

His Eye Is On The Sparrow

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. I'm Sarah Christaff and I'd like to share a song that reminds me of who God is and what he's done for me. His Eyes on the Sparrow, which has been sung in this church a few times by Sue Phillips over the years.

Through life's most difficult times, I'm reminded of how God is with me and he sees me. It reminds me to focus on his goodness and I'll lose my doubts and fears.

I am important to God. I love birds, yet the sparrow is common and not much appreciated in the bird world. The song lyrics mention, whenever I'm tempted, whenever clouds arise, when songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies, I draw closer to him from care he sets me free. His eyes on the sparrow and I know he watches me.

I can still hear Sue's sweet voice, as beautiful as the songbirds in spring. Even though she went through some difficult times, she'd still get up here in front of the church and profess her love to God so beautifully and with conviction.

Hi. Thanks, Kathy. That was marvelous. All right. What a joy it is to be here among you friends this morning. I am going to start with a psalm of David.

[1 : 2 4] Psalm 8, verses 1 through 9. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory in the heavens.

Through the praise of children and infants, you have established a stronghold against your enemies to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them.

You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet.

All flocks and herds and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

And from our Lord Jesus, from Matthew, chapter 10, verses 21 through 22 through 31. You will be hated by everyone because of me.

[2 : 4 2] But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.

Truly, I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master.

It is enough for students to be like their teachers and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of the household.

So do not be afraid of them. For there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight.

What is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[3 : 51] Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your father's care. And even the very hairs on your head are all numbered.

So don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray together.

Almighty and gracious God, we are indeed overwhelmed by grace. Overwhelmed by love and overwhelmed by praise today. As your spirit moves among us, Lord, come and fall fresh on us again.

Reignite that fire in each heart that we may go into the world shining bright for you. And the world will see your light in the midst of so much darkness around us. Give each of us what you know we need.

In Jesus' most holy name we pray. Amen. Amen. So, who wants to play a game? Let's play a little game this morning. All right.

[4 : 53] So, here's what I want you to do. Adrian's going to put a picture up here. And I want you to find Woodstock. All right.

That's all you get. That's all you get. All right. How many of us got him? A few. All right. It's fewer than I expected.

I want you to hold that thought. Okay. Now, see, here's the thing. We've been in this journey for a while. This idea of my story and my song.

And you just heard Sarah give us a powerful reflection about how this really popular hymn that many of us know speaks to our souls. And it speaks to something that you probably can appreciate a little bit differently after just 10 seconds.

Because if you struggled to find a little yellow bird in a picture, right? And it got lost among all those different little birds.

[6 : 04] I want you to consider something else. When you consider all the stars in the sky, all the planets in the universe. When you consider all the different ways people are struggling.

Right? Because you may be sitting here in a moment of grief right now. But did you know that in 2022, 3.2 million people passed away?

And think of all the different lives that are still grieving those folks. That you may be struggling with an illness or know someone who is.

Somebody may be sick or hurt. Last year, more than 35 million people were admitted to hospitals. You may be sitting here worried about a particular struggle in your life.

Say, that might be financial. Best data we have right now suggests that in the United States, more than 38 million people live in poverty. 38 million.

[7 : 08] 15 million were laid off at the end of 2022. Now, in the midst of all of that, consider that your story, in the midst of all those different stories, then there are the people around you who know your story.

Those in your life, the people you talk to every single day. And even in the midst of your struggle, sometimes they don't feel like they get it. It's like you don't feel what I'm feeling.

Do you understand what it means to carry this weight around in my spirit? And these are the people who love you. The people who see you. The people who know you. And yet, it's easy for us to fall into this kind of discouragement that makes us think we're invisible and unseen.

One story among all those millions we were talking about. One story in the midst of all the people you may interact with over the course of a given week.

But here's the good news. God's eye is on the sparrow. God's eye is on the sparrow. God's eye is on the sparrow. And yes, he watches you.

[8 : 32] You are never out of God's sight. That if you are feeling a little invisible in this great, big, loud, noisy world, know that God sees you, understands you, and truly loves you.

Now, that's hard for us to remember when those circumstances are hitting a little hard. When those life stresses start to overwhelm us.

But the fact that we may forget doesn't make it any less true. You know, that psalm you heard Louis read today.

Sometimes I think we forget how truly amazing that is. You know, God doesn't have to deal with us like this. Sometimes we just take that for granted.

God doesn't have to operate this way. Hear that line, right? What is humanity that you are mindful of them? When you think of all the stars in the universe, all the life on this planet, what is humankind that you are mindful of us?

[9 : 52] Not only mindful of us as humanity, but deeply involved in the details of your journey. Walking right alongside you, with you.

How cool is that? You know, sometimes we forget that, right? That there's nothing that you do that God doesn't see.

You know, sometimes we flip that into the bad news part, right? Because we think we can get away with stuff. It's like maybe God doesn't know I did that. Or maybe if I turn the lights off and close the door, God doesn't know that I did that.

But we know that's not true. But the thing that makes that part the bad news is in those hard parts, in those struggles, in those deep moments, should be the source of our living hope, should be the source of our strength.

His eye is on the sparrow. And he cares about you. It's so easy to lose that truth.

[11 : 07] You know, as we go a little deeper into this verse, and we think a little bit about this song, you know, this one has been a personal favorite. Like most of you in here, I grew up singing this a lot. And this is one of the sort of go-to songs in my playlist.

But a lot of us don't know where that song came from. So I want to give you a little backstory on this song. The song was written in 1905 by a woman named Sevilla Martin.

And this is her account of where the story came from. Early in the spring of 1905, my husband and I were sojourning in Elmira, New York.

We contracted a deep friendship for a couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Doolittle, true saints of God. Mrs. Doolittle had been bedridden for nigh 20 years.

Her husband was an incurable cripple who had to propel himself to and from his business in a wheelchair. Despite their afflictions, they lived happy Christian lives, bringing inspiration and comfort to all who knew them.

[12 : 21] One day while we were visiting with the Doolittles, my husband commented on their bright hopefulness and asked them for the secret of it.

Mrs. Doolittle's reply was simple. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me. The beauty of this simple expression of boundless faith gripped the hearts and fired the imagination of Dr. Martin and me.

The hymn, His Eye is on the Sparrow, was the outcome of that experience. How powerful is that? But think about that story.

Here you have this woman who was bedridden. Her husband can't walk. And this is 1905, when people weren't worried about accessibility.

And he has to get to and from his work in a wheelchair. And yet their testimony to the world is one of faith and joy.

[13 : 29] One of boundless hope because they know that God's eye is on the sparrow and that God cares about them. How easy is it for us to fall into a trap of discouragement?

How easy is it for us to get a little down when things aren't going as planned? No, we're not going to sit here and pretend this is a fairy tale. I'm sure that the Doolittles had their