

the Jesus Storybook Bible

Every story whispers his name

Bible



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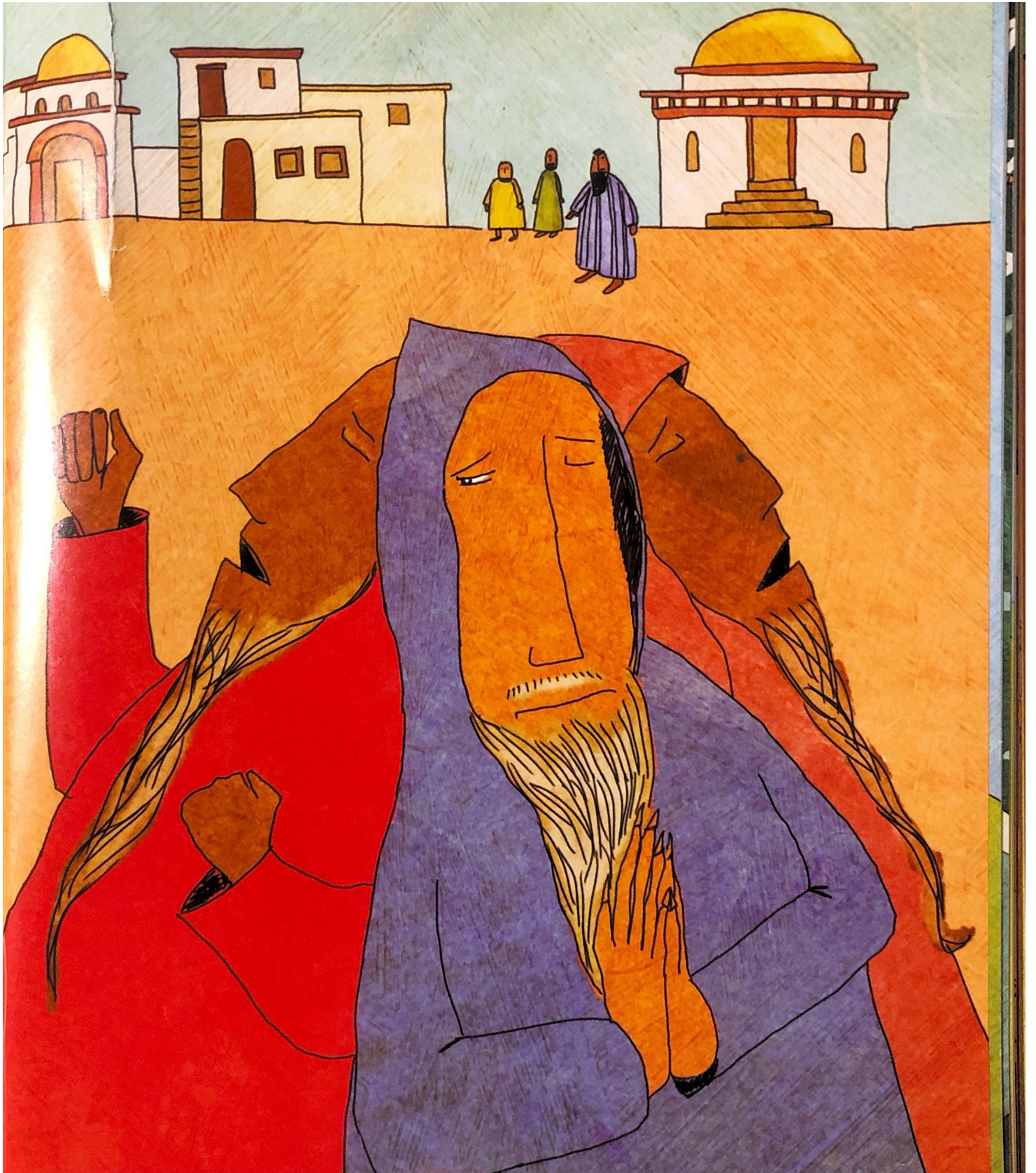
How to pray

*Jesus teaches people about prayer; paraphrase of
The Lord's Prayer, from Matthew 6*

IN THOSE DAYS there were some Extra-Super-Holy People (at least that's what they thought), and they were called "Pharisees." Every day, they would stand out there in the middle of the street and pray out loud in big Extra-Super-Holy Voices. They really weren't praying so much as just showing off. They used lots of special words that were so clever, no one understood what they meant.

