

## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

### BIRDS

#### EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

##### *Introducing the Gospel*

*The way of faith (Matthew 6: 25-34)*

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus advocates the way of faith as the antidote to worry and anxiety. In two important images, Jesus invites his listeners to learn from the birds of the air and from the lilies of the field. In contrast with men and women, the birds seem to live uncomplicated lives, and yet God takes care of them. We should learn from their example and put our faith in God.

The image to stimulate reflection on Jesus' invitation to consider the birds of the air is *birds*.

##### *Core extract from the Gospel (Matthew 6: 25-26; for reflection throughout the week)*

Jesus said, 'Do not worry about your life,  
what you will eat or what you will drink,  
or about your body, what you will wear.  
Is not life more than food,  
and the body more than clothing?  
Look at the birds of the air;  
they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns,  
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.  
Are you not of more value than they?'

##### *Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)*

Heavenly Father,  
you care for the birds of the air,  
feeding and clothing them with your love.  
Help us to know how much more  
you care for us your children,  
that we may place our faith in you;  
we make our prayer in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

**READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL**

**Matthew 6: 25-34**

**Do Not Worry**

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

## ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

### *Dwelling with the text (Matthew 6: 25-34)*

Begin to explore Matthew's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about the way of faith by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

### *Thinking and talking*

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you make of Jesus' invitation to look at the birds of the air?
- What do you make of Jesus' invitation to consider the lilies of the field?
- How do you understand Jesus' teaching about worry and anxiety?
- Why does Jesus address his listeners as 'you of little faith'?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

### *Using your Bible*

Explore parallel teaching in Luke's Gospel.

- Luke 12: 22-31

Explore Matthew's refrain about people of little faith.

- Matthew 8: 26
- Matthew 14: 31
- Matthew 16: 8
- Matthew 17: 20

Explore images of God feeding the birds of the air in the Old Testament.

- Job 38: 41
- Psalm 147: 9

Explore Solomon in all his glory.

- 1 Kings 10: 4-7

### ***Exploring online***

Widen your exploration of Matthew's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about the birds of the air by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Consider the birds of the air commentary
- Consider the lilies of the field commentary
- Images of birds

### ***Drawing on experience***

The image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is *birds*. Draw on your experience of birds. For example:

- Have you watched birds in flight?
- Have you studied wild flowers growing in the fields?
- How do you feel about learning from the birds and flowers?

What have you learned from Jesus' invitation to consider the birds of the air?

### ***Creating and making***

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Matthew's invitation to consider the birds of the air or the image of birds.

- Make a poster of birds in flight.
- Make a collage of different types of birds.
- Collect recordings of bird song.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus' teaching about the birds of the air or the image of birds.



## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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