

Father Knows Best
Jer. 29:11

Good morning! Welcome to our Worship at the Park. It's a beautiful sunny day and thank God for giving us this wonderful weather. And thank you everyone for sharing this beautiful day with us. Say to the person next to you, "It's a beautiful day because you're here. God bless you!"

Being Father's Day, this message is short because I'm a father and I need a break. Father knows best, right? But actually, the Father I'm referring to in the title of this message is our Heavenly Father. More intimately, we can call him Father God. In fact, we can call him "Abba" or Daddy. "Abba" which appears in the Bible is the Aramaic word for daddy.

Our Father God knows best, not me, nor any fathers here. Our knowledge is limited and we can try to do our best but at the end of the day, we too, need to trust and learn from our Heavenly Father because he knows best. Our Heavenly Father is the father of Jesus. Even the Lord Jesus when he was on earth had to submit and be obedient to his heavenly Father.

Do you know the name of our heavenly Father? It's not Howard as some children believe. Why Howard? One day, a mother asked his children, "What is the name of our Father in heaven?" The youngest raised his hand and said, "Howard!" The mother was surprised. "Why did you say Howard, darling?" And the boy said, "Because isn't it we pray, 'Our Father who art in heaven, Howard be your name.'"

The child's heart is in the right place, but his mind is not. Fathers, it's your job to put your child's mind in the right place.

Anyway, Father God goes by the name of Jehovah or Yahweh in the Bible.

He has other names but Jehovah or Yahweh is the most common one found in the Bible. Our versions of the Bible, however, substitute Lord, all capitalized letters, for Jehovah. Why that is so is another story which I'll tackle in the future.

Please take out your outlines and let us read together Jeremiah 29:11.

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

The message I'm going to share with you this morning is for our fathers that they may know how to love the way God loves us. This message is also for some folks here who are celebrating milestones in their lives because they're either 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, or 60. How about 70, anybody? This is for them because God promises a good plan for them in the years ahead. And finally, this message is for anyone who needs to know that God loves them just the way they are.

Now, from the passage we just read. First of all,

1. God knows you inside out.

Nothing is hidden from God. He knows every part of your being. He created you. I'm a software developer. I write programs. I know what my programs do. I know their purpose. And even before I write them, I already had them in my mind. But most of the time I make mistakes. And many times I have to rewrite my programs.

God is more than a programmer. He is the Grand Designer and Creator of everything who doesn't make any mistakes. So, you're not a mistake. Yes, you have made many mistakes or you may feel like you're a mistake because people make fun of you or you feel inadequate but God made you just the way he intended you to be. You have a purpose in life. And God has a wonderful plan for your life. That's why our verse says, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord.”

God knows you more than you know yourself. He knew you when you were still in your mother's womb and, in fact, even before you were born. King David says in Psalm 139:13-16,

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

And when you were born until now, God still knows you. The beginning verses of Psalm 139 (1-5) say, “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.”

Because God knows you, it means that he is personal. Being personal, he wants to have a close relationship with you. He is real. He is unlike the gods of false religions who don't care about people. That's why we can call him to him anytime. He says, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” (Jer. 33:3) What you don't know God knows. He is omniscient. Because he is personal, he knows what you're feeling and he longs to give healing to any broken heart. The Bible says that he is our healer.

He also understands what you're going through. Your struggles, your anxieties, your problems. Nothing is hidden from him. But he wants you to come and be personal with him, too. A loving relationship is a two-way relationship. God longs for you to come to him, too.

