

## DEVOTIONAL 5 Matthew 6:25-34

by Matt Humphrey

<sup>25</sup>Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? <sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. <sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." – MATTHEW 6: 25-34

Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life." These are powerful words that drive us to focus on our way of operating in this world. Many have interpreted this passage to imply we need to move away from "worldly" concerns (food, drink, clothing) toward "heavenly" ones (the Kingdom of God). However, this view instantly gets turned on its head when we realize Jesus teaches the chief exemplars of such "heavenly" character are down-to-earth creations – the birds and the lilies.

With these strong words, Jesus calls his disciples to a new Kingdom way of life that is connected to Creation and the Creator. The reference to the birds of the air has a close echo to Psalm 104: "All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time." Every created being depends on the gifts of Creation – its abundance of food, water, and shelter – to live a blessed, healthy life.

But worry consumes us: "What will we eat?" Worry causes us to forget our God and begin to see ourselves as the centre of our world. Jesus' words are a potent reminder and a reorientation to the world God has made, in which He is at the centre.

"But what about our clothing?" Well, says Jesus, "Even Solomon in all his splendour was not dressed like one of these little flow-

ers." Our anxieties about life are not "natural" at all, but are the consequence of living as though God does not exist.

"For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Why bring the pagans into this? Because in a world absent of God it is sensible to "run after all these things." But in a world "Charged with the Grandeur of God," to use Gerard Manley Hopkins's phrase, God's creatures are called to receive His gifts and not to worry.

Is Jesus calling us to move away from "earthly" matters toward "heavenly" ones, as so many have suggested? Well, in a way, yes! Jesus calls his followers to be reoriented from a self-centred universe (the worldly) toward a God-centred one. Food and clothing are important and necessary for survival, but when we are self-focused we will find ourselves on the path to worry, doubt and relational brokenness.

On the other hand, God's "heavenly" universe is the way of righteousness – living rightly in His Creation. Seeking the Kingdom does not mean we will escape the worries and concerns of this world. Rather, it means that we are reoriented towards the world in ways that reflect God's love for all creatures, and that set aside the self-centred preoccupations which deprive our neighbours of their needs.

*"Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

