

Nothing to Fear

Matthew 10:29-31

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

In this chapter Jesus is sending out his disciples for some missionary work. He goes on to give them instructions on how to proceed. He lays out some of the hurdles they will encounter and he doesn't sugar coat his message. Their ministry will bring out the worst from their enemies. But in the verses which include our text, he assures them that as his chosen ones they have nothing to fear.

Jesus directs our attention to some common, ordinary birds to assure us of God's providential care. To this day sparrows are not highly valued compared to many other birds. At the time of the apostles, sparrows were sometimes used for food. Some tell us that sparrows were considered a delicacy, but the very low price for which they were sold seems rather to indicate that they would serve as food for poor people when they couldn't afford anything better. A normal wage for a laborer was a denarius per day. A penny was 1/16 of a denarius. Yet the God who created sparrows watches over them and not one of them falls to the ground unless He permits it.

Jesus moves next to the example of the knowledge of the number of hairs we possess. What no person would want to do, what our Father has done: counted each hair on our heads. He knows us down to the minutest detail. (TLSB)

Does this mean that evil will not befall Jesus' disciples? No. Rather, it means that when difficulties or persecutions or even martyrdom comes, the disciples are still under the Father's loving care, and it means that he is with them even when they are suffering and dying. Probably the greatest fear of a Christian who is suffering for the sake of Christ is that God has abandoned him. The doubting human tendency is to think that God allows suffering and even death because he has forsaken us (cf. the disciples in 8:25). Jesus' words are as strong as they are gently understated: "Therefore, do not fear; you are worth more than many sparrows" (10:31).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, through Word and Sacrament, assure me of your loving care and drive fear from my heart. Amen. (TLSB)