People walking by would stop and stare, which might sound rude — except that's exactly what the Extra-Super-Holy People wanted. They wanted everyone to say, "Look at them. They're so holy. God must love those people best."

Now, you and I both know they were wrong — God doesn't just love holy people. But the people walking by weren't so sure. Perhaps you did have to be really clever, or good, or important for God to love you. Perhaps you had to know lots of difficult, clever words to speak to God.



So one day, Jesus taught people how to pray. He said, "When you pray, don't pray like those Extra-Super-Holy People. They think if they say lots of words, God will hear them. But it's not because you're so clever, or good, or so important, that God will listen to you. God listens to you because he loves you.

"Did you know that God is always listening to you? Did you know that God can hear the quietest whisper deep inside your heart, even before you've started to say it? Because God knows exactly what you need even before you ask him," Jesus told them.

"You see, God just can't wait to give you all that you need. So you don't need to use long words or special words. You don't have to use a special voice. You just have to talk.

"So when you pray, pray in your normal voice, just like when you're talking to someone you love very much. Like this ...







Hello Daddy!
We want to know you.
And be close to you.
Please show us how.



Make everything in the world right again.
And in our hearts, too.
Do what is best — just like you do in heaven,
And please do it down here, too.
Please give us everything we need today.
Forgive us for doing wrong, for hurting you.
Forgive us just as we forgive other people
when they hurt us.

Rescue us! We need you.
We don't want to keep running away
and hiding from you.
Keep us safe from our enemies.
You're strong, God.

You can do whatever you want.
You are in charge.

Now and forever and for always!
We think you're great!

Amen!
Yes we do!



You see, Jesus was showing people that God would always love them — with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.

So they didn't need to hide anymore, or be afraid, or ashamed. They could stop running away from God. And they could run to him instead.

As a little child runs into her daddy's arms.



