

Consider the Lillies

Matthew 6:19-34

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TRANSCRIPT:

Turn with me, if you will, to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, and we'll be reading from verse 19 through to verse 34. If you were here last year when I preached on this same text, don't worry; this is a different sermon.

Matthew 6:19-34 reads:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body, so if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 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."

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that You are a God who speaks, and You have spoken to us through Your word. And Father, we pray as we come to look at this text in particular, that You would open our eyes that we might see the wonders of Your word and that we might be changed as we see it. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

What should I wear? It's always a question we ask because there's nothing worse than turning up to a place in inappropriate dress. The advice to preachers, I'm told, is to always dress up, wear a suit and tie. You can tell I don't listen to that advice. Not because you can always be the best dressed, but because you can adjust a suit and tie down, so you can always make yourself appropriate for the situation. But the point is that there's an appropriate way to dress in every situation, isn't it? My wife actually informs me that there are even more rules than just getting the standard right. Apparently, the colors have to match, and some patterns can't go with other patterns, and things like that. Certain shoes can't be worn with certain pants. I don't quite understand all of this; it's very complex. But dressing in general is not complex, right? Even if you're not at that level of concern about what you wear, I guarantee that all of you are concerned enough about what you wear that you don't walk out of the house each morning with no clothes on. You know to put clothes on each day. Clothing is a necessity, and certainly, when Jesus is speaking in this passage, He's dealing with it at a time when clothing is a basic necessity. They're not worried so much about suit and ties and things like that; they're just worried about whether they will have clothes to wear. We know that it's something that concerns us a lot; it consumes a large amount of our time.

Parents are on about clothing all the time. They say, "Put a jumper on," to their kids, or "Pull your pants up," to their teenagers, or "Stop running around naked," to their toddlers. And so, Jesus picks up on this basic necessity in this passage, and He gives His disciples a command about it. In verse 25, He says, "Do not be anxious," and in verse 28, "Why are you anxious about your clothing? Do not be anxious about these things. Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear." This command is found in a part of the Bible called the Sermon on the Mount. It's in the Gospel of Matthew, and it's where Jesus is speaking to His disciples, He's speaking to those who are following Him. And these verses that I read, verse 19 through to 34, they all hang together as one unit; they're not disconnected thoughts. Jesus has been speaking about how the law is applied in His kingdom in chapter 5, and now He turns His attention in chapter 6 to how we are to think about practicing righteousness as those who follow Jesus. That is, He says in the first few verses of chapter 6 that our giving, our praying, and our fasting, He gives us instructions as to how we do these things, right? This is about how you're to live very practically. And then in verse 19 to

34, He shifts from talking about your righteousness, these sort of elevated pietistic practices of prayer and fasting and spiritual disciplines, and He says, "Now I want to talk to you about how your discipleship, your walk with Me, impacts the way that you view the material world around you."

And in verse 19 to 21, Jesus gives us two options. He says you can either be the type of person who lays up for yourself treasures on earth, or you can be the type of person who lays up for yourself treasures in heaven. And in verse 22 to 23, He gives us two more options; they're really parallel ideas. He says you can have eyes that are full of light or eyes that are full of darkness. What's He talking about? Well, the eyes are what represents your desires. We look at the things we want; we look at the things we long after. And He's saying you can seek to feast your eyes on the things of light, or you can seek to feast your eyes on the things of darkness. And in verse 24, Jesus makes all this very clear, summing up this whole idea: "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." And these are the two masters you can serve: you will either serve God, or you will serve money. And when He says money there, what He's really talking about is a bigger concept than our concept of money; He's talking about wealth. You cannot place your trust in God and place your trust in wealth, in the stuff that you have; you must choose one.