Because God knows you, it means that he is present. He is not absent. He is always there for you. The Bible says, “The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” (Zeph. 3:17) He is with you, the verse says. He is always on guard, a mighty warrior who defends you and fights for you. When Joshua just became the leader of the Israelites after the death of Moses, he felt so nervous. But God said to him, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9) That is God’s word for you today if you’re feeling nervous and anxious and afraid. Just trust God’s presence in your life. That is true for every believer in God. Especially those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, because Jesus is himself God. Before he went to heaven after his death and resurrection, he promised his followers, “Surely I am with you always.” (Matthew 28:20)

Fathers, like God, your presence is needed by your children. Let me share with you an article I read about the importance of fatherhood, “...kids who grow up with a present, engaged dad are less likely to drop out of school or wind up in jail, compared to children with absent fathers and no other male caretakers or role models. When kids have close relationships with father figures, they’re less likely to have sex at a young age and tend to avoid other high-risk behaviors. They’re more likely to have high-paying jobs and healthy, stable relationships when they grow up. They also tend to have higher IQ test scores by the age of 3 and endure fewer psychological problems throughout their lives when fatherhood is taken seriously.” Then it continues, “When fathers are actively involved with their children, children do better,” explains Paul Amato, a sociologist who studies parent-child relationships at Pennsylvania State University. “All of this research suggests that fathers are important for a child’s development.”

<https://www.fatherly.com/health-science/science-benefits-of-fatherhood-dads-father-effect/>

So, don't underestimate the importance of your presence in your children's lives, dads. The more you are engaged with them, the more they become normal, well-rounded persons.

Yesterday, I bought a second-hand ping pong table because it's good for my health and my personal relationship with my children. I'm also playing board games with them. I realize I really need to spend a lot of time with them. I've been so busy I sometimes neglect this significant aspect.

Now, let's go to another thing we can learn about God in our passage.

2. He wants you to live abundantly and safely.

Our verse says, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you." I'm sure all of us here wants to live prosperous lives. Amen? Do you know that God wants to bless you and make you prosperous? God says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10) BTW, if I were a dentist, this would be my life verse.

What I'm trying to say is that God wants you to not lack anything. I believe in the verse I just read, God is saying, "Just receive whatever I'm going to give you because I'm going to give you everything...you need." Notice I said you need, not you want. I believe God is not someone who spoils anyone. If he spoils you, you might forget him. You might get abusive. The writer of Proverbs 30:8 says, "Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me. Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need." (Prov. 30:8 CSB). The writer is practical and biblical. In his wisdom, he knows that when God says to open your mouth so he can fill it, God means he will give you just to satisfy you. Your need for the moment.

Sadly, some people misinterpret it and teach that you can ask anything from the Lord, that you can name it and claim it, that God intends to give you health and wealth and prosperity always through material means.

God is a giver. No doubt about that. But he won't give excessively. Yes, he does that, too, but it's not for us to indulge in it. We have to give it back to God in terms of giving our tithes faithfully, in terms of helping those in need, in terms of giving to missions and outreach and contributing to other church-related efforts, in terms of making others know about Jesus. That's what prosperity is all about. The more we do this, the more God blesses you. We can never outgive God.

God also wants you to have peace of mind. He doesn't want to harm you or hurt you. He wouldn't punish you because of anything wrong you did. I used to think that way. Whenever things didn't go my way, I would immediately think that God was punishing me because of a sin in my life. And I would get angry with him and would feel like he didn't care. Most of the time I would blame him for my misery. But through the years I learned how God really loves me and has my best interests always at heart. He rejoices over me with singing! Didn't Zephaniah say that? He sings just like a father who sings to his little child because he dotes over the child. I imagine God singing, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, sapatos namin ay bagong shine". Oops, that's a boy scout song in the Philippines. But that's the picture I get.

In Psalm 139:17, it says, "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them, Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I am awake, I am still with you."

Have you ever tried to count the grains of sand on the seashore? For those of us who have tried it is absolutely impossible! There are so many in just a scoop of your hand that it becomes incomprehensible to think that we could even begin to count them.

In this scripture verse, the psalmist tells us that God's thoughts toward us even outnumber the grains of sand on the seashore! What imagery. The Father, who created you and who numbered all your days, is thinking about you all the time.

He never stops thinking about you...And they are not thoughts of condemnation and judgement, but thoughts of absolute love and adoration. How precious are His thoughts toward us. In our limited understanding, this is just too good to be true...but it is true. God is thinking about you right now!

