



Kirkcaldy and East Fife Parish Church of Scotland

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Reading: Matthew 6 25-34

Sermon: 7 March 2010

Text verses for the sermon ²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Sermon

After reading this text over and over, I did not understand it at all. I did not understand what Jesus really meant. In one sentence he tells his listeners not to worry and in the next that “each day brings troubles of its own”.

And then it dawned upon me. What He was trying to tell his listeners and us is that God provides in many ways. He looks after creation and sustains everything. We as humans need to trust Him unconditionally just like nature does. Then He explains this by means of a very powerful picture namely that of the lilies. He says to his listeners and us to look at the lilies of the field. In those days these lilies were actually arums that could be eaten. In times of poverty they used to cut the leaves, then boil them in water while emptying the water several times to remove toxic substances. Then they fried the leaves by using olive oil, according to a recent study done in Palestine of edible wild plants. But that is not all. They also ate the **roots** of this plant which they had to dig out from the desert sand. So the arums were not only beautiful plants to look at. They were also plants that provided sufficient nutrition in order for people to survive. God created the lilies in order for people to survive. He sustains the lilies despite the desert like conditions. He provides also for them to grow.

Jesus is urging his followers that they must first seek the kingdom of God. He is actually telling them that they need to focus on the things that they really need in life and not necessarily the things that they want. They need the presence of God in everything they do. Sometimes they have to trust him unconditionally like the lilies who He sustains

despite the desert like conditions. They must prioritise and give God first priority in everything they do. God will provide in all their needs!

Jesus assures also that when they are experiencing difficult and trying times, God will help them. Even when days are hard and life is difficult He will be there. He knows His children's needs like He knows the needs of the lilies that grow in the most unsatisfactory conditions!

To me this picture of the wild lilies reminds me vividly that right now there are daffodil bulbs waiting to come into bud which we can't see. But although we can't see them, we know, YES we TRUST that they are there. I guess it is like this with everything else in life. There are things that we cannot see but just need some trusting on our part. Sometimes we **want** so many things but God knows what we really need. He sees further than what our eyes can see. He knows of all the dangers on our pathways.

God knew that we needed his kingdom, his presence in everyday life. He provided us with a most precious gift namely Jesus who suffered, died, was buried and was resurrected in order for us to live as people freed from the bondage of sin. He ascended to heaven to make it possible for us to live in this life with hope. He provided for us a new life to look forward too - One without tears and suffering - A life where God will reign supreme.

God also knew that we couldn't survive on our own. We needed a hand to guide us. He provided by giving us his Holy Spirit to mature in our faith. God actually provided everything that we really **need**. Sometimes we have to get down on our knees, and "dig" into life itself to understand his provision and mercy. We have to look at the bigger picture and trust God to know. He knows better.

Life is not simple and most of the time it is a constant struggle to make sense of everything that happens to us. Sometimes it is like the people in Palestine who have to dig really deep in the desert sand to find the roots of the lilies. Sometimes you and I have to suffer in order to understand clearly why things have happened to us. Sometimes others suffer and then by the grace of God we can help them because we know what it is like. Sometimes we get impatient with God but need to be just more

trusting especially if we think of the daffodils that will surely come. And just in the case of the daffodils, we know after every trying situation, after a long winter, there will be some things happening to us that are meaningful and full of God's blessings.

The crux of our lives as followers of God is: He will provide in His own time and on His own terms because He knows better!

We need to be realistic in our discernment of the things that we really need and the unnecessary things that we want! In Africa we used to say: if a door closes in your face a new journey starts to find the open window! God will provide what we need and not necessarily what we **want**! But we must trust him enough to know it will be for the best. We cannot pray for a Mercedes Benz if we do not have a valid driving licence.

It reminds me of something that happened in Africa. There was a very poor woman who did not have running water and saved her whole life for a water tank. But she wanted a big one to provide for her whole community. She really struggled for years to get enough money to buy one. One day eventually she gathered enough money to buy one. She had to be realistic because the one she could afford was just big enough to provide for own family. She invited all her family members and neighbours to celebrate with her. But that evening something tragic happened. Someone stole her hard earned water tank! She was against the ground with sorrow. She could not understand how God could allow such a thing to happen!

Then as it was Christmas someone wrote to a radio station telling this very tragic story of this woman who tried to do good and then someone robbed her of the precious life saving water tank!

A few days later someone heard her story on the radio and was so moved by it that he donated a water tank big enough to help her whole community!

I guess that is precisely how God sometimes provides. In the small things, through trivial situations and after long, long winters of pain, suffering and hardship!

May we look at life and its worries with a new perspective, a "DAFFODIL perspective"

AMEN