

8 September 2010
Pentecost 15 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

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"A Lily in the Hand of Jesus"

Text: Matthew 6:24-34 (1 Kings 17:8-16)

"Consider the lilies for the field," Jesus said. The actual word there means literally to *"let your mind dwell on the lilies."* Why? To learn from them. And what, you ask, can we learn from lilies?

Well, there's a lot of them in this world. There are fields full of them. The ones around my house have multiplied greatly. And at first glance, they seem all the same. One like the next. No difference. But, Jesus says, don't look at them all - He draws our attention to just one. For they're not all the same to Him. Consider this one, He says. ***Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.***

Jesus is not putting Solomon down with this comparison, but exalting the lily. We hear of Solomon in all his glory - the riches, the power, the honor, the wisdom - and the splendor of those who are glorious in the world today, and think this poor lily cannot be compared to them. But Jesus sees it just the opposite. The Creator sees what we cannot. Each lily is special to Him, unique. And what we consider glorious is not what He considers glorious.

But perhaps there is more to it than just that. For Solomon, in all his gifted-from-God-splendor-and-glory, sinned. He contradicted that it was all gift from the Lord. He supposed it belonged to him for his own glory to use as he pleased. His heart turned away from the Lord. And the result was great anxiety. Great worry.

But not so the lily. The lily lives as it lives only from God's hand. And so it grows, it flowers, it is glorious. It has no other trust or confidence, and so no anxiety. No anxiety, for it does not live as if God were not on the scene, as if God did not care to give it life and growth. It lives from what God gives. And it is glorious. A beautiful and precious thing in God's eye.

But the important thing here is not the lily, but the One in whose hand the lily is. The One whose eye beholds the lily and calls it glorious. We learn of Jesus from this lily. That is the message for us tonight. It is not really about ourselves or flowers, but about Jesus. About His eyes which regard not only the flowers of the field and the birds of the air, but also - and especially - you and me.

And He does not regard us from afar, from some distant far off heaven. No, He

came into our flesh and blood, in solidarity with us. Born not rich, but poor. Not high, but low. Not mighty, but weak. And in His life, He knew both joy and sorrow. Both good times and bad. Both friends and enemies. All of life, He lived, with you. From conception to death, not one moment, not one experience, un-lived.

And He lived the truth He bids us live, that no hair, no sparrow, no lily, falls without the Father. We hardly notice the hairs that gets washed down the drain, the grass that is mown, the lily that fades and falls, but not one escapes your Father's notice. Not one.

But for these Jesus did not come. Though He regards them and they are precious to Him, for these He did not die. But for you. For you, He bore what you bear. For you, the weight of all sin was placed upon Him. For you, He was thrown into the oven of God's wrath. For you.

But who are you? One in a million, or a billion, who live here, now. One that other people take no particular notice of. One who perhaps looks neither splendid nor glorious. Pretty much the same as all the rest. . . . Not to Jesus. To Him who regards each lily of the field, you are splendid and glorious. You are worth His attention, and even more, His life.

And so Jesus - like the sparrows and the lilies - falls to earth and dies. But not alone. His Father knows, and does not leave Him to the grave. He rises from the dead, and so from His grave grows the vine into which you are I have been grafted in Baptism. A newness of life, from Him, in Him, with Him. With Jesus who looks not upon you from afar, but has joined you to Himself. And with His victory over sin, over death, and over the devil.

And so there is no living for you apart from Jesus, as if He did not die and rise again for you. And so with Him, no more anxiety. For that comes when we choose to live alone, apart from Him. Separate from our vine, and so having to look out for ourselves as if the Lord were not there, not caring. Or looking to others, to false gods, to give us what we need. There is only one thing that comes from that: endless anxiety.

Rather, better is to be like Elijah and his widow, **to be lilies in the hand of the Lord.** With our confidence only in the Lord Jesus. In the care of His life and forgiveness. The apple of His eye. For that is what you are. And when others are anxious around us, and see not this great love, let us encourage them and **bear one another's burdens**, and so, as St. Paul said, **fulfill the law of Christ.** The law of love.

When Jesus told these things to His disciples, I wonder if He plucked that lily He cradled in His hand? If so, its life was spent telling of Him. Could there ever have

been a flower more beautiful? Truly, an *Easter lily* if there ever was one.

But so, too, you. Who are worth more, much more, than they. ***“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?”***

O you, who are lilies in the hand of Jesus. *Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief* (Mark 9:24).

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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