

## God's Creatures (Matthew 6:25-27)



Have you ever watched a gaggle of Canadian geese meander across a busy street of traffic? I have witnessed this many times. It is amazing how traffic will screech to a halt or stop suddenly when they see the gaggle getting ready to cross the road. Drivers wait patiently for the entire gaggle to waddle slowly to the other side of the street as a group or one at a time. There is a saying that “birds of a feather flock together.”

This crossing event starts with one goose strutting proudly with its neck up while moving slowly to the middle of the street where there is no traffic or when traffic is in the far distance. The goose leading the gaggle will stop to survey the flow of traffic or the lack thereof with a watchful eye before the other geese cautiously wade into the road with it. They are all able to cross safely. There is no blowing of horns by the waiting drivers and as soon as the last goose in the gaggle is across, traffic flow continues. I witnessed this fiasco a few days ago. I have never seen a dead goose in the road.

Even though the gaggle will spend time mostly on the ground, they occasionally fly short distances to reach their destination. In this short narrative related to the geese, we see God's hand of protection as an invisible force or safety barrier for these animals as they move freely from place to place and pond to pond. I surmise that someone has prayed for the movement and safety of these birds.

Birds of the air were part of the Creation story in Genesis 1 of the Bible. Genesis 1:21 reads “So God created every living thing...that moves, of every kind...and every winged bird of every kind” (NRSV). God knew that man would need elements in his life and environment to beautify the earth with movement, color, and melodious songs and words from the animal kingdom to make humanity's existence unique and worth living. He gave man dominion over the animals of the newly created earth in Genesis 1:26 and 1:28 (NRSV). Genesis 1:28 reads “God blessed them, and God said to them ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’” (NRSV), assuring the preservation of their species through reproduction and fertility (Genesis 7:3).

I found 3 Greek words from Gerhard Kittel's text Theological Dictionary of the New Testament for the word *protect*. The Greek words for *protect* are *rhýomai* (meaning “to save, to protect, to guard, to ward off, and to deliver”), *tērēō* (meaning “to watchover” and “to protect”), and *phylássō* (meaning “to protect” and “watch”).

Kittel notes that The Old Testament references the fact that “He (God) saves according to His mercy (Nehemiah 9:8) for his name's sake (Psalm 79:9) and as he wills.” Job 39:1 and Jeremiah 5:24 denotes “God cares for animals” as well as men. The New Testament references shepherds who protect or “keeps watch over their flocks” (Luke 2:8) as Christ cares for his believers. Psalm 50:11 notes that God knows the “birds of the air” and they all belong to him. God even makes a covenant (binding agreement) with the “birds of the air” in book of the prophet Hosea 2:18 with the words “I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals (and) the birds of the air” (NSRV).

What does the Bible say about God's creatures or animals in the New Testament? Matthew 10: 29-31 reads “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father...So do not be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows” (NRSV). This scripture is a reminder that God cares for the sparrows even though they are of much less value than humans. There is also a hymn that reminds us that “His (God's) eye is on the Sparrow and I know He watches me.”

New Testament scripture Luke 12:24 notes that God will even feed the ravens. Matthew 6:25-27 reads “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? 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? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” (NRSV). Kittel notes that the word *protect* is “uncommon in the New Testament,” but if you find it, the meaning of it is always “to save.”

Job 12:10 reads “In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being” (NRSV). As far as humanity is concerned, God takes care of those who may not be able to fend for themselves, the widows and the fatherless (Psalm 8:5; Isaiah 1:17; and Isaiah 1:23). No one can do what God does, protecting or caring for so many facets of humanity and the animal kingdom as well.

### Resources

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