

Matthew 6:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Analysis

Jesus uses creation as object lesson: 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?' (Greek: οὐχ ὑμεῖς μᾶλλον διαφέρετε αὐτῶν, 'are you not much more valuable than they?'). 'Behold' (ἐμβλέπω) means 'look carefully, observe.' Birds don't practice agriculture yet survive. This isn't advocating irresponsibility but highlighting God's faithful provision in creation's order. The argument is from lesser to greater (qal vahomer in Hebrew logic) - if God feeds birds, how much more will He provide for humans made in His image? This reveals God's character as faithful provider.

Historical Context

Palestinian birds included ravens (Luke 12:24), sparrows, and doves. In agrarian society, birds were sometimes viewed as pests eating grain, yet they survived on God's provision. Jewish wisdom literature celebrated God's providence in creation (Psalm 104:27-28, 147:9). Jesus' teaching echoes Job 38-39 where God points to His faithful ordering of creation. This wouldn't minimize human responsibility to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10) but reframes it within trust, not anxiety.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does observing God's provision in nature strengthen trust in His care for us?
2. What does this teaching reveal about God's character and priorities?
3. How can we balance diligent work with trust in God's provision rather than anxious striving?

Interlinear Text

ἐμβλέψατε	εἰς	τὰ	πετεινὰ	τοῦ	οὐρανοῦ	ὅτι	οὐχ
Behold	into	G3588	the fowls	G3588	of the air	for	not
G1689	G1519		G4071		G3772	G3754	G3756
σπείρουσιν	οὐδὲ	θερίζουσιν	οὐδὲ	συνάγουσιν	εἰς		
they sow	neither	do they reap	neither	gather	into		
G4687	G3761	G2325	G3761	G4863	G1519		
ἀποθήκας	καὶ	ὁ	πατὴρ	ὑμῶν	ὁ	οὐράνιος	τρέφει
barns	yet	G3588	Father	your	G3588	heavenly	feedeth
G596	G2532		G3962	G5216		G3770	G5142
αὐτῶν;	οὐχ	ὑμεῖς	μᾶλλον	διαφέρετε	αὐτῶν;		
them	not	ye	much	Are	them		
G846	G3756	G5210	G3123	G1308	G846		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 147:9 (Parallel theme): He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.

Job 38:41 (Parallel theme): Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

Matthew 6:32 (Parallel theme): (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Job 35:11 (Parallel theme): Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?

Matthew 7:9 (Parallel theme): Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

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