The Singer

The Sermon on the Mount, from Matthew 6, 9, and Luke 12

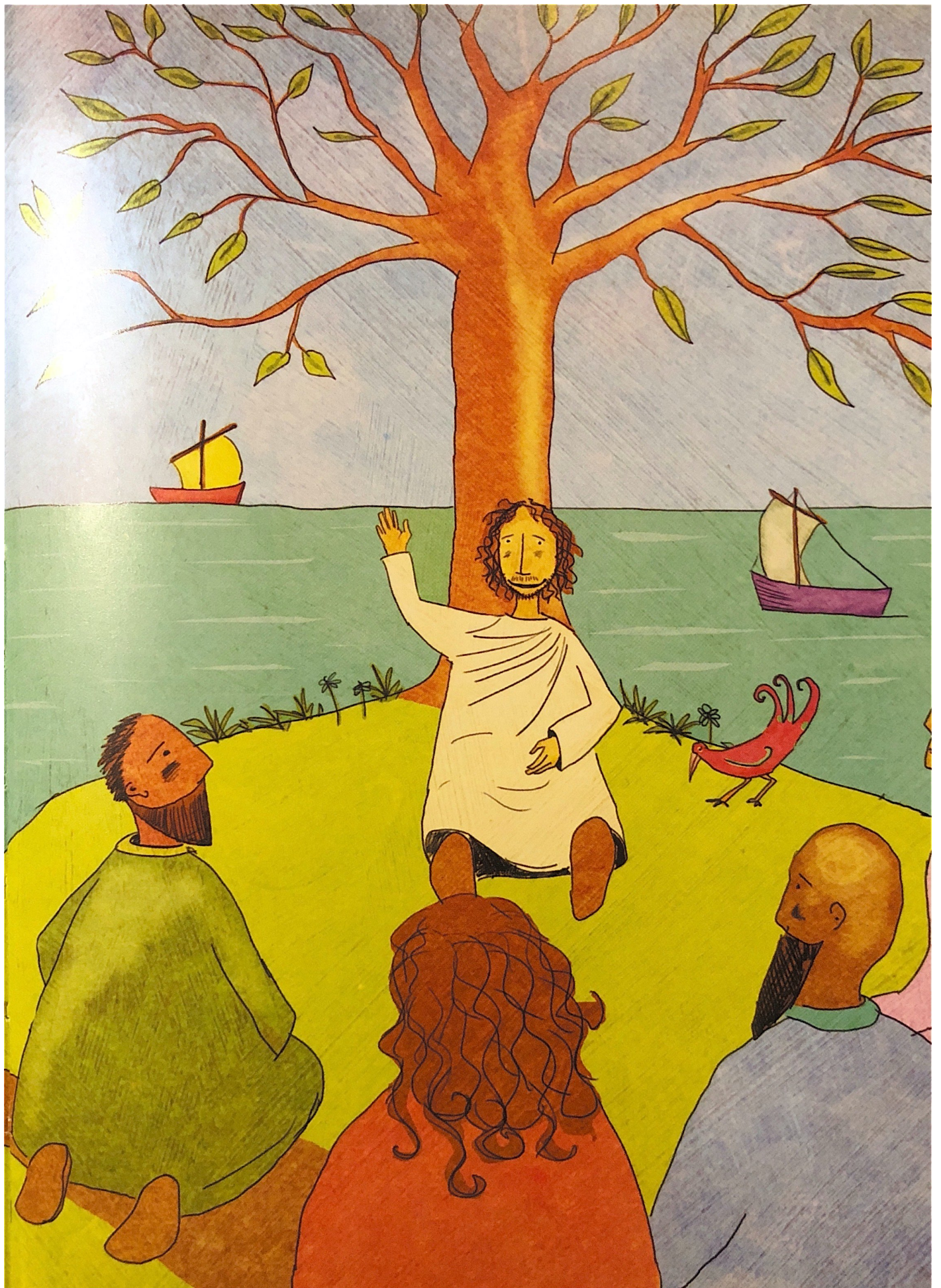
WHEREVER JESUS WENT, lots of people went, too. They loved being near him. Old people. Young people. All kinds of people came to see Jesus. Sick people. Well people. Happy people. Sad people. And worried people. Lots of them. Worrying about lots of things.

What if we don't have enough food? Or clothes? Or suppose we run out of money? What if there isn't enough? And everything goes wrong? And we won't be all right? What then?

When Jesus saw all the people, his heart was filled with love for them. They were like a little flock of sheep that didn't have a shepherd to take care of them. So Jesus sat them all down and he talked to them.

The people sat quietly on the grassy mountainside and listened. From where they sat, they could see the blue lake glittering below them and little fishing boats coming in from a night's catch. The spring air was fresh and clear.







"See those birds over there?" Jesus said. Everyone looked. Little sparrows were pecking at seeds along the stony path.

