***Matthew 6:28-29 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.***

Consider the lilies of the field. Why do we worry? Most people certainly worry enough… oh, we call it concern, planning, hard work, anxiety, conscientiousness, and any number of other names, but it comes back to what Jesus calls worry. It’s rooted in pride and mistrust. It’s a degree of separation from God. How often do we simply stop to consider the lilies of the field? How often we overlook the relaxed, uncomplicated, extraordinary beauty in the lilies of the field, waving yellow, red, purple, and orange. How often too we overlook the powerful lesson found in these verses spoken by our Savior. I don’t have time to consider the lilies of the field! Then I’m probably not considering the Savior well either. Worry, constant motion, always on, never disconnected… I’m getting tired just thinking about it. Consider the lilies of the field.

 Over the last several years, we’ve had a saying on the front of our bulletins – Who’s your one? This year, I made a change. TOP – Trust, Obey, Praise. 2023 – let’s Trust, Obey, and Praise. Maybe Who’s Your One… is You! How will we find ourselves on TOP in 2023? Trust, Obey, Praise.

 *Consider the lilies of the field.* Most of us know that lilies come from bulbs. These bulbs are layered, and every layer can produce a flowering plant. These bulbs are planted in the Fall, in the dirt, before the frost. And there they lay… in the dark… as Fall passes into Winter… trusting the seasons, waiting for the Spring, but not the earliest Spring. They don’t pop up like the daffodil. No. They trust that the Creator will waken them at just the right moment. Jesus tells us to Consider. That doesn’t just mean look at them and move on… no, He uses a word that means Learn Thoroughly from the lilies of the field. Learn to Trust that God will bring forth His many layered purpose for your life, in just the right conditions. Trust is a must in our walk with Jesus. In 2023, let’s examine our Trust. Is God our first response or our last resort?

 *How they grow*. The bulb waits in Trust. When conditions are right, it obeys. It doesn’t get impatient and decide God’s forgotten it. In due time, it pushes through the dirt, emerging from the darkness, rising toward the promise and purpose it knows awaits. Have we learned thoroughly from the lily of the field? I think not.

*They neither toil nor spin*. It does not toil. Now this word has a deeper meaning too. It means to feel fatigued from working hard. Toil… we’ve seen that word before, haven’t we? Sure, we have. Matthew 11:28 - *Come to Me, all you who* ***labor*** *and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Yet, in this life we toil, we labor, and we most assuredly spin, if not in body, certainly in mind and spirit. Jesus tells us to Trust like the lily lying in wait, knowing there is a promise and a purpose in all that surrounds us. Obey like the lily when we feel a drawing towards something with all our hearts. Rise and reach for that purpose God lays in heart, not by way of the tiredness of toil, but by way of the energy of expectation. Obedience is a must in our walk with Jesus.

*Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* Praise like the lily. The word for glory here also means praise and worship. We get our word for doxology from it – hymns of glory and praise. The lily, trustfully waiting, obediently pursuing, now bursts from the darkness into the light blooming in praise. It blooms from a root of trust. It blooms atop a stem of obedience and flowers in praise to the Creator, with a splendor unmatched by man-made creations. Take man’s most magnificent and it’s a poor imitation of God’s simplest.

Let us learn thoroughly from the lily. It uses its entire life to praise God in full bloom, drawing by way of beauty, while producing bulbs that will wait in Trust, Faithfully Obey, and Bloom in Praise of the Creator. It’s not just blooming. It’s producing at the same time. Let us bloom and produce. Let us disciple new Christians, pursue new Ministries, and guide their seeking souls to bloom in praise and purpose. Praise is a must in our walk with Jesus.

In 2023, may we Trust, Obey, Praise. May we TOP the year. May we trust even in the darkness. May we obey even in uncertainty. May we praise in the light, in times of sunshine and storm, when the wind lies still, and when rain beats upon our heads. May 2023 find us Trusting, Obeying, and Praising God. When we open our eyes each morning, may we say – it will be a TOP day today. I will Trust, I will Obey, and I will Praise – Let us learn from the lilies and oh, how we’ll grow.