

Intro:

So we're just going to dive right in today... You guys remember Covid? I know, we hate remembering that time in history. Looking back and reminiscing on how everything flipped on its head in the matter of a few days. Our society went from normal to anything but normal because of a sickness that we now consider nothing but another flu. We look back now and laugh, but at the time it was literally apocalypse level in some of our minds at the time. Its hard to believe that it was more than 5 years ago, but it was. And I'm sure you all had different experiences than Nathan and I, but we were seniors in college when all that happened and everything for us changed. We hadn't even been married for a year, we were only last stretch of college, we worked in the cafeteria at our college, had no other family in town. So when the shutdown happened, not only were we stuck in a 400 square foot apartment with each other, doing all of our classes online over zoom, but we were also out both of our jobs completely making us even more broke than we already were. So... as you could imagine, we were stressed beyond belief. I don't remember a lot about that season, but what I do remember is that God, as he always seems to, brought me to the section of scripture in Matthew chapter 6 that we are going to be reading from today.

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **27** Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. **29** Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. **30** If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31** So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **34** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Prayer

1st Point:

You are not a dirty bird.

Are there any bird watchers in here? Or people that like actually know things about birds? Im gonna be honest... I don't really like birds. Nor do I really care to know things about them.

Normally they leave me alone, other than pooping all over my car and trying to make nests in our carport, but I'm gonna be honest, I don't think I've ever gonna reach that birdwatching stage that they say everyone gets to when they get old. There are only a few birds I actually care about... sorry to the KU fans, but its not a Jayhawk. My mom is a huge St Louis Cardinals fan, and though I don't really follow baseball, my mom instilled the love for Cardinals in me. So there's the first bird I actually care about. And the second one. I don't think anyone that grew up in the Nebraska school system made it out without learning about the sandhill crane... so I'm about to tell you way to much about a bird you don't care about. Because theres not much else Nebraska has going for it. This is a sandhill crane. They migrate north for the summer and south for the winter and the flocks make a few stops to rest and eat along the way, but one of the major resting places for them is along the Platte river in Nebraska. Hence why they are called the Sandhill cranes, because of the Sandhills of Nebraska. Here is a picture of the Platte river in March when the Sandhill cranes stop to rest. This is just one small spot, but approximately 1 million Cranes stop along an 80 mile stretch of the Platte river in Nebraska during their migration each spring. I cannot imagine how loud and dirty it would be... Well like I said I'm about to tell you way more than you wanted to know about Sandhill Cranes today. All these birds... what do they eat? They aren't very picky eaters. They eat everything from plants to berries to mice and lizards, but their diet mostly consists of grain. Now who can tell me the first thing they think of when they think of Nebraska? Corn! I thought this was crazy so I will share it all with you. In this section of land along the platte river 3 of the counties it covers are among the top 5 producers of corn in the state. There is so much corn in this area in Nebraska that they attribute the 500% growth in Sandhill Crane population over the last 40 years to Corn. So they have tons of corn, the biggest river in the state, for a water source, tons of flat land to rest. All of their needs met in this one spot in the middle of Nebraska that no one else has use for. Now if you asked me if God made that spot specifically for these sandhill cranes, I wouldn't be able to give you a definite answer, but I would have to at least acknowledge that God provides. All these facts that you didn't want to know about Sandhill cranes that I just spewed out of the last 10 minutes all point to this. God Provides for the birds. "Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Verse 25 -27

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **27** Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

The Sandhill cranes aren't stockpiling corn in bushels along the platte river so they have some when they come back the next spring. God gives them what they need. "Are you not much more valuable than they?" It might not be exactly what of how we envisioned it, but God will give you what you need.

Lets keep moving to the next section of this scripture today.

2nd Point:

You are not a fleeting flower.

