

The Parable of Fowls and Lilies

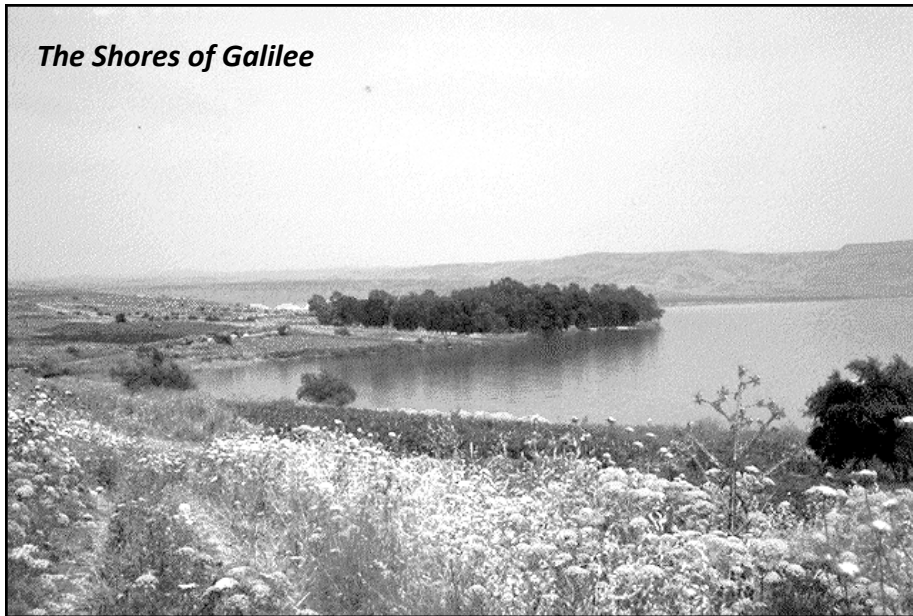
Mark 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31



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Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31

⇒ **Introduction:** As with the previous two parables, the ever observant Son of the Creator draws lessons from every facet of his Father’s handiwork; whether from earth or sky, sea or land, flora or fauna, the way of God is there. Jesus spent most of his life growing up in the rural village of Nazareth that lay between Mt. Carmel and the Sea



of Galilee. Hills, streams, long flowing meadows, farmers tending their flocks and fields, fisherman repairing their nets and the quiet life of a small village filled his days. With nature beckoning all around him, this gave him the advantage of solitude and opportunity for meditation upon the Word without all the distractions of a bustling city life. This is a lesson for all of God’s servants—take time for solitude and meditation upon the Word (**Psa. 19:14; Psa. 104:34; Psa. 119:97-99**).

◆ During his ministry the hills and shores of Galilee were also familiar and called Jesus away many times from the thronging multitude that desired to benefit, only in a temporal way, from some miracle he would perform. But Jesus was seeking for a higher goal for his hearers; he was seeking for a higher

thought than the mere practical or obvious things that worry us from day to day; *“what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.”* Indeed, he was exhorting his hearers to separate themselves from such lowly and common cares of this life, and to Trust in Yahweh alone as *“He giveth all”*.

- ◆ *“Three times in these verses he says, ‘Do not be anxious’. Our A.V. has ‘Take no thought,’ a translation which today can mislead. In the seventeenth century ‘though’ meant ‘anxious care’; and the R.V. translates ‘Be not anxious’; in homely speech we would say, ‘Do not worry’.”* (Parables of the Messiah, p.29) Worry over matters that we can not control will age us beyond our years, although this does not mean we should lay all concern aside for the sake of peace of mind. Rather, all things must be observed through the lens of the Eternal Spirit (only possible by prayerful consideration of, and familiarity with, our Bible), and then we shall have peace, knowing that all things will work for our good as we seek Yahweh's will.
- ◆ Asaph the Seer wrote in the Psalms on this very principle; how that the wicked and ungodly, from all outward appearances, seem to prosper endlessly, but that the righteous seem not so, and that such appearances, when not kept in the proper perspective, can cause us to loose sight of what is truly important.

A Psalm of Asaph.

“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other

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men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors...” (Psa. 73:1-19).

⇒ **Consider the Ravens:** Our Lord now chooses out two symbols, the fowls and the lilies, to illustrate Yahweh's mercy to all mankind, and particularly, His children by the spirit of adoption. The first is the symbol of the fowls.

