

FBC Service Sunday April 30 2023 Matthew 10:26-31

“26 **But don't be afraid** of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all.

27 What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

28 “**Don't be afraid** of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.

30 And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. 31 **So don't be afraid**; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.”

Sparrows. Sparrows are all around us. Sparrows are those little brown birds that seem to be everywhere and are one of the more numerous bird species in North America. **Ever present. Unimportant. Unimpressive. Unassuming.**

We see them often on our outside bird feeder.

Sparrows don't draw attention to themselves. They're are not majestic like eagles with their white headed feathers and eight foot wide wing spans. Nor do they have long elegant legs like the blue heron. **They don't soar in the wind like seagulls. Nor do they squawk noisily like crows.**

Nor do they stretch out in a posed position like cormorants. Often we only notice eagles, hawks, seagulls, crows and turkey buzzards, but we hardly ever notice the sparrows. Here in the southwest Ontario we don't go “**sparrow watching.**” **No, sparrows are hardly noticed as you see them flutter by.**

There are so many different species of sparrows here in North America I couldn't name them all. Normally, we don't even bother to pause and look at them because they're so ordinary, and we see them everywhere these “little brown blobs.

It's with these images of these little brown birds which are so common, so unnoticeable, so unremarkable, that we approach the teachings of Jesus today.

Jesus taught that the sparrows of his day would be sold in the town market for a penny or two.

Jesus said: “**God does not forget a single one of them.**” (Luke 12) Whoa! Wow! **No, not one.**

Not one sparrow is forgotten by God. Jesus taught it. Jesus said it.

But why did He tell this story about tiny little sparrows that nobody seems to care about? This was his way of saying that not one human being is forgotten by God.

Jesus also said, “You are more valuable than sparrows.” If the Lord remembers all the sparrows of time and history, then He remembers all human beings from time and history.

We human beings are more valuable than sparrows. Jesus taught it. Jesus said it. This was his way of saying that every human being is valuable to God.

We recall the words of that famous song about the sparrow:

“Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,

Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,

When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

For many of us, those words have deep meaning. “I know God’s eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me.”

Jesus repeats himself three times in this passage from Matthew 10. He begins and ends with the same exhortation, and He repeats it in the middle:

“Don’t be afraid” (26).

“Don’t be afraid” (28).

“Don’t be afraid” (31).

It’s not hard to trace the argument of these verses.

First, don’t be afraid because the truth will prevail.

What is hidden will be revealed. What is spoken in secret will be shouted from the housetops. Every evil deed will be exposed in the light of God’s blazing truth. No one will be able to hide; all will be revealed. God’s truth wins out in the end.

Second, don’t be afraid because God is greater than anything man can do to us.

All they can do is kill us. That’s the worst they can do. Why fear man whose power ends at the grave? Instead, fear the Lord, who made body and soul.

Third, don’t be afraid because God takes special care of us.

He sees the sparrow as it falls. He numbers the hairs on our head. We’re worth more than many sparrows to the Lord. **So why be afraid of anything?** That’s a good question, but the answer isn’t so simple.

We live in dangerous times. The news headlines tell a grim story just about every day:

Where can we go for safety when there is so much trouble on every hand? Verses 29-31 offer us three reasons why we should not be afraid.

Reason # 1: God Cares About Things We Don't Notice.

"What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it" (Matthew 10:29).

If you check your Bible dictionary, you'll discover sparrows were among the humblest birds in Bible times. Because they were so cheap, the poor could offer sparrows to the Lord if they couldn't afford a lamb or a goat or a bull.

You could buy two sparrows for a penny. That's pretty cheap by any standard. A buck would buy you a whole bag full of sparrows. You could feed your family sparrow casserole for a dime.

It's astonishing that God sees those little sparrows when they fall. Jesus is telling us God cares about things we don't even notice.