And the contrast in this passage, Jesus starts to bring to light who these two groups of people are. In verse 32 to 33, He makes this distinction. He says the Gentiles seek after these things, but you, implied, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The Gentiles, when He's talking about Gentiles, He's talking about people who do not know God, people who do not trust in Jesus, people who are not disciples of Jesus, aren't following Him and trusting in Him as their Lord and Savior. The Gentiles are those who aren't doing that, and they are the ones who lay up treasures on earth from verse 19. They are the ones who have eyes full of darkness; they lust and desire with covetous eyes those things that are dead and dying and dark. They place their trust in the stuff that they have, this material world around them, and they are full of anxiety about their physical wellbeing. These are the things they worry about each day. "How am I going to feed myself? Is my bank account big enough? Do I have all that I need? Am I secure?"

In contrast, Jesus's disciples lay up treasures in heaven; they desire and yearn for the light; they serve God, and they worry about the kingdom of God and righteousness. Now, this is not an easy thing to do. Jesus calls us in verse 25, "Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on." Who could possibly live up to that standard? Which of us this week hasn't had that thought

cross our mind? "Am I going to have enough to pay that bill? Will I get that job? What am I going to eat today? What am I going to wear today? Am I going to be secure this week?" We worry about these things all the time. But notice the word "therefore" in verse 25. "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about these things." You are commanded to not stress out about the basic necessities of life because you are people of the kingdom of Christ because you serve God and not mammon.

But we are in flesh souls; we live in a world where we do actually need these things, and Jesus acknowledges that, right? He says that your Father knows you need these things; these are actual necessities. It's not like we're worrying about things that are irrelevant. So the question for us today is, how could we possibly not worry about them? How can we see the world like Jesus does and so not be anxious about these basic things in life?

In order to teach us this lesson, Jesus employs two main illustrations. He points to the birds in verse 26, and we looked at that some time ago if you were here. And He also points to the lilies in verse 28. And that's what I want to look at today.

"Why are you anxious about clothing?" Jesus says. "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." And so we don't just need to be bird watchers as Christians; we need to be botanists, I guess. We need to go outside and look at the flowers. And when you go outside and look at the flowers later today, in obedience to Jesus' commands, He tells you to look at some particular things about them. He says, "I want you to observe the way they grow. I want you to observe their beauty, and I want you to observe their lifespan."

Firstly, look at the way that they grow; look at their work ethic. Flowers, Jesus says, neither toil nor spin. This is in contrast, really, to the birds from a few verses ago. Birds, Jesus says, do not sow nor reap, but they do work. We watch the birds go around and they get all their food. They're up before dawn and they're searching diligently. Flowers, on the other hand, do nothing. At least nothing you can observe. When you go and watch them grow, they don't do anything. And in contrast to the birds, they're stationary. They do not search for food. In fact, how does a flower grow? Well, it grows in a way that's entirely dependent upon God bringing everything they need right to their doorstep. The rain falls, sent by God, and the water soaks into the ground next to the flowers in your backyard, and they merely absorb that which God has brought to them. The sun shines, flooding the earth with energy, food for the plants, and the plants do very little to get it. They simply put out their leaves and receive what God sends their way.

Plants cannot move into a location that has better sunshine. If they're stuck under a tree, they must live off the light that filters through to their receptive, trusting, outreaching foliage. Look at how they grow, and yet God provides for them. But Jesus says also observe their beauty. As we move on to the second aspect of flowers, we see that they are beautiful. They are the glory of the plant world. Get down close and personal with a flower. Touch its petals. Smell its perfume. Let the intricate details of its design overwhelm you. Consider how this beauty, this glory, this splendor was brought about through no exertion of toil or weaving of material. Instead, the flower waited patiently on God to provide the necessary sunlight and water, and then took this generous provision and used it to put forth the glory that God designed for it to wear. There are no fashion designers in the plant world. There are no tailors, no artists. All of the glory of flowers is unworked for. It's all a gift that God gives them. And yet it is a glory. We know this intuitively. We give flowers to our wife and our mother, or at least we should. And we spend hundreds or thousands of dollars on flowers for weddings and funerals. They adorn our most precious people and our most precious times because they are glorious. Flowers covered the temple of Solomon. If you go back and read about the temple that Solomon built, you'll find that there were flowers all through it. Palm trees and flowers. That's what covered the walls and the doors of the temple. And lilies, in particular, were the model for several aspects of the temple design. Why? Because they are beautiful. Because they're glorious. And Jesus says, look at their beauty and notice that they didn't work for that at all.

