



May 25 • 2008

**Focus Scripture**

**Matthew 6:24–34**

Additional Scriptures

Psalm 131

1 Corinthians 4:1–5

Isaiah 49:8–16a

When we strive for wealth, O God, remind us that you provide unlimited riches; when we are anxious about clothes, that the beauty of your grace enfolds us; when we worry about food, that your bounty can provide for all. Enliven your Spirit within us. Amen.

# Seeking God's Way

The readings today proclaim that God cares for us and provides for our needs. The realm of God, which Matthew calls the "kingdom of heaven," is now; we are formed by God's ongoing relationship with us. When we are distracted by the requirements and details of everyday living, Jesus invites us to entrust our lives to God's Spirit and follow in God's way.

**Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:24–34**

Today's focus text is set within the section of Matthew called "The Sermon on the Mount." This sermon, found in chapters 5–7, follows Jesus' call to the disciples. It summarizes Jesus' teachings about living as a community of God's people. Earlier, Moses taught God's law to the Israelites, to form them as a community of God's people. Matthew's first readers would have seen links between Moses and Jesus in this "Sermon on the Mount." Images such as going up the mountain were clues.

At the heart of the law revealed to Moses is God's covenant with God's people (Exodus 20–32). Jesus affirmed the principles of the law that Moses taught, but interpreted it differently than many of the religious authorities of that time. This caused confrontations between Jesus and some religious leaders. Jesus' teaching about the meaning of the law might have seemed revolutionary, but the law remained central for Jesus as he taught the disciples about what it means to seek God's way and live in the present and future reign of God (Matthew 5:17–19).

No one can serve two sources of authority equally. Those who follow Christ, including Matthew's community, must make a choice (6:24) between the presence and character of God and that of wealth. Wealth can be the focus of one's trust and love, becoming an idol that distracts from knowing and serving God. God's presence empowers disciples to focus on compassion for the neighbour.

Wild lilies grow prolifically. Their brilliant flowers clothe brown Palestinian hillsides in beauty. King Solomon was famous for his ornate possessions, but Jesus teaches that these were nothing compared to the God-given beauty of the lily blooms. In Jesus' time,

grass clippings were used as fuel for cooking. How surprising that he says God cares about grass.

In this text, Jesus is teaching the disciples, and us, about knowing God's character, God's righteousness. Jesus teaches that our character can reflect God's righteousness when we live in God's way. Worry about our own needs leads us to seek security in possessions, power, or beauty. These distractions divert our attention. Distracted, we might ignore others' need for the abundant gifts that God gives. Being alert and open to God's grace and compassion can overcome worry about being acceptable to God. Living in God's way can relieve worry and build character. For Matthew, the church would grow as anxious people could find healing in Jesus' teaching. Worshipping God would be the natural response to such gifts.

The other readings lift up how seeking God's way shapes our lives. **Isaiah 49:8–16a** affirms that we need not worry—God will not forget God's covenant relationship with us. **Psalm 131** rejoices that God's presence helps us to calm our distractedness, reassuring us of the reason to hope.

In **1 Corinthians 4:1–5**, Paul tells how awareness of God's presence in his life has formed him as a servant of Christ and steward of "God's mysteries." Knowing that God alone will judge and commend, Paul is freed to reflect and express God's gracious and compassionate character in his living.



Living in God's presence forms character and inner beauty, nourishing our worship of God. What does it mean that God knows you and is involved in your well-being? What distracts you and your church from acts of grace and outrageous compassion?

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