Note two implications of this truth:

1) The sparrows do fall. Even the little sparrows fall to the ground eventually. **Sooner or later troubles do come to all of God's children.** Sometimes we fall into the romantic notion that when we come to Christ all our problems will disappear.

Not so. He makes his rain fall on the just and the unjust.

What happens to the people of the world happens to us too. They get sick; we get sick. They lose their jobs; we lose our jobs. They get ripped off; we get ripped off. They have family issues, we do too.

It's the same for us as for everyone else. Though we know the Lord, we're not exempt from any of the trials and troubles of this world.

2) The sparrows fall according to the Father's will. As the great confessions tell us, all things take place according to the counsel and decree of Almighty God. There's a very real sense in which everything in the universe must fit into God's ultimate plan somehow.

Even the falling of the sparrow is part of God's providential oversight of the universe. This applies to our pain, our suffering, our loss, and it applies to the heartache of watching our loved ones suffer.

Everything fits somewhere

Reason # 2: God Cares About the Tiniest Details of Life

"The very hairs on your head are all numbered." (Matthew 10:30). Have you ever tried to count the number of hairs on your head? Most of us probably tried that when we were children, but we quickly learned it was a futile exercise. So a little bit of trivia. **What is the average number of hairs etc.**

Scientists say the average human head has 100,000 strands of hair. They also tell us fifty strands fall out each day, no matter what we do. Interestingly, the amount of hair varies by colour. Blondes have an average of 140,000 strands of hair, brunettes 105,000, and redheads 90,000.

All of this is fascinating trivia, but it's not something I think about often. And when I do think about my hair, it's always, is it too long or too short, and is it time for a haircut?

I never pick out a strand of hair and say to myself, "I wonder how Number 437 is doing?" **I don't number the hairs on my head, but God does.** Think about that for a moment.

In my family that would mean;

100,000 for me

100,000 for Wyn

100,000 for Mike

100,000 for Amanda

100,000 for Jonathan

100,000 for Matthew

100,000 for Ben

100,000 for Tori

100,000 for Jarrett

100,000 for Aynsley

100,000 for Joshua

100,000 for Zachary

100,000 for Alexandra

100,000 for Sam

That's 1.4 million for my family alone. God counts all the hairs of all his children. Millions and billions of hairs. He numbers them all. The meaning of this is clear: **If God cares for things that matter so little, then He cares for things that matter much more.**

If God knows each strand of hair individually, He knows each of us individually as well. God's knowledge of us is not just general; **it's amazingly specific.** He knows us through and through, and He knows us in minute detail. In fact, He knows us far better than we know ourselves.

In a sermon on this verse, Charles Spurgeon illustrates God's minute care from the life of Joseph in Genesis 37-50. He points out there was a "chain of circumstances" that had to happen in a particular way for the story to take place as it did.

Spurgeon offers a long series of questions. Why did Jacob want to send Joseph? Why were Joseph's brothers on this particular day in a different location? Why did the Ishmaelites come along at that moment? Why were they in the mood to purchase a slave?

Why were they going to Egypt and not to some other destination? Why did Potiphar purchase Joseph? Why did his wife have designs on Joseph? Why were the baker and cupbearer in the prison when Joseph was there?

Why couldn't Pharaoh remember his dream? Why did the cupbearer first forget Joseph and later remember him?

Spurgeon points out that every single one of these seemingly unconnected events had to happen in a particular way at a particular time, for Joseph to be in the right place at the right time to preserve his family in Egypt during the great famine in Canaan.

Spurgeon goes on to say, "God is to be seen in the little things." They are the "minutiae or seemingly small and unimportant details of Providence."

Reason # 3: God Cares About Us Even When Trouble Comes.

"Don't be afraid! You are worth more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31). Here is the heart of the matter. Tiny sparrows, worth so little, and yet God cares for each of them. **But you're worth more than a bushel of sparrows.**

How do I know this? **Because Jesus didn't die for sparrows. He died for you and me.** His blood is the badge of his love, the proof of his everlasting affection. Jesus didn't die for the sparrows

What then, should this truth do for us? **First**, it should give us boldness in the time of trouble. If God is for us, and He is, why should we fear anything or anyone? **Second**, it should give us confidence in the moment of uncertainty.