And lastly, Jesus says, observe their lifespan. They're short-lived. Observe that bunch of flowers you're going to buy for your wife or mother after this sermon because you just got reminded to do that. And watch how long it lasts for. It's really disappointing. Notice that it only lasts for a week or so. Today, the flowers are radiant in glorious dress, and tomorrow they're being thrown in the rubbish bin. And now Jesus says, take this little exercise of meditating on the flowers and make this tiny connection: "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?"

Jesus' point is not that we should act like the flowers. He's not saying that you don't need to go to work to earn your money or to buy your next pair of pants. He's not advocating for standing out in the rain and waiting for your new shoes to appear on your feet. He's arguing from the lesser to the greater. You are the greater. You can do more, and you should do more than flowers. You can move around, you can work, you can toil, you can spin, you can go to the shops and buy socks. But don't apply yourself to your work thinking that you're going to provide for yourself. Don't apply yourself to your work trusting in your own abilities. Don't apply yourself

to your work trusting in the wealth that you're hoping to produce. Go to work with the attitude of a flower: "God's going to clothe me today. God will provide for my needs today. God will look after my wardrobe as I faithfully serve Him in my work and with my finances."

The problem that Jesus is addressing in this passage is not a lack of work; it's a lack of trust and a disordering of priorities. The flowers trust God for their clothing despite their lack of capacity. But that's key, right? Remember when we looked at the birds, we realized that yeah, we have a limited capacity too, and that's the point. We get anxious because we are limited because we can't control everything. We can think about the future, we can plan, but we can't guarantee that our plans will come to fruition. We can sow, but we can't make it rain. We can reap, but we can't guarantee how much wheat is actually going to be on the plant. We can toil and spin, but we can't ensure that we can always replace our worn-out shoes. You can't guarantee your next pay rise, and you don't know what the bank's going to do with your mortgage next week. That's why we fret because we have some capacity to think about these things but no real capacity to change them. And that's why Jesus has just previously linked anxiety to our insatiable desire to gather and hoard and store up wealth in verse 19 to 21. This is how we try and manage the future. I think this way sometimes; I'm sure you do too, you know, "Well, once I get to X number in my bank account, then it's okay, then I'll relax, then I'll trust." We direct our eyes towards these things, thinking that they'll make us secure, unceasingly grabbing and gathering and grasping for more, but only until we get to this level, right? Then we're then we'll be alright, then we'll go and serve God somewhere, or then we'll then we'll trust Him. But Jesus says, where our eyes go, there our whole body will follow. If our priority in this life is security, is a full wardrobe, then we will lose sight of something greater: the kingdom of God and His righteousness. When we stress endlessly about our physical provision, about our mortgage and our electricity bills, then we're behaving like Gentiles, He says in verse 32, people who do not know God. We're behaving like those who don't have a father in heaven who cares for them. We're not living like creatures made by a good Creator who knows their Creator. The birds and the flowers trust our Father—notice that, not their Father—they trust our Father better than we do. How much more should we live a life of humble dependence upon God?

And this is the first challenge for us today from our passage. And I hope it's another help in your mind, right, when you feel that stress, you can look out of the birds and you can look at the flowers and you go, "God supplies their needs. He will supply mine." But let's go a little bit deeper. Jesus is the greatest teacher of all time; whenever He speaks, He's working at multiple levels, and He's done some interesting things in this passage here to make us think a bit more deeply. Jesus has called us to consider

lilies, clothing, Solomon, and glory. And some of these, if we start thinking about how the Bible speaks about these topics, we start to see some a bit of a deeper picture of what God actually does to provide for our needs. I'll try and take you through that.

