

Consider the Flowers: *A Biblical Response to Worry*

Yesterday, the weight of our present situation seemed to drain all the oxygen out of my office. Hearing the news of another person with the virus, to discovering that yet another needed item is out of stock at the grocery store, I felt as if I was suffocating. Jumping out of my chair, I went outside for fresh air. As I walked around the confines of our backyard, I noticed our daffodils. It was at that moment the Lord brought to mind these words from the Sermon on the Mount: “Why do you worry about clothing? Think about how the flowers of the field grow; they do not work or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these!” (Matthew 6:28-29).

Indeed, worry, in many ways, functions as a virus. It is highly contagious, quick to immobilize its host, and deadly if not addressed. However, the good news is there is an antidote for this spiritual contagion. Our Lord, Himself, disclosed it to His followers in these well-loved words preached on a Galilean hillside nearly 2,000 years ago. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus addresses the following areas of life that often lead to anxiety: (1) what we will eat or drink, (2) what we will wear, and (3) how we can sustain our lives. These various areas only seem to be accentuated in this precarious time in which we find ourselves. In all three of these facets of vulnerability, Jesus challenges His listeners to look at God’s creation (i.e., the birds, the flowers, and the grass). In each of these examples, God’s provision and care is observed. In the Book of Job, we are reminded that God’s creation testifies to how the Lord cares for it. Job 12:7-10 asks,

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.”

Of course, we should not be surprised that God’s creation has much to teach us. In this massive flannel graph, “the heavens are telling the glory of God” (Ps 19:1). Viewing those daffodils in my backyard, God’s artistry brought a wave of solace and encouragement. As noted by Jesus, if the Lord will take care of temporary things, such

as flowers and wild grasses, then will He not care for His children?! Or as Jesus asks, “Aren’t you more valuable than they are?” In the Greek, the question expects for us to answer with a resounding “Yes, we are more valuable!” Indeed, our Savior gave His life for *us*, not for the flowers.

What is more amazing to me is Jesus’ words in verse 32. Not only does the Heavenly Father provide for us, He knows what we need. In the midst of this present chaos we are living in, I find my prayers instructing the Lord on what I view as my needs. At the end of the day, my prayers are sadly infected with worry. Instead of advising the Lord, I need to rest in His goodness and recognize that my Father knows what is best. After all, the Sermon of the Mount began with a reminder of God’s provisions (e.g., “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”).

Jesus’ words on the Sermon on the Mount instruct us that “anxiety about the concrete necessities of life is incompatible with the all-encompassing nature of the claims of the kingdom of God” (J. Nolland, *Matthew*, 307). This is why Jesus called those who worry “people of little faith”. Sadly, the term is used three additional times in Matthew’s Gospel to describe disciples who fail to trust in the Lord. Matthew 6 is clear: worry is wrong because it fails to trust God as the provider.

So what is the antidote to worry? Jesus states in verse 33: “seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness.” While not dismissing the need to provide and care for those around us, our entire mindset needs to be focused on the main thing—seeking to glorify the Lord in our lives. Interestingly, after declaring God’s revelation in the creation, Psalm 19 turns our attention to the Scriptures. It is here that “the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart . . . the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever” (v. 8). A heart seeking after the things of the Lord is assured peace, comfort, wisdom, and even joy. Our situation may not change immediately, but our perspective will. Our Heavenly Father never promised to remove the valleys, but He did promise to walk through those valleys with His children. This is why Jesus can state, “and all these things shall be added unto you” (v. 33). I would argue this promise is not just referencing the basic necessities of life, but it also implies a removal of anxiety.

Psalm 19 closes with this glorious declaration: “O Lord, my rock and my redeemer” (v. 14). We must not let worry rob us of the joy of resting in the arms of our Heavenly Father—a Father who cares intensely, knows exhaustively, and provides thoroughly. If in doubt, consider the flowers!

Verses Addressing Fear and Worry

Isaiah 41:10: “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 43:1: “But now, this is what the Lord says . . . Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine.”

Psalm 23:4: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

Psalm 46:1: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

Psalm 55:22: “Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fail.”

Psalm 56:3: “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.”

Philippians 4:6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 1:7: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

1 Peter 5:6-7: “Humble yourselves, then, under God’s mighty hand, so that He will lift you up in His own good time. Leave all your worries with Him, because He cares for you.”