- ◆ **The reference in Matthew's Gospel says “consider the fowls of the air...”** from the Greek, *peteinon* (πετεινόν, *a flying animal, a fowl*), while Luke's Gospel says “consider the ravens...” from the Greek, *korax* (κόραξ, from *korennumi, to cram, glut, sate, eat enough, full*). We might first enquire, “why were two different words used by the Gospel writers?” Matthew's Gospel was written primarily to the Jewish believers of the first century; those who were of the stock of Abraham. Fowls would be familiar to the Jewish believer as the least offering of sacrifice allowed under the law of Moses (**Lev. 1:14-17**), yet the dove comes into view much earlier in Genesis where Noah sends forth the dove from the Ark (**Gen. 8:8-12**). At first the dove returned with no sign of rest and Noah put forth his hand to receive the dove even as Yahweh's hand is stayed to protect His Heritage. “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (*Matt. 6:31*).
- ◆ Returning to the account in Genesis, after seven days the dove was again sent forth and returned with an olive branch. At last, after seven days more, the dove returned not again. The dove in this context presents a symbol of the ecclesia in its various stages of development; first having no rest for its labors; then the evidence of fruit in the seventh day of Sabbath rest in which Yahweh, His son and the ecclesia will be glorified and at long last the dove, or ecclesial bride, will be set free, receiving immortality with sin and death having been destroyed in all aspects. If we are of faith, we will recognize that Yahweh will care for us throughout this process of refinement.
- ◆ We later see the dove associated with the Abrahamic covenant as one of five animals parted and offered to Yahweh as a covenant sacrifice (**Gen. 15:9-10**). As five in the number of grace, and as the dove is elsewhere connected with the true bride at long last redeemed (**Song. 5:2; 6:9**), we see that by Yahweh's grace He has provided for the bride, “*thy turtledove,*” a savior upon whom was poured the spirit of grace and power in the form of a dove (*Matt. 3:16*). As the messenger of the covenant Yahshua (Jesus the Christ) was the forerunner of all who are poor in

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this world, but rich in faith; in symbol, a dove. Again, like Noah reaching forth from the ark, He will receive His bride and redeem them from the “*multitude of the wicked*”. Our Lord told those of his generation that there would no sign be given them but the sign of Jonah, and Jonah, or *Yonah*, means “Dove”. And so, even as our Lord was raised up, the Saints from all ages past will likewise be raised up from “*the dark places of the earth,*” the memorial graves where the ancients of the covenant have slept for these thousands of years.

- ◆ Under the Law of Moses, we find the dove associated with the sin offering. Leviticus 14:22 records: “*And two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get; and the one shall be a sin offering, and the other a burnt offering.*” From the Leviticus expositor we quote:

“The birds designated take the place of the lambs mentioned in v. 10. ...The dove or *yonah* (from a verb signifying to *afflict, oppress*) represented the lamb in bird life. *The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge* states: ‘The dove is universally allowed to be one of the most beautiful objects in nature. The brilliancy of her plumage, the splendor of her eye, the innocence of her look, the excellence of her disposition, and the purity of her manners, have been the theme of admiration and praise in every age. To the snowy whiteness of her wings, and the rich golden hues that adorn her neck, the inspired Psalmist alludes in most elegant strains (**Psa. 68:13**). The voice of the dove is particularly tender and plaintive, and bears a striking resemblance to the groan of a person in distress; to which the inspired bards frequently allude (**Isa. 38:14; 59:11; Ezek. 7:16**). Her native dwelling is in the caves or hollows of the rock, allusions to which also occur in the Sacred Writings (**Song 2:14; Jer. 48:28**). Her manners are as engaging as her form is elegant, and her plumage rich and beautiful. She is the chosen emblem of simplicity, gentleness, chastity, and feminine timidity. For these reasons probably doves were chosen as offerings by Yahweh’.”

- ◆ Yahweh knows His doves, not from the outward appearance, not from the mere physical or personality characteristics from which a man might judge, but from the Word instilled in ones heart that makes them, as regarding their faithful character, *as a bird that lifts upon the Spirit Word away from the earth and all things carnal which are from below.*

⇒ **As distinct from Matthew’s record, Luke’s Gospel says “consider the ravens...”** Luke’s Gospel was written primarily to Gentile believers of the first century ecclesia. Ravens in particular would have been more appropriate to a Gentile audience because such birds were unclean according to the Law of Moses (**Lev. 11:13-15**). It would have been reassuring to them, those who were considered to be unclean by Jewish standards, that is, the Gentiles, that Yahweh cares for them as well, though not of the Abrahamic stock according to the flesh. We believe therefore, that the record of Luke was teaching that in addition to Yahweh’s grace being upon the just as well as the unjust in general, that the Gentiles, as covenanted believers, would also fall under the particular care of Yahweh.

- ◆ “Consider,” says the spirit, the Raven. “Consider,” from the Greek *katanoeo* (κατανοέω), means “*to fully observe,*” which eliminates any possibility of a mere casual observation as one might make of a bird just flying by. from the Greek roots *kata* (*according as, as touching, after the manner of*) and *noieo* (*comprehend, heed, understand*), we may be confident



ELIJAH BY THE BROOK CHERITH.—1 Kings xvii. 4.