I'd like to start by considering why it is that we would be anxious about clothing in the first place. And that the first reason really is because we don't like being naked. That's why we get up each morning and put our clothes on because if you walked out of the door naked, you'd be ashamed. The idea of shame extends to much of our anxiety about clothing. Even the idea that we need to be dressed in the appropriate way is all related to shame. "What will they think of me if I turn up with the wrong type of clothes on?" And this actually is something that was still common in Jesus' day. He tells a parable in Matthew 22 with this very point. Remember the parable about the wedding where a guy turns up and he doesn't have the right dress on? "Where's your wedding dress?" And he gets kicked out. It's shameful. It's a terrible thing to rock up to a wedding wearing the wrong thing.

And this is actually the context in which clothing first appears in the Bible. In the Garden of Eden, we read of God making Adam and Eve, and He made them naked. They didn't have any clothes on, and the Bible is very clear as to why. They were unashamed. They didn't have any shame. So they didn't need a cover-up. In the garden, God gives them His single command. He says, "You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," in Genesis 2:17, but Adam and Eve, tempted by the devil, seek after the knowledge of good and evil by their own means. They refuse to submit to God's commanded path to knowledge and instead they reach out and they take for themselves. And so, as a result of that sin, we read in the scriptures that they became ashamed. They realized they were naked and they wanted to cover up. So they cover their nakedness in an attempt to cover their shame, but they do a really bad job of it. They sew fig leaves together to form what the ESV calls a loincloth, and that's actually a really good translation. The word doesn't refer to clothing in the Bible; it refers to like a belt. They made a little belt out of fig leaves to cover their shame. And this covering clearly doesn't do the job. Adam and Eve know it, and so does God, because when God comes walking in the garden, they still feel the shame. So they run and hide. They don't come out thinking, "Oh, we've covered our shame now."

They hide from God because their clothing is rubbish. And so God calls them out to question them, and you can imagine them standing embarrassed before God, sort of fidgeting, adjusting their loincloths to try and cover everything up. But God, our gracious God, knows that their covering is insufficient and graciously gives Adam and Eve better clothes. He kills

an animal, and in verse 21 of chapter 3 of Genesis, it says that He made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

We see this theme again in Exodus 28:42 when God is giving Moses instructions about how to design the clothing for the priests who were going to minister before the Lord at the temple and to stand between God's people and God. God says, "You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh." The priests were not allowed to have any of their nakedness seen. If they wore a flowing tunic and then ascended up the steps to the altar, their nakedness would be exposed to the altar, and so they had to wear underwear, right? Otherwise, they would bear their guilt and die, is what Moses says.

And so we must have our naked shame covered by clothing. This is something that we're anxious to do as people. We do this spiritually all the time. We try and cover our guilt. We try and excuse ourselves. We try and hide our sins away so that no one knows about them. We don't let anyone into that part of our life because we want to cover our shame. The physical idea of being shamed about being naked in public is mirroring the spiritual reality that we are ashamed of our sin. And so a large part of what our society today tries to do is to try and excuse sin and make it something that, well, it's okay to be like this. And what they're doing is they're trying to cover their shame. The Bible says we all know these things are wrong, but we try and make it sound like it's alright. It's just a loincloth.

Sometimes the way that we cover our shame is by trying to be religious. We see a picture of this actually in Zechariah 3 that we read earlier. In Zechariah's vision, we see Joshua the high priest standing before the Lord dressed in filthy clothing. A filth which carries the connotation of excrement or possibly even blood. Satan is there accusing Joshua, and Joshua, by the way, the high priest, is a stand-in for all of God's people. So he's not even talking about the sinful world now; Zechariah 3 is talking about God's people. And you can imagine Satan's accusations, "God, look at this man; he's filthy. He can't stand before you. He's covered in dirt and filth."