For my birthday this year Nathan got me flowers, but not the kind of flowers you're probably thinking... Yes those are lego flowers. And yes it took forever to put them together. Nathan knows I love flowers but I hate they don't last and why they start to die they get stinky. These ones are still alive and well. Unlike birds, I do like flowers and care about them a little bit more, but they are fleeting. One of my favorite flowers and the ones we are going to talk about today is the peony. Peonies have a special place in my heart because my grandma had them in her garden, she still does. When they first bloomed we would go out and cut a few to make a bouquet and bring them in and they would always brighten up a room. Now who here has also been told their whole lives that peonies need ants to eat away at them for them to bloom? Well we've all been lied to. Google told me that's not true and because of that google ruined this whole portion of my sermon because I was gonna tell you that God sent the ants so the peonies could bloom and that he provides people to help us so that we can bloom and grow and it was going to be a beautiful analogy. So thanks google. No it didn't ruin it, but I did find that out this week. The real reason you see this when you look at a peony bush is peonies have nectar on the outside of the buds that attract greedy hungry ants that just wanna eat. However, google did tell me that the ants scare the other unwanted pests away that could potentially hurt the buds before they have a chance to bloom. So there is some mutual benefit here. Ants get the nectar peonies get protected until they can bloom.

We recently watched the lion king because Maelie learned that lions roar so I can't help but think of the circle of life when I read this scripture but how can you not see the creation around you and how even the smallest things like ants and corn play rolls for something bigger. The youth group just finished going through a series on King David. So when Nathan, maelie and I went to Branson with my mom and my brothers family last week and we got to go see the show on David at the Sight and Sound theatre I was super excited to get to watch everything that we had spent months reading through. Well then Maelie happened and she wanted to run around the whole time so I had to take her up to the cry room and I missed parts of the show. However later that night my mom and I sat out on the back porch of our Airbnb and talked about the life of David and she asked me questions and we read scripture together, it ended up being a great time. During all of that I was reminded of how David as well as the other psalmists frequently talk about God's provision and intricate design of his creation. I'm going to read a few of them.

Psalm 65- Written by David, starting in verse 5

God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,

who formed the mountains by your power,
 having armed yourself with strength,
who stilled the roaring of the seas,
 the roaring of their waves,
 and the turmoil of the nations.
The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
 where morning dawns, where evening fades,
 you call forth songs of joy.
You care for the land and water it;
 you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
 to provide the people with grain,
 for so you have ordained it.^[d]
You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
 you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
You crown the year with your bounty,
 and your carts overflow with abundance.
The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
 the hills are clothed with gladness.
The meadows are covered with flocks
 and the valleys are mantled with grain;
 they shout for joy and sing.

Psalms 104 - Starting in verse 10

You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
 and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth
 and wine to gladden the heart of man,
oil to make his face shine
 and bread to strengthen man's heart.
The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
 the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
In them the birds build their nests;
 the stork has her home in the fir trees.
The high mountains are for the wild goats;
 the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.

These psalms remind us that not only did God create everything around us, but he designed it perfectly and bring glory to his name. So let's go back and read this section again.

Verse 28 - 30

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. **29** Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. **30** If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?”

One of my professors at MCC, Dr. York said something one day in one of my classes that has always stuck with me. He asked us “what is the most important thing on earth?” And then when we just stared at him blankly for a few seconds he shouted at us “You!” His most prized creation is you. Yet like Jesus says he clothes the grass of the field with beautiful flowers that are fleeting and don’t last. Just like those peonies we would watch bloom in my grandmas back yard every summer. They died. Why do we get so caught up and worked up over the things of this world, when God has proven over and over again that he will give us all we need? And then Jesus just has to throw salt on the wound. And this verse right here always sticks with me. “Will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith?” It might not be clothes you’re worried about, but its something. We are always worried about something. And when our worries start to affect our faith we need to check ourselves.

