one who fears the Lord will see his blessings in his wife and the children she bears. The Psalmist sees not just a couple children but a whole table, surrounded by children, like olive shoots.

This scene is also written about in the previous psalm, Psalm 127 where the title is: "Unless the Lord builds the house." In that psalm he writes: 3-5 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

He will not be put to shame, why. Why won't he be put to shame when he is face to face with enemies who have confronted him at the gate to the courtyard of his home? He won't be put to shame because he has a quiver full of arrows, children who know how to handle a bow and they have his back, have his training, have his backbone to stand up to anyone who would come against the family.

When we think of the Psalmist's expression of olive shoots around the table, we may have visions of a large family sitting down to eat around the table, enjoying their favorite piece of fried chicken, telling what went on during the day in school between bites. All sorts of things come up during those meals. Yes, there is the loving poking fun, there is the concern for one of the kids who had to deal with a challenge from the curriculum or maybe some teacher or student, there may even be a cheer come up when the kid who was struggling with an assignment can't wait her turn to tell of a great grade on that assignment.

Each gets to share. Dad and Mom look over the crowd and know each one of the kids intimately and know the challenges of each and what it takes for each to be encouraged in their lives. Our coming together is important in the training of how children will deal with life as Proverbs states: 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

So when the Psalmist sees the picture of a family with children all around the table, he knows that the topic of God and how the family handles life based on His will, will come up and be discussed and even questioned as life is relived over a meal.

When asked what a Dad would want from his children, what could be greater than that they too, would fear the Lord and want to do His will? Can you imagine what it will be like to be in heaven with them forever?

Some may say that they don't want to take the chance and have a child who chooses to go against God. They think it would be better to not be born and not have the possibility that hell awaits them. What a great fear that is but what is the upside of a large family? Each one of the family has a chance to have the Lord work in their lives to bring the Law and the Gospel to the people He places in their lives. They all have a

chance to experience the joy of seeing the Holy Spirit bring the light of the Gospel to another, one whom they will see in heaven, saved from the fires of hell, shining the light of Christ to those Jesus brings into their lives.

I was sent a survey the other day that talked of the decline in the number of people attending churches. It reminded me of a article put out by the synod of how there is a decline in church membership over the years. We can see it here in this congregation as well. We may look over the board out in the narthex with the names on it of those who have died over the years and realize each of us are going to die too, and when we do, who is going to come through the doors instead of us?

The article that I read earlier talked of the greatest reason for the church of the past to maintain and grow the church, even in past years, was not evangelism as we normally think of it but it was larger families. So that is why, when asked as to how many children I would have liked to have had, I responded with choosing the circle that coincided with 10 or more.

You might ask why didn't we have that many? It was because of the health of Cyndi during pregnancy. That may have been a limiter but what else came into play? Our society doesn't support large families.

You have all heard and may have used the phrase: "Don't you know how that happens" when someone says they are pregnant again after they already have the "normal" of two or maybe three children. The mindset of many who see a large family is that there is something wrong with them. Yet, what does the Word of God say? What is always the problem of the size of a family in the Bible? One of the greatest problems is a wife who is barren, who can't have children.

To not have children, for a woman who can't have children is a curse in the Bible. But a blessing is a quiver full or a table surrounded by many children. Job had all his children die in what seems was a tornado that took the house where they were meeting. It was a great tragedy when that happened but then the Lord blessed him, in the end, with another big family where he knew his children to the 4th generation.

There is the comment and thought that large families were needed on the farm in the past but that aren't thought to be needed anymore but what about missionaries in our communities, in our churches and throughout the world? Who is going to witness to others of Christ and what He has done for us and for the world? It is Christians. Where do most Christians come from? Families who trust in the Lord.

In a large family, kids have to do much of the work in a family. My grandmother was asked if it was difficult taking care of 13 children and she responded that it wasn't hard at all. No, she said, once the first kids were a little older, they took care of the younger ones while she had to take care of the baby.

Think about it, where are you more likely to find a spoiled child? In a single child home or in a family where there is a large number of kids?

Some say that raising kids is so expensive and yet what happens in larger families? Yes there may be a bigger food bill and there may not be a whole lot of extras but growing up in a family with 5 kids and usually one or two more or so, we thrived even not having everything that some others had. We thought of ourselves as blessed. How hard would it have been to have to do all the chores that needed to be done if you were the only one doing them?

We don't know exactly how many brothers and sisters Jesus had. The names of his half-brothers are listed, James, Joses, Juda and Simon even though we don't know His sister's names. If there were only two or three, that would make at least 7 or eight or even more children in that family. They seem to have began not believing in Him as the Christ but then we know of Jude and James, half brothers of Jesus who wrote books in the New Testament professing Jesus as Lord.

The psalmist points out the truth about families, a person who has a large family is blessed, is sitting down to eat of the fruit of his labors that go into taking care of a large family that grows up, like olive shoots around the table or arrows in the quiver who needs to stand up to enemies at the gate. Who wants only one or two children to have a person's back, why not an army?

We need to throw that false teaching that large families are too great a burden and look to the Lord and see all the benefits of a large family, a family in the Lord who may be stared at but all the time have a chance to proclaim the blessing of the Lord in their lives as they are a blessing to even more people.

Lord, forgive us for having been mislead to think ill of large families. You are being undermined in the easiest way for you to grow your church. May words never cross our lips or minds that would degrade those who are committed to your charge to Adam and Eve, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The earth isn't full yet and neither is heaven.