

# still waters

home church studies

## Psalm 131

[Worship]

1 **L**ORD, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. 2 **B**ut I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. 3 **O** Israel, hope in the **L**ORD from this time on and forevermore.

### Consider:

[Think & Pray...]

#### A New Set of Priorities by Jim Rice

Right at the heart of Jesus' greatest sermon lies this profound—and oft-trivialized—passage. Despite its context and clarity, not many of us seem to take this message too seriously. It is, we are told, “poetic” imagery, or perhaps an “impossible ideal,” not attuned to our modern sensibilities or realistic for those of us living in the fast-moving present-day world. Who, after all, could live like the birds of the air or the lilies of the field?

But as is the case with most hard sayings, we ignore this wisdom at our own peril. The passage is as much a pastoral word about how to achieve quiet of the soul (Psalm 131:2) as it is a laying down of the law (although it is that, too).

We are not, the gospel says, to “serve” wealth—if we do, we cannot also serve God. To serve wealth is to be a slave to it, to be in bondage to it. Jesus illustrates with metaphors from the natural world—birds and lilies most certainly don't aspire after material things in the way humans do. It is the non-Jews, the pagans, who “strive for” these things; people of faith have (or ought to have) a different set of priorities.

Perhaps the emphasis here should be on the striving. The root of the Greek word (*epizeteo*) connotes a craving, almost an obsession with the things of mammon. Jesus is aware, of course, that we have material needs (Matthew 6:32), but his point is one of priority: We are to seek *first* the kingdom of God and its righteousness. We are called, in fact, to strive for, to crave, the things of God. The rest will then be added unto us.

The passage ends with an exhortation straight out of the 12-step program: One day at a time. Most contemporary translations render Jesus' words as “do not worry about tomorrow” because “today's trouble is enough for today” (6:34). In the King James version (“Take therefore no thought for the morrow... Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”), Jesus acknowledges the presence of evil—which carries more spiritual weight than “troubles”—but still calls us not to be anxious or distracted from our focus on God.

And lest in the midst of troubles we fear that God has forsaken us, Isaiah reminds us that God's love is as unailing as a woman's for her nursing child, and more (Isaiah 49:15). With that kind of steadfast care, what reason have we to be anxious?

[The Scripture]

### 1 Corinthians 4.1-5

1 Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. 2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. 4 I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God.