But it's interesting, isn't it, in this picture that Joshua here is not naked. This is not a picture of Eden, like I said. This is a picture of someone who has attempted to cover themselves. He's more like Adam and Eve when they hid from God. His attempt to cover his shame is shameful. It's filthy. And you can think of his filthy clothing as our attempts to cover our own shame. Particularly in terms of trying to be religious. "Well, I give to charities, and that's what excuses the rest of my sin. Oh, I come to church, and that's what excuses this area of my life that I don't want to expose to anyone. Well, I pray every day, and that's what excuses my hunger after money." Well, maybe it's just how we talk. We might talk to anyone who

will listen about how terrible all the world is so that we look good by comparison. "See how righteous I am? I'm offended by all this sin. I'm clearly more righteous than them."

Isaiah 64:6 says that when we try to mask our sin with our own righteousness, our righteous deeds become like polluted garments. It's what you see in Zechariah 3. But gloriously, just like the Garden of Eden, God steps in in Zechariah chapter 3. God Himself rebukes Satan and commands that Joshua's filthy clothes be removed from him. "Behold," God says, "I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." Pure clothes. The removal of the filthy garments is God's way of covering Joshua's shame and removing Joshua's guilt.

Do you see how this links to Jesus's words in the Sermon on the Mount? Our physical anxiety about clothing is a mirror of our spiritual anxiety about clothing. We need to cover the guilt and shame of our sin, and we know it, but our attempts are ineffective. We need God to remove our failed attempts to cover our sin and to cover our shame for us. We need God to kill the innocent and cover our nakedness like He did with Adam and Eve. And the only way to have our nakedness covered is to do it like the flowers. You can't toil and spin for your own righteousness. You can't do it. Doing that just results in more shameful clothing. No, you must do it like the flowers. You must humbly receive from God the righteousness that He has provided. The covering of your shame and guilt that He has provided in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus dies on the cross, He takes the garment of filth that we wear, and He puts it on Himself, and He takes His pure robes of righteousness, and He puts it on us. That is the gospel. The gospel is all about clothing. And how do you receive that? You receive it the same way the lilies do. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Humbly receive. Don't offer anything. You can't pay for this. Receive like the lilies.

But there's more. There's more. In Zechariah 3, we see that it isn't enough to be stripped of our filthy rags. Nakedness, you see, was never the goal. Nakedness does speak of innocence in one sense, but we know from our own experience that nakedness also speaks of immaturity. Who are the only people in society who are allowed to run around naked and no one bats an eyelid? Children. Little babies. But when they grow up into maturity, what do they do? They put on clothes, and they put on the appropriate clothes for their position. Why? Because clothing is righteousness and glory. Clothing goes together with rule and authority and access to God.

You see that very clearly in Zechariah 3. God says when I clothe Joshua the high priest, I'm going to give him rule. I'm going to clothe him with

royal robes and give him rule in my house, and I'm going to give him access to me. This is why God's clothes that He prepared for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were much more than just better coverings. The word used in Genesis for garments is not used very often in the Old Testament, and so we can find some clues as to what God was actually talking about back then. We find the word used to refer to the coat of many colors that Joseph was given by Isaac in Genesis 37. In 2 Samuel 13, it's used to describe the garments that young virgins wore, but this word for garments is most often used to refer to the clothing of priests. Isn't that amazing? When God clothed Adam and Eve in the garden, He took off their loin cloths, and He put on them priestly robes. Priestly robes.

And in the clothing of priests, we begin to see what God does with our clothing. Consider these few verses from Exodus 28, where God details the design of the priest's clothes in the Old Testament. Verse 2: "You shall make holy garments for Aaron, for glory and for beauty." Verse 40: "For Aaron's sons, you shall make coats and sashes and caps; you shall make them for glory and for beauty." And one verse from chapter 39, verse 1: "From the blue and purple and scarlet yarns, they made finely woven garments for ministering in the holy place."

