

A LITURGY FOR

Giving Your Children Bad News

JANEL DAVIS

O Lord, in a few moments
I have to tell my kids one of the worst things
I hope they will ever hear.

Have mercy on us, O Lord.
I know you love them more than I
could ever love them.
Help me remember that truth
as I watch the pain cross their faces,
and also in the coming months
as I shepherd them through the grief
that is sure to follow.

May this moment of awful revelation
not become a memory that might uproot
their budding faith, but rather one that plants it
deeper within them, turning their young hearts
to you in the midst of their dismay and giving
those gospel seeds the resiliency they need to
flourish for a lifetime, no matter the suffering or
the circumstances they experience in their lives.

Help me not to fall apart as I tell them, Lord.
Help me hold my emotions together so that
I don't scare them, but also let me open enough
of a window into my own sorrow that they
might see that it is okay and good to grieve,
to weep, and to express their feelings.

Sovereign Lord, this news is so awful
my children likely won't even understand
some parts of it. And I'm not sure quite
how to explain it. Grant me wisdom, insight,
and understanding to communicate
just enough that they might comprehend
this heartbreak in an age-appropriate way,
but also such that no horrid,
graphic details would lodge
in their dreams
and imaginations.

I rely on you, Holy Spirit, to be
my counselor, nudging me toward
what to tell and what to hold back.
Let me be sensitive and responsive
to your voice that I might
in this moment become a conduit
of your wisdom and
your love for my children.

There will almost certainly be a loss
of innocence in learning of this news.
My children will begin to understand
hard truths about life and humanity.
Till now I've tried to guard their hearts
from things too dark for them to deal with.
I've tried to show them the flourishing
and the beauty of your good creation.
Now they will also hear of the horrors that
followed on the heels of the fall.

Lord, may they know that you are still good.
May they better see why the news of your
coming kingdom is such a great hope.
May they begin to learn how you will subvert
even this evil, somehow using it for the
good of your people and for your glory.

I entrust their innocence to your hands.

Lord, our great Healer—
redeem the trauma this brings
to our lives. Let your redemption be
active in ways we cannot even imagine.
Redeem the shock and the wounds
we will feel. And redeem the wreckage
in the lives of those affected most directly.

Do not let this trauma lodge for long
in our bodies, spirits, or minds, O Lord.
Make us resilient. Let our faith become more
rooted and fierce in the face of storm and
darkness. Give us a grit that would glorify you,
using even this experience to make our lives
more sheltering for others in their sorrows.

Hold us, heal us, and comfort us, Lord Jesus.
We entrust you with all that is good
and all that is awful in our lives.
Be near us in the hard conversation
soon to happen. Be our balm and our
guide, our counselor and our shepherd,
in the hours and days and months that follow.

Amen.