Today many things are unclear, uncertain, and undecided. We all have many more questions than we have answers. One day God will make all things plain, and all His ways will be proved right.

Third, it should give us hope in the time of sorrow. Oh, we weep, all of us weep, the tears flow behind closed doors and in the private moments of life. When we face death, how can we not weep for loved ones who have left us? But be of good cheer.

Even death itself is in God's hands. If you're a Christian, you cannot die before God's appointed time.

A Christian is immortal until his work on earth is done.

And so we come to the bottom line. Do you believe nothing ever happens by chance? We must say what the Bible says, that “all things” work together as part of God’s unfolding plan of redemption. **If this is so, then there is no such thing as luck or fate or chance.**

As Tony Evans likes to say, everything is either caused by God or allowed by God in His permissive will. And there is no third category. **The Bible teaches it. Do you believe it? I do.**

Let this great truth be the source of your security. Rest in the Lord. Lay your soul upon the solid rock of God’s eternal providence. Rest in his control over all things. **(Check Time Here)**

In 1871 a great fire destroyed much of the city of Chicago, killing three hundred people and leaving one hundred thousand homeless. A Chicago lawyer named Horatio Spafford lost part of his fortune in the fire. He was a Christian and an associate of the great evangelist D. L. Moody.

After spending several years rebuilding his fortune and helping those who lost everything in the fire, Mr. Spafford resolved to take his wife and four children in England, where they could accompany Moody and Ira Sankey on their evangelistic crusades.

After purchasing tickets on a luxury liner set to sail in November 1873, Mr. Spafford was unable to go at the last moment because of unfinished business in Chicago.

He instructed his wife Anna and their four children, Maggie, Tanetta, Annie, and Bessie, to go on ahead and He would cross the Atlantic on a later voyage and meet them in England. On November 21 an English sailing vessel struck the luxury liner, causing it to sink in only 12 minutes.

Hundreds were lost and only 47 survivors were pulled from the icy waters. In the chaos of the sinking ship, all four Spafford daughters drowned.

Rescuers found Anna Spafford unconscious and clinging to a piece of wreckage. She and the other survivors were taken to Cardiff, Wales. From there she cabled the awful news to her husband in America: **“Saved alone.”**

Brokenhearted, Mr. Spafford purchased a ticket on the next ship leaving New York. At one point the captain called Mr. Spafford to his cabin and told him that according to the charts, the ship was passing over the spot where his daughters had drowned. Going back to his cabin, He composed the words to a beloved hymn we still sing today:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows, like sea-billows, roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It’s well, it’s well, with my soul.
Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,

And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

And no doubt thinking of the day when He would be reunited with his daughters, He penned the final verse:

“Lord, haste the day!”

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,

The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;

The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,

Even so, it's well with my soul.

All is well because God is in control of all things, even the hardest tragedies of life. This truth does not remove the pain, but it makes a way for us to keep believing even while our hearts are breaking.

May God give us this same faith, so no matter what happens, we may still say, “It is well, it is well with my soul.”

Share with your family and friends that not one human life is forgotten by God, that their life is known and remembered by God.

As someone has said, God in heaven carries a wallet in His pocket, and in that wallet are pictures of you and me. Just as the Lord has an image of every sparrow in mind, so the Lord God carries a picture of you and me in His heart.

“Not one sparrow is forgotten by God our Father.” Learn these words. Memorize them. Put them deep into your heart. Our God watches us even more than He watches those little brown blobs called sparrows

Prayer: Lord God, we thank you that you know all things. There is so much we don't know, and so much we don't understand. Fix our eyes clearly on you. Let faith rise to banish our fear.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**