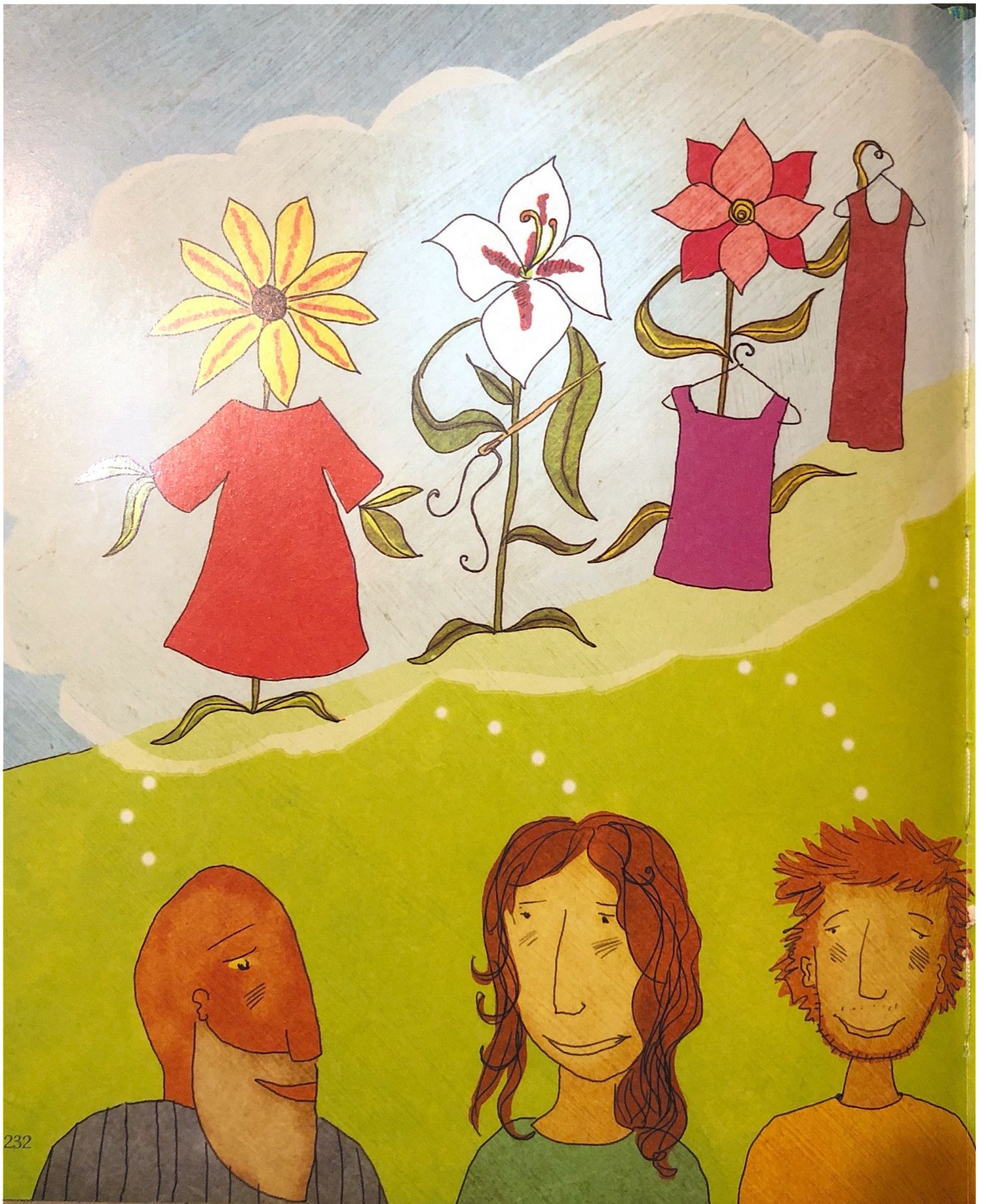
"Where do they get their food? Perhaps they have pantries all stocked up? Cabinets full of food?"

Everyone laughed — who's ever seen a bird with a bag of groceries?

"No," Jesus said. "They don't need to worry about that. Because God knows what they need and he feeds them."









“And what about these wild flowers?”

Everyone looked. All around them flowers were growing. Anemones, daisies, pure white lilies.

“Where do they get their lovely clothes? Do they make them? Or do they go to work every day so they can buy them? Do they have closets full of clothes?”

Everyone laughed again — who’s ever seen a flower putting on a dress?

“No,” Jesus said. “They don’t need to worry about that because God clothes them in royal robes of splendor! Not even a king is that well dressed!”



They had never met a king but, as they gazed out over the lake, glittering and sparkling below them, the hillsides dressed in reds, purples, and golds, they felt a great burden lift from their hearts. They could not imagine anything more beautiful.

"Little flock," Jesus said, "you are more important than birds! More important than flowers! The birds and the flowers don't sit and worry about things. And God doesn't want his children to worry either. God loves to look after the birds and the flowers. And he loves to look after you, too."





Jesus knew that God would always love and watch over the world he had made — everything in it — birds, flowers, trees, animals, everything! And, most of all, his children.

Even though people had forgotten, the birds and the flowers hadn't forgotten — they still knew their song. It was the song all of God's creation had sung to him from the very beginning. It was the song people's hearts were made to sing:

"God made us. He loves us. He is very pleased with us."

It was why Jesus had come into the world: to sing them that wonderful song; to sing it not only with his voice, but with his whole life — so that God's children could remember it and join in and sing it, too.