3rd Point:

Now these last two verses is where it gets really hard for us. Now we gotta talk about priorities. Which is always convicting. Has anyone here heard of Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs? Its a Psychological theory that there are 5 basic needs in life and that in order to reach the next level you have to have the one prior covered. So you gotta make sure you got food, water, shelter and other basics before you need to start worrying about safety and financial security. Makes sense right? Then the next few levels are love and belonging which is our social needs being met. The next one up is self esteem, or the need to be respected, or recognized by others. Then we have the top of the pyramid being Self actualization, which is finding meaning, joy, purpose in life. Now maybe to most this sounds reasonable and it would make sense that we would priorities the bottom layers first. But then we read this section in Matthew 6 and we realize Jesus is calling us to flip this on its head. We need to be relying on him to fill in our blanks and we need to be abiding in him and living for him “Seek first the Kingdom and his Righteousness and all these things will be given to you.”

I grew up in a single parent household, and there were a few years there after my parents got divorced that things were tight. If everything worked according to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs I would have turned out a lot different. But thanks to the Lord’s provision in our lives and because of the faith we had in him, we were provided for, by family, by friends, by church family. We may have missed a few meals here and there, but knowing my grandma that probably wasn’t true. We always had a roof over our heads, we always had clothes and the essentials, because God put people around us as a support system to provide. I was young so

I can't remember much about my thoughts or feelings during that time, but I know I can speak for my mom that she definitely worried, but when she gave it to God, he would always provide. We would volunteer at church and around the community, we would pray and worship God earnestly and we sought him even through the cloudiness of our life. Maybe you aren't struggling your basic needs, but most of us are worrying about something and you need to allow God to prove his provision. To prove his faithfulness. You need to reorder your priorities. Instead of being worried about financial stability, or how successful you are at your job, or if you're involved in all the socially normal activities that create more busyness, maybe you need to look to the top of the pyramid

Verse 33-34

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Live for the here and now. Where does God want you here and now?

So now what?

We just tell ourselves we are gonna seek God's kingdom first and it will all be easy and rainbows and unicorns and butterflies? I wish. This is where it gets hard. I know I'm younger than a lot of you but I have already found out during my time on earth that trusting God is one of the hardest things to do sometimes. To wrap up our Covid experience, Nathan and I did graduate and even though there were a couple months there were finding a job seemed impossible we managed to stay afloat. We got financial help from our families and ate a lot of Ramen. It was cheapest and closest we could get to manna from heaven. But God knew what he was doing. Earlier in the year before covid hit we started meeting with this group lead by this guy we met at Westview. It was a pastoral group that met to talk about spiritual disciplines and after covid hit we stopped meeting but we got a call from this guy and he said hey would you two wanna come lead worship at this church I'm at now? It might not be paid and we don't even know where we are meeting because of covid, but I sense God telling me to ask you to come. So we did. We followed this crazy guy named Art to this little reception hall with a buffalo head and a lot of other creatures mounted all over the walls. We barely had a worship team or knew what we were doing, but we were just trusting because everything that we had been seeking failed. And now here we are 5 years later still with you all and getting to see God continue to use Tru in ways that we never would have imagined back then.

Ask yourself, "What am I prioritizing?" "What am I worried about?" "Am I living in the present?" "Am I seeking God's Kingdom everyday?" "Are you asking him for things instead of asking him how he can use you for his glory?"

Communion:

As we move into communion, we are going to be doing a new song called Abide. And it repeats the phrase "I depend on you" a couple times in the song. I want that to be our prayer today. As we take communion and remember the sacrifice Jesus made for us we acknowledge that we need him. But we also need to acknowledge that it doesn't stop there. We must live out the calling he has given us. To seek first his kingdom and righteousness.

Lets pray.