So, stop thinking that God is like a cosmic cop who is watching your every move and ready to give you a big whack whenever you fall out of line. Friend, God loves you so much. He'll never act like that. He is kind and compassionate and will always forgive. The Bible says that his mercies are new every morning and his faithfulness is great.

Dads, are you always thinking of your children? Do you have their best interests at heart? Do you make it a point to bring them happiness always and do whatever you can for their benefit? The other day, I was talking to Kuya July. I was asking him to help me get the ping pong table which I saw on craigslist. And he mentioned that it was good I was doing it because, according to him, dads should always do their best to make their children happy. Of course, in a godly way. I didn't realize that words of wisdom would come from his mouth. Although I wish he made me happy by helping me. It was out of his control though. He was on-call. It was Kuya Alex who helped me anyway. Another dad who made me happy. But Kuya July made me happy with his words of wisdom.

Finally, the third thing we can learn about God's love in our verse is that

3. He offers you a bright future.

That is God's ultimate plan. He wants to give you a bright future. Maybe someone here is losing hope.

You are presently enjoying the fellowship and worship and looking forward to the sumptuous food afterwards, but you know that at the end of the day, your life seems to be on hold. Your future seems bleak and you don't want to go there. You wish that the future wouldn't come. You are behind in your payments for your rent, medical bills, school fees, you're in deep debt, you're feeling sickly, your spouse is unfaithful, you have damaged relationships, your job is in jeopardy, your boss or workmates are just impossible to get along with, your child is on drugs, your husband is gambling, and so on. You feel tense and nervous. You're losing hope.

Jesus says, "...with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26) That's why you must realize that **God offers you a life of endless possibilities**. Because he is God, he can turn things around and help you in your situation. The Bible says, and I'm sure many of us know this verse by heart. Let us recite together Romans 8:28 from memory, whatever version you have, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

God hasn't forgotten you. He has a purpose for your life. Some of us know what it is but some of us are still in the process of finding out. But definitely he has a purpose and a plan for your life. He didn't create you and then left you to your own devices. No, that would be cruel. We don't have the wisdom and knowledge to make it in our own power. The reason we're in a mess is because we can't control things and people. Only God has the power to put things back in order. Start trusting God and witness a miracle.

You know Josh Groban, right? I read an article entitled, "Josh Groban Walked Out Of A TV Interview To Stay True To His Faith." It was dated April 21, 2017. Let me share it with you.

Josh Groban walked out of a recent interview, proving that his career is as much about his character as it is his outstanding vocals. Multi-platinum star, Josh Groban, has won the world over with his boy-next-door charm and dynamic vocals. While his rise to fame has been quick, he hasn't let that go to his head. Josh is not shy about discussing his faith and attributes his careful career choices to his upbringing.

Josh Groban loved music and was frequently serenading his family as a child. Considered a musical prodigy, his interest in music led to Groban teaching himself to play the piano. Josh was introverted and quiet in school. He struggled to make connections and turned to music as his outlet.

Groban says, "My school life was very much a wandering experience. I was having trouble in school and I was not making a lot of friends...improvising on the piano and just coming up with melodies was an escape for me."

In 7th grade, Josh joined his middle school choir. It was there that his teacher discovered his voice and asked him to perform in a monthly cabaret.

Groban shared: "I invited my parents, and there were a bunch of kids there. That was the first time I really felt a kind of adoration. My mom was crying. The kids gave me a standing ovation. It was one of those 'Afterschool Special' moments."

God's plan for his life was starting to take shape as Josh was placed under the direction of vocal coach, Seth Riggs. Michael Crawford was unable to perform at the governor's inauguration. David Foster, famous producer and arranger, needed a stand in. Riggs happened to be good friends with Foster and sent him a recording of Josh singing "All I Ask of You" from Phantom of the Opera. It was Josh's first big break.

At 17, Josh was offered a huge opportunity. Celine Dion was set to rehearse for the 1999 Grammy's when her partner, Andrea Bocelli, couldn't make the rehearsal. David Foster asked Josh to rehearse Bocelli's part and fill in for the rehearsal. Groban was incredibly nervous and Foster had to convince him that he had the vocal ability to do it.