We've already seen how the priest's robes were designed to cover their nakedness, but here we see two more aspects. Firstly, the garments are not just designed to cover nakedness. A loin cloth would have done that. They could have just stopped at the undergarments if that was all that was needed, but instead, we read of glorious clothing. Clothing is described as a glory and a beauty. The priests of Israel were dressed spectacularly. They looked marvelous, and they wore kingly colors. Isn't that interesting? Scarlet and purple and blue, which is very much connected to Zechariah 3, where you see the high priest being clothed in garments and told you're going to rule. The priests were wearing royal garments as well.

And secondly, the garments were designed to allow the priests the privilege and danger of serving in the holy place before God Himself. They were given the right of access because of what they were wearing. They were invited back into Eden, where they could walk once again with God in a temple that has garden imagery everywhere. Flowers and trees and cherubim. And like I said, these are exactly the themes that we see playing out in Zechariah 3. Verse 7, God says, "If you will walk in My ways and keep My charge, then you shall rule My house and have charge of My courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here." This is what follows when Joshua is clothed in those pure garments. Those kingly, priestly robes of glory and beauty.

We see this very clearly also in Solomon, and Jesus tells us we should be

thinking of Solomon. One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in 1 Kings 3, where we see Solomon's glory. In 1 Kings 3, after Solomon becomes king, God appears and says to him, "Ask whatever you want, and I'll give it to you." Imagine being asked that by God. Incredible. What would you ask for? He's just about to become king. Could have asked for anything. "I want an army that no one can defeat. I want a storehouse of treasure so I'll never be in need. I want lots of beautiful wives." I don't know. You could ask for all sorts of things.

Listen to Solomon's answer: "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

You might think this has nothing to do with clothing, but notice these features. Solomon says that David's success as a ruler, his father's success as a ruler, came because of his walk with God, specifically his faithfulness, his righteousness, and his uprightness of heart. And Solomon acknowledges that he doesn't have this same ability as his father. He says, "I'm just a child. I don't have the maturity that he had." And so he asks for an understanding mind, in particular to discern between good and evil. Do you remember those words? Solomon wants wisdom, righteousness, understanding. And this is a the understanding of this means that in Genesis, when God says there's a tree that has the knowledge of good and evil, we often think, "Oh, it's a bad thing to know good and evil." But 1 Kings 3 tells us no, it's a good thing to know good and evil. Kings know good and evil. They are able to discern between the two. God knows the difference between good and evil. But how do you get there? That's the question. How do you get this thing? How do you get this maturity? Well, you do it in the same way that the lilies do. That's what Solomon did. He said, "God, I need it from you. I can't muster this up myself."

And just to double down on this, when Jesus says, "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the lilies," you have to ask the question, well, what was Solomon's glory? And we often think, "Oh, it was his money," because he was given lots of money and lots of wealth. He was given lots of everything by God, even though he didn't ask for it. But if you read the Old Testament, you will not find a reference to Solomon's clothes anywhere.

And in fact, in 1 Kings 10, when the queen of Sheba comes to observe Solomon's kingdom, she says very specifically what his glory was. She mentions wealth just once and speaks of his wisdom four times. Specifically, the way in which his discernment allows him to execute justice and righteousness. Solomon's wisdom is his glory. Solomon's righteous rule is the thing that we all know about Solomon. If you're a Jew who read the Old Testament, raised on Solomon, and you hear Jesus say, "Solomon in all his glory wasn't arrayed like these," you're thinking, "Well, what was Solomon arrayed in?" He was arrayed in wisdom, righteous rule, uprightness of heart. He knew how to live.

And so when Jesus speaks of the glory of Solomon, I think he's not just speaking about his clothing. He's telling us, "Think deeper. Realize that what you really need to live in life is righteousness, uprightness of heart, and wisdom from God." And like I said, we've got to receive that the same way as the lilies.