SANDHILL CRANES, PEONIES, AND PRIORITIES

Matthew 6:25-34

MATTHEW 6:25-34

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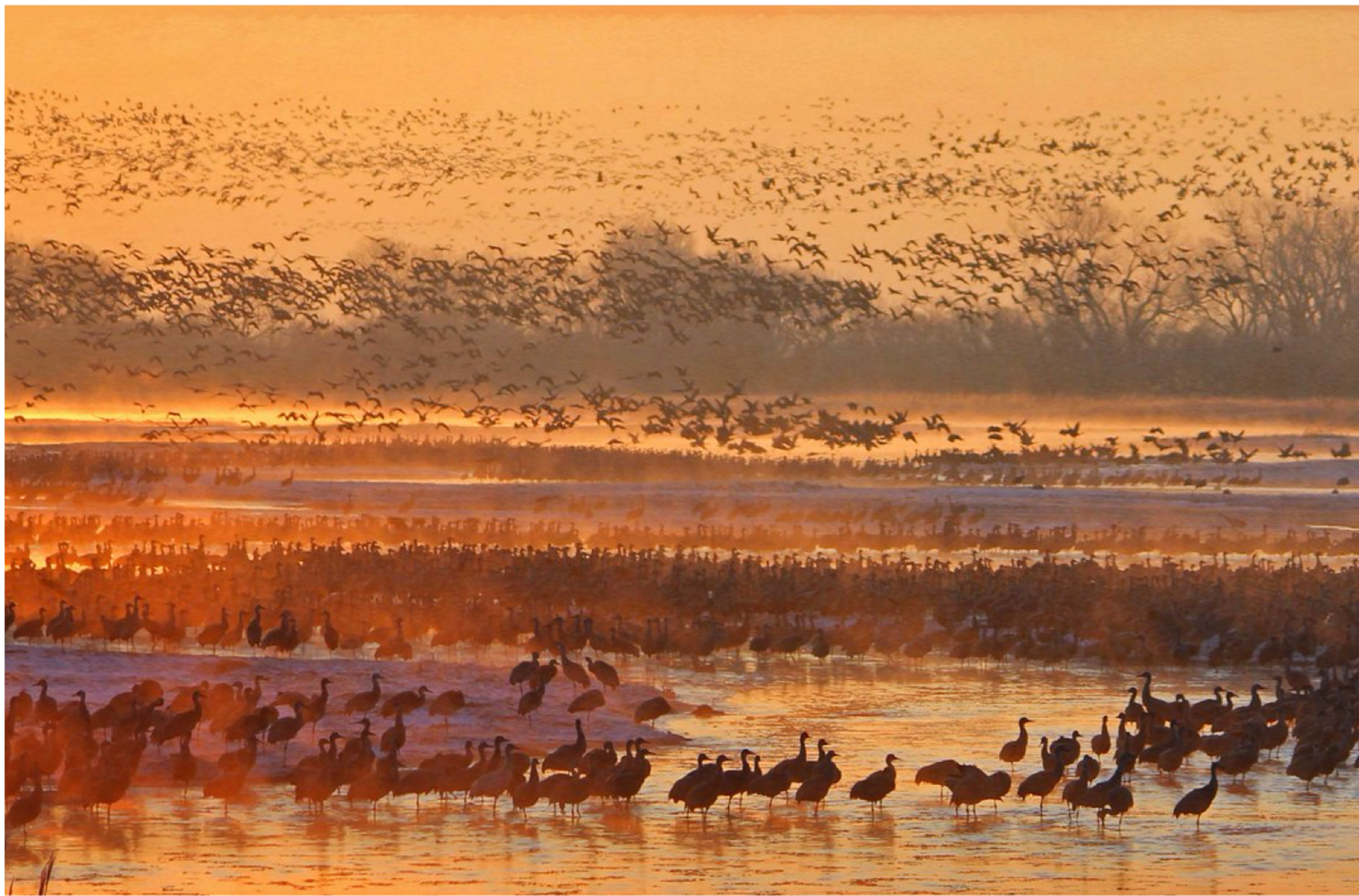
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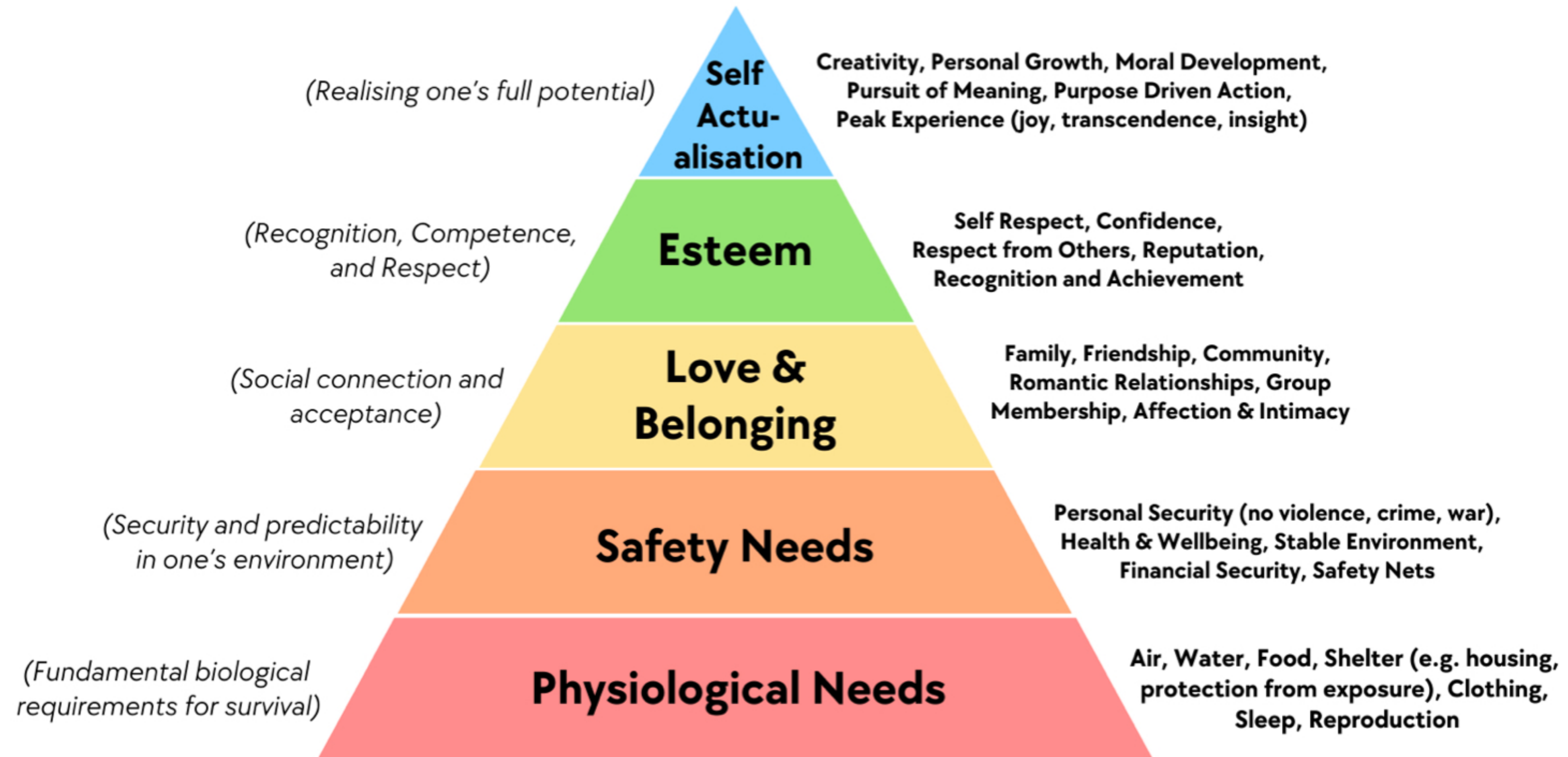






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REFLECTION

- **What are my top priorities in my life right now?**
 - **What am I worried or anxious about?**
 - **Am I seeking God's Kingdom everyday?**
 - **Am I asking him for things instead of asking him how he can use me for his glory?**
-