“This young man comes on stage almost going backward he was so scared,” Dion shared in an interview. “He took the microphone, and when he started to sing, he couldn’t be any more powerful than that... This kid was incredible!”

Just four short months after starting school at Carnegie Mellon University as a drama major, Groban dropped out to pursue a once-in-a-lifetime recording contract. From here his career has grown further than anyone could have expected.

For Josh Groban, his career is just part of his story. Born to a Jewish father and Norwegian mother, Josh was raised in a Christian household. His father converted when he married Groban's mother and they attended an Episcopalian Church. He is very open about discussing his belief in the importance of faith and how those early years shaped him.

Since those early foundation days, Groban keeps things in perspective. Staying humble and always encouraging others, Groban works with many charities and children's choirs. He works very hard to not have "celebrity" dictate his choices.

While Josh Groban generally stays out of the tabloids, he recently made quite the commotion after walking off set of a Jenny McCarthy interview. Initially shocking his fan base for having accepted to appear on McCarthy's debut show; it appears Groban's team wasn't prepared for the path the interview intended to take.

Reportedly, he read the list of prepared questions and decided the show wasn't the right fit, so Josh Groban walked out. Groban’s career has been built on singing uplifting pieces and being a light in Hollywood.

<https://www.godupdates.com/josh-groban-walked-tv-interview/>

Folks, just like what he did for Josh, God can do for you. I don't know your greatest fear, but don't be afraid, because Jesus is here. As I said, whatever you're going through, God knows that and he is working behind the scenes so that he will be glorified in the end. You just hold on and wait for his deliverance. The Psalmist says, "Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield." (Psalm 33:20)

God offers you a life of endless possibilities. God also offers you a life that is endless. Period.

Folks, that is the ultimate of ultimates. That's our greatest hope. That's our magnificent obsession. To be immortal, that's everyone's dream.

Have you heard of "Cryonics"? The term was coined in 1962, when the freezing of humans was first scientifically proposed by Michigan professor Robert Ettinger who wrote a book called "The Prospect of Immortality". According to Wikipedia, Cryonics is the low-temperature freezing (usually at $-196\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-320.8\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$; 77.1 K)) of a human corpse, with the hope that resuscitation may be possible in the future. It is regarded with skepticism within the mainstream scientific community and has been characterized as quackery. If you want to know more about it, go to cryonics.org.

Anyway, this organization is responsible for putting a number of people in a frozen state. Of course, for a big sum of money, between \$28,000 to \$200,000 . As of 2014, about 250 corpses have been cryogenically preserved in the U.S. I googled it and I found eight famous people who have been preserved when they died. People like Dr. James Bedford, a psychology professor at University of CA, Dick Clair Jones, a TV producer, actor, and writer, and Thomas K. Donaldson, a mathematician.

Meanwhile, around 1,500 people have signed up to have their remains preserved as well. Famous people like Simon Cowell, Britney Spears, Larry King, Paris Hilton, and Andrew Pombuena.

All these people want is immortality. They have cash. Tito Andrew has credit. The question is: Will it work?

Folks, there is a better plan for immortality. And that's knowing Jesus as your Lord and Savior. If there's anything to know about, this is it. If you know everything in the world, you have perhaps the best mind in the world, but you don't know Jesus, then you're still lost and will die, separated from God forever.

Having eternal life. That's God's promise to those who would put their faith in Jesus and no one else. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

That's God's ultimate plan. And this plan is offered to anyone who would believe that Jesus died for their sins and rose again on the third day. This is an offer that will expire only when you expire from this earth. Meaning, the offer always stands because as the Bible says God doesn't want anyone to perish. In 2 Peter 3:9, it says, "The Lord is not being slow in doing what he promised—the way some people understand slowness. But God is being patient with you. He doesn't want anyone to be lost. He wants everyone to change their ways and stop sinning."

But, if your life expires, then naturally, this offer expires as well, and therefore, you will lose all hope of ever getting to heaven.

As I conclude this message, I'd like to ask, "Would you like to receive this gift of eternal life? Would you like to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, the only one who died for your sins?"