

## Reflections on Ps. 112

By Rev. Dr. Kenneth J. Barnes

Some thirty years ago I had the privilege of receiving what may have been the best theological education in the world. I attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the 1980s when “giants” roamed the hallways. Roger Nicole, Meredith Klein, Gordon Fee, Richard Lovelace, John Jefferson Davis, Doug Stuart, may not be household names, but in the worlds of theology and biblical studies, trust me when I say that they were (and in some cases still are) “giants” in their fields. They had an enormous impact on my life and are partly responsible for me being a seminary professor today.

While I am deeply indebted to their Christian witness, their wisdom and their teaching its quite ironic that the most salient piece of theological insight I have ever received came not from one of them, but from my then four-year old daughter Julia, one year after graduating from seminary!

The story goes like this: one evening after putting her to bed, as was my custom, I bent over to wish her “sweet dreams” with a goodnight kiss on the forehead. As I went to turn out the light however, she stopped me in my tracks with the simple words, “Daddy, I love Jesus” (a proclamation every Christian parent yearns to hear their children utter).

“You do”? I queried, sensing the onset of a teachable moment, “and why do you love Jesus”? Because she said – “Jesus knows what’s under the bed”!

As soon as I heard those words, I knew that it was indeed a teachable moment and that I was the one who had just been “schooled”. Never in my life, including my three years at Gordon-Conwell, my four years at Kings College London, my ten years in Oxford or my three years at Ridley Melbourne, has anyone ever summed up so succinctly and so perfectly the essence of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

We believe in him, so we can trust in him, and we can live our lives with courage and conviction. Having the assurance that Jesus is in control gives us the freedom to live fruitful lives of grace and generosity, especially among the poor and the oppressed.

During my years in the marketplace, I witnessed firsthand “the good, the bad and the ugly” of global capitalism. I have seen people brought out of poverty and given the opportunity to flourish, because of capitalism’s unmatched ability to create wealth, and no country has benefitted more in this regard than our own. Unfortunately, I have also seen the exploitation of the poor and the weak for the benefit of the rich and the powerful.

As a Christian, I must speak out against economic injustice, because God speaks out against it and because God demands that we, the “upright” who have been mightily blessed by God must act accordingly. Listen again to the words of the Psalmist:

“Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,  
for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.

Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely,  
who conduct their affairs with justice...

...Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear...

...They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor,  
their righteousness endures forever;  
their horn will be lifted high in honor”.

Of course, the Psalmist also tells us that such ideas “vex” the wicked, because they just don’t get it. All they want to do is make money and as much of it as they possibly can, regardless of who or what is hurt in the process. They live in a state of constant tension between greed and fear; greed because their appetites are insatiable, but mostly fear because they can’t stand the thought of losing all that they have gained. Yet Jesus has warned us, “what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world but lose his soul”? (Mk. 8:36) What indeed?

In simple fact, there’s no reason for Christians not to live graciously. There’s no reason not to give generously. There’s no reason to worry about the stock market, or our pension funds, or anything else tomorrow may bring, because we love Jesus – and “Jesus knows what’s under the bed”!