And so, as we've sort of explored these themes, I think we start to see these connections between Solomon, glory, lilies, and righteousness. Let me just draw four quick conclusions. Firstly, we must be clothed by God. The problem with Adam and Eve was not that they wanted to have the knowledge of good and evil. The problem was not even that they wanted to cover their shame after they sinned. Their problem was that they didn't recognize that these things must come from God. They must be received from God. Instead, they tried to work it out their own way. But God clothes those who depend on and submit to Him. He clothes them physically. He clothes them spiritually. He covers their shame. He gives them righteousness. Come humbly to God for clothing.

Our clothing must cover our shame. We need garments to cover our guilt. Before Adam and Eve sinned, clothing, I believe, was all aiming for glory. But after sin enters the world, clothing is needed to cover guilt. But again, don't do it yourself. Come to God to have your guilt covered. What does your spiritual clothing look like? If you're here today, how do you stand before God covering your shame? Do you try and muster up your own coverings? Or are you coming clothed in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection? This is why the saints in Revelation 7:14 are said to be clothed with robes that have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. That's what we need.

Thirdly, priestly robes of righteousness give us access to God. When we go to God for a covering for our shame, God does not stop there. He covers our nakedness, but He also gives us robes of glory and beauty in the person and work of Jesus Christ, specifically designed for the task of entering into His presence, like the priests of old.

In Isaiah 61:10-11, the promised servant of God speaks these words: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He's covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels." This is the clothing we need if we are to enter into the presence of God.

And the next verse in Isaiah 61 actually connects really nicely with the Sermon on the Mount and tells us how we get this robe. "For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before the nations." It's the same way. You look at your life, and you say, "I need more righteousness in my life. I'm sick of these sins. I want more wisdom. I don't know how to live my life. I need wisdom from God." How are you going to get it? Like the lilies. Come to God and ask.

And lastly, royal robes of righteousness equip us to rule with justice. This is an amazing thing, actually. When we rule through the righteousness that God gives, when we live in our life and we see the various tasks that we need to do, and we seek to live in those areas of our life in dependence upon Him, and He gives us the wisdom that we need to do it, then when we get to the very end of the Bible, we see that God looks at us and is just amazed at us. He sees us as beautiful.

Revelation 19 says this, verses 6 to 8: "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints."

And as you read that, you should be thinking, "Hang on a second, all the good that we do in our life as Christians, we just worked out, is something that God gives us." But this passage tells us that at the end of all time, as the saints stand before God, He looks at them and He says, "Wow, look at the righteousness that you've clothed yourself with. You say, 'How glorious is your dress! You are altogether beautiful.'" You've clothed yourself in righteousness.

Jesus will look at you and say, "Like a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women." He'll delight in your glory. And we will say to Him as we stand there, clothed in His righteousness and in the deeds that He's given us to do, and we will say, "What are you talking about? We didn't

Consider the Lillies

do anything. We put out our hands, and we received what you gave us." And you will look at Christ as He delights in you, and you will say to Him, "Jesus, your blood and your righteousness, they are what I'm wearing." And it will be magnificent as He delights in His well-clothed bride, and she delights in Him.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, You are a God who thinks of everything. Lord, You have provided for our every need. We so often can't even see the things that we need. We think we need to cover our guilt only, but Lord, we need so much more to come into Your presence and to be made righteous before You. And yet You have provided all of that as well. And Father, we pray that as we go out into this week, that we would see that these things come from Your hand, that we would live in total dependence upon You. Father, we pray that You would provide a covering for our guilt. We pray that You would provide the righteousness that we need, that we might live in a way that is well-pleasing to You. And Lord, we pray that You would provide all our physical needs as well. Help us, Lord, to have the right priorities in life. Help us to live like the lilies, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Amen.