



SERMON/BIBLE STUDY

The Sunday of the Lilies

BY REV. ERICH FICKEL

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob rescued His children from the mighty Egyptians, brought them safely through the sea and led them through the desert wilderness. They ate manna from heaven and feasted on fattened quail. Without toil or sweat, without thorns and thistles, Israel was filled with heavenly food. Yet their appetites were not quenched and they complained bitterly against God. Rescued from slavery and fed on bread from heaven, without a need in the world, they wanted more — something new, something different, from someone else.

The closed circle of man's misguided materialism is not new — aspirations become wants, wants become needs and self-gratification becomes a bottomless pit of self-deception. We speak loudly of the great good we would do for the Church, for our congregation, for Christian missions, if only we had more. Silently we think only of the personal leisure new wealth would bring.

It is a powerful lie — that money will bring happiness. So we plot and plan and pursue every incremental dollar as though our lives depended on it. It is never for us, of course. We chase after mammon for our children, for their education, for charity, for good. And when we've gained more than we ever needed or imagined, what do we have? Our children still become unwed mothers. They drop out of school and run away. We, as parents, are no better. Our bellies bloated, our cupboards full, our retirements funded and our futures secure, we search for new diversions and new mates to fill the diminishing interval between now and eternity. Unsatisfied with the goods we so eagerly sought and having done little of the good we so often spoke, we find the world empty without the solace or stimulation of drugs, debauchery or drunkenness.

That money or success brings happiness is the devil's manna and we've eaten it without complaint or contempt. Greed is Satan's bird and we've swallowed it whole. Instead of full and satisfied, we're empty and defiled. Repent, O man, for you cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. God is not mocked. He who sows to his flesh will reap corruption but he who sows to the Spirit will reap everlasting life. Repent for the time wasted in worry instead of spent in prayer and confession. Repent of your endless chasing after earthly treasures, which moth and rust will soon destroy.

Matt. 6:24–34

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. 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 which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious 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 arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Repent and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and you'll have more than you have ever dreamed or imagined or wanted. Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

You are of more value than birds. For the only begotten of God did not die for sparrows. He did not take the form of a blue jay and come in the likeness of seagulls. He took on the form of a bond servant and came in the likeness of man. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Bearing the world's sins He was a worm and a reproach of men, despised by the people. Dangling as from a fish hook, Jesus Christ suffered and bled and died to catch you safely from the devil's river of greed and avarice. He was raised again on the third day by the glory of the Father and ascended to the right hand of glory. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

In the meantime, Jesus feeds seed to the sparrows and worms to the blue jays. How much more does He care for you! He sows in you the greater Seed of His Holy Word, for the kingdom of God is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. He fills you with Seed that yields a hundredfold, the Seed of God's power for your salvation. He fattens you with His own flesh and quenches your lusts with His holy precious blood — the Worm's meat for the forgiveness of your sins for life and for salvation. Our Father in Heaven provides you with more than daily bread to sustain the flesh in this veil of tears. He feeds you with heavenly Manna to carry you, body and soul, into everlasting life.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: They neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. For what silk or precious tapestry can compare to flowers? What so shines in beauty as a lily? What dye surpasses the purple of the violet?

You are more precious to your Father than lilies. He has clothed you with the wedding garment of everlasting righteousness, for the kingdom of God is like a king who had a wedding banquet. What rose possesses the reddened beauty of Christ's holy blood, which washes you clean for the feast? What lily shines as brightly as the incorruptible, glorified Flesh, which shall appear at the trumpet fanfare? Our Father in Heaven provides you with more than protection from the sun's rays. He covers you with the righteousness of His Son so you too may be called the sons of God with whom He is well pleased.

Though there is enough trouble for each day, you needn't worry. This life will not last and your communion with God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Ghost is already complete. You need never run and chase after the devil's lies. You have the Truth, Who sets you free to everlasting life filled with eternal riches.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

