**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

**BIRDS**

**EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY’S THEME**

***Introducing the Gospel***

*The birds and the lilies (Matthew 6: 25-33)*

The first main block of teaching in Matthew’s Gospel (chapters 5, 6 and 7 known as the Sermon on the Mount) presents these two memorable vignettes in which Jesus invites his listeners to look at the birds of the air and to consider the lilies of the field. For Jesus the birds of the air and the lilies of the field spoke clearly of God’s grace. God who provides generously for the birds and for the lilies provides with even greater generosity for the human race, created in God’s image.

Our image to stimulate reflection on God’s grace and on God’s generosity is *birds*.

***Core extract from the Gospel (Matthew 6: 26, 28-30; for reflection throughout the week)***

Jesus said,

‘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?

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,

will God not much more clothe you?’

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

God of grace,

you care for the birds of the air,

feeding and clothing them with your love.

Help us to know your love and care

that we may always place our faith in you;

for you are a gracious and generous God,

now and always.

Amen.

**READING NEXT SUNDAY’S GOSPEL**

**Matthew 6: 25-33**

**The birds and the lilies**

‘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.

**ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

***Dwelling with the text (Matthew 6: 25-33)***

Begin exploring Matthew’s teaching about the generosity of God’s grace 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 reasons does this passage give for not worrying?
* What evidence does Matthew cite for God’s generosity?
* What is meant by striving first for the Kingdom of God?
* Why is worrying detrimental to seeking the Kingdom of God?
* What does this narrative say for us today?

***Using your Bible***

Explore other passages in the Bible that speak of God’s generosity.

* Exodus 34: 6
* Psalm 33: 17-21
* Psalm 65: 9-14
* Psalm 68: 7-10
* Psalm 145: 5-12
* Luke 15: 22-24
* Ephesians 1: 7-9

***Exploring online***

Widen your exploration of God’s generosity by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

* God is generous
* Divine grace meaning
* Images of birds

***Drawing on experience***

The image to stimulate reflection on God’s generosity is *birds*. Draw on your experience of birds. For example:

* When has your attention and imagination been caught by looking at the birds?
* Where would you go to experience the magic of birds?
* What thoughts have been set running in your mind by watching birds?

What have you learned about birds and about God’s generosity?

***Creating and making***

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Matthew’s invitation to look at the birds of the air.

* Create a collage of images of birds.
* Make origami birds.
* Create a display of Bible texts about God’s grace and generosity.
* Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of birds or God’s generosity.



**EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

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.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

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 and the St Christopher’s College Trust.



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