

These are such familiar verses. We all worry, and I expect most of us have read and prayed these words to try and get our minds out of the pit of worry we have fallen into. The world constricts and all we can see and think of, is the stuff that is overwhelming us.

It is always helpful in our understanding of scripture to look at the context.

These verses are part of the great 'sermon on the mount'.

The most well known sermon that Jesus spoke on the banks of the sea of Galilee.

People had swarmed to hear him, so he climbed a hill and began to teach.

He taught the listeners, people that were being bullied, oppressed and mocked, how to live authentically in a time of great hardship.

Jesus' fame had spread. He was saying challenging things. To the authorities and their own corrupt leaders.

The people wanted a rescuer.

In the sermon on the mount Jesus emphasised humility, forgiveness, and generous care for neighbours. He encouraged people to choose God's way of love, which will eventually renew all creation.

He taught the model prayer, The Lord's Prayer.

And right before this passage, He taught on money, Material things.

This is about worry over material stuff. Practicalities. Food, clothes.

What do you worry about?

We can add nothing by worrying.

It takes our attention from where it should be.

It distracts us; consumes us with fear and the world gets dark. The light is dimmed.

All that we know God is, gets pushed out.

His love, mercy, care and hope. His promises and peace

And so our world gets narrowed and smaller.

WE do not see God guiding, helping, speaking to us, because its all smothered.

We limit his strength and power within us when we become overwhelmed with worry.

Jesus says do not worry about the basics of your life; those things he has promised to supply.

Trust in Him who created you.

His examples of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, are shifting the focus from earthly treasures and values in the previous verses, that fade and wear out, to the beauty of creation.

God's attention to detail. To the detail of all He created.

They live free, unencumbered by concerns. Trusting in daily provision.

By keeping our eyes fixed on our Almighty Father the worldly stuff shifts down our list of priorities.

Of course, we are to be concerned. God places things on our hearts to move us to pray, to act upon the issues he brings.

Philippians 4 v6

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'

Worry immobilises. Concern moves us to action.

Then there is that challenge, 'are you not more valuable than they?'

Do we have such a low understanding of **our value before God?**

Scripture endlessly confirms how much we are loved, how important we are to God.....

He rescues us, lifts us out of the pit, he sings over us, loves us and dies for us.

John 3 v16... 'for God so loved the world.'

Isaiah 43 v4 'Since you are precious and honoured in my sight'

49 v16 'See, I have engraved you on the palm of my hand, your walls are ever before me.'

Zephaniah 3v17 'The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.'

Joshua 1v5 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'

Jesus tells us to replace worry with **concern for the Kingdom of God** and His righteousness.

To turn to God first for help, to fill our thoughts with his desires and to take his character for our pattern, and to serve and obey him in everything.

We need to get our priorities right. Stuff is vying for the space in our heads and hearts.

If we must worryworry about today.

Our worry is mostly over what we have no control over anyway, its harmful and foolish.

When we become overfocused on the past and the future, we lose the present day and all that God has planned for us....actions, words, and blessings.

God wants us to remember the past, plan for the future but live in the present.

Remember that in this passage, the birds and the flowers are not isolated. They are not alone but in community. Supporting each other and in the case of birds, feeding each other.

Together we can be strong, praying and worshipping and giving thanks.

Here in the 'dale; Lets hold onto our unity as we prepare to move, to have all this, long awaited transformation commence. Lets be expectant of the unexpected, be trusting in the unknown, and be excited to try different things with open hearts.

How do we stop the worry?

A good place to start is with this amazing Psalm.

It is a hymn of thanksgiving and praise for His enduring, steadfast love.

It highlights His creation of the heavens and earth, and his faithfulness in remembering His people, rescuing them from their enemies and providing for all life

Worship shifts our focus. Helps us lift our eyes.

Prayer - individually or with someone else, which can be hugely comforting.

Writing down, memorising verses that remind of God's astonishing power, love and help.

Take a walk and thank God for the beauty you see.

The message translation of v30-34

"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.'

Each day we are challenged to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

I pray that we do not let anxiety suck the joy from the life we have,

The hope we cling to and the promises that bring us peace.

May we recognise the daily provision from our God; how it is new each day and how very precious we are to Him.

Lets step out every day, confident in His steadfast love that endures for ever.

A Grace from Malcom Duncan

May your worries be lifted from your shoulders and may dread be drained from your heart.

May your eyes be lifted towards heaven and may you be reminded that God's grip is strong enough to hold you safe, He is close enough to carry you, and He loves you enough to care.