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in the Spirit's choice of words that the symbol of the raven was intended to give comfort to those of Gentile stock, that the Messiah, the Lord Jesus the Christ, was indeed given as "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32; I Tim. 2:7).

- ◆ Yahweh used ravens to feed Elijah indicating that he would be served by a Gentile woman (**I Kings 17**); an ultimate foreshadowing that the messenger of the covenant, even Yahweh's Son, would open the way of salvation to the Gentiles, and that, in turn, the Gentiles would serve both Israel and Yahweh (**Isa. 49:23; Psa. 72:9-13**).
- ◆ The meaning of "raven" in the Greek, again, due to its voracity, is "to cram, glut, sate, eat enough, full" and does not speak well of those whose "god is their belly...who mind earthly things" (**Phil. 3:19; cp. 1 Pet. 4:3**). But, as regarding those who are cleansed through baptism and the Word, they will be a part of that future age described by Paul to the Romans as "the fullness of the Gentiles" coming in. At that time, the Gentile dusk (Heb. **oreb**, a raven) will be over, and the new millennial dawn will have arrived without fail. For then Jesus, as with Joseph of old, will be the great provider and savior for all mankind.



Anemone coronaria

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⇒ **Consider the Lilies of the field:** Our Lord now turns to the lilies of the field to draw another lesson of how Yahweh is the omnipotent creator and sustainer of life here and now, and in the Age to come. Jesus grew up in the northern regions of Judea where the "Crown anemone" or "lily" (thought to be *Anemone coronaria*), blooms in mid winter covering the hills, valleys and even the northern tip of the Negev desert in a spectacular display.

- ◆ *Anemone coronaria* is one of the most renowned and beloved flowers in Israel. The modern Hebrew word for Anemone is Cala, which means "bride," which is appropriate to its use as found in the Bible.
 - ◇ **I Kings 7:15-22**— the Pillars of Jachin and Boaz
 - ◇ **2 Chron. 4:5**—The Brazen Sea
 - ◇ **Song of Sol. 2:1-2**—The bride-lily among thorns
 - ◇ **Song. 2:16; 6:2-3**—The beloved in his garden
 - ◇ **Hosea 14**—Israel shall grow as the lily
- ◆ A very common perennial with beautiful showy flowers with 5 to 6 petals in many colors (red, white, pink, purple and blue, 25 colors in all), the "lily" appears to be an apt representative of covenanted saints, having diverse backgrounds but each one appearing after the dew or rain, then tracking the sun's movement in the sky, capturing the light and warmth in the cold season of Gentile times.
- ◆ "Consider these multitudinous flowers of my Father's creation," the Master is saying. "Have they not been provided for? Have they not received the dew and the rain? (**Deut. 32:1-3; Prov. 16:15; Isa. 26:19**) Have they not received light of the sun? (**Psa. 4:6; Psa. 36:9; Psa. 37:6; Isa. 9:2; John 1:7**) Have they not also been clothed with unmatched beauty exceeding even Solomon in all his glory?"

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“How much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith,” and such “clothing” will not merely amount to the temporal needs of this life, but shall be raiment of glory unspeakable in the Age to Come (**2 Cor. 5:1-4; Isa. 61:10-11; Zech. 3:4-5; Rev. 10:1; Rev. 19:14**).

- ◆ The Master also takes note how these plants appear in bloom but for a moment and then are gone; *“which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven.”* Our lives are, according to the Psalmist, as *“a tale that is told,”* and a short one at that. As such the lesson continues that we might number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom (**Psa. 90; Isa. 40:1-8**).

- ◆ **Summary:**

“How simply does Jesus see in these things the hand of the Father in heaven. The world is God’s world, full of evidence that He cares for it; and Jesus argues from the smaller to the greater—God cares for His children.

“The lesson would be misapplied if it were made an excuse for carelessness or indifference about providing necessary things. It is anxiety, not diligence, that is reproved. ‘Take no thought’ does not mean thoughtlessness. The plant that grows is busy in all its parts—roots, leaves and flowers; more obvious the industry of the birds in seeking their food, in gathering materials for their nests, and in the untiring labors to feed their young. Yet all this is done with freedom from anxiety.

“In effect, Jesus says that anxious efforts to store for the future imply a trust in wealth which is really a worship of mammon, or in Paul’s words, ‘Covetousness which is idolatry’. Men who do not know God act in that way: ‘after these things do the Gentiles seek’: but men who know God know also that He knows their need. Jesus sums up the lesson: ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you’ (Matt. 6:33); and gives the wise counsel that each day’s cares are sufficient enough for that day; the cares of today and tomorrow—a double load—make a burden that taxes the strength, and distracts the mind from essential things.” (Parables of the Messiah, by John Carter, p. 31-32).