

Thanksgiving Day

GOD, GRASS, AND GRACE

Matthew 6:24-34

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Analysis by Ron Starenko

24 "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

25 Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 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? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 and yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

DIAGNOSIS: The Kingdom of Grass

“All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass” (Is. 40:6b-7).

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow*

We glibly say that nothing lasts forever. Not surprising. It is an obvious, self-evident reality, Jesus' words about the grass of the field being “alive today” (v. 30) and gone tomorrow, everything from what we eat and wear, also the possessions we gather and the wealth we accumulate, to what we use to adorn ourselves and inflate our egos. These are the things we love, even worship, the things that suffer the same fate as common, ordinary grass, sooner or later, “thrown into the oven” (v. 30).

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Worriers*

Less obvious to us, our idolatrous attachment to the things of grass makes worriers of us all. Deluded, we fail to recognize that building our lives on shaky ground, on fleeting pleasures, and on an uncertain future, we become victims of worry. Idolatry is self-destructive. Indeed, our misplaced trust in what is here today and gone tomorrow, unites us with our grass-like idols that have no life, as we become what we trust in, what we worship. What we call worry may seem innocent enough, however, according to Jesus it is symptomatic of our rebellion against God, before whom sinners are subject to decay and death. Yes, “the people are grass” (Is. 40:7).

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Thrown into the Oven*

Now the news is so bad we will do all in our power to escape

judgment, hardening our hearts in hatred against God (v. 24). How unfair, we say, that God would thrust us into a world where we do not love or trust God, where we are doomed to die with our idols, and where God still holds us accountable. So, the accusation that “we have other gods” (the first commandment) above the one true God serves in the end to make us ever more hardened God-haters, people deserving to be “thrown into the oven” (v. 30) of God’s wrath. Such is tomorrow’s trouble (v. 34), out of our control and yet our responsibility, as we are helpless “when the breath of the Lord blows upon [us]” (Is. 40:6). Such is the kingdom of grass.

PROGNOSIS: The Kingdom of Grace

“The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of the Lord stands forever” (Is. 40:8).

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *What Stands Forever*

Thank God, Jesus came to establish the kingdom of grace, calling this new order of things “the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (v. 33), the kingdom of grace that trumps the kingdom of grass. We would sink into despair were there not a word from God that is stronger than judgment and death, nothing less than our Lord Jesus Christ who takes the heat for us, wearing our unrighteousness, suffering our fate by the fire of his cross. What is more, rising phoenix-like out of the ashes of his own death on our behalf, he bestows on us his own righteousness. Greater than God’s care of “the birds of the air” and “the lilies of the field,” good as that is, God’s merciful saving of sinners, making us now his valued daughters and sons, is a word that lasts forever.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Adorned with Christ*

Knowing now how much God loves us, undeserving as we are, we are

able to love and trust God. Such faith arises out of the living word concerning our Lord, as the Holy Spirit transforms creatures of grass into graced souls. We, then, believing the gospel that stands forever, become what we believe in, what we worship and trust, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Even though we go hungry and naked, even though we fade away with the birds and the lilies, including our Solomon-like glory, we are destined to share now and in the age to come the eternal life of our risen Lord. On this Thanksgiving Day, as we gather around his Table, we receive a life that never wears out, a tomorrow that will never end.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Adoring, Giving Thanks*

The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29). Since grace rules over grass, and we live by that word, so we become people who not only "say grace" over what we eat and drink and wear, we also become people who grace the world, blessing our neighbor in need with compassion as did our Lord. Such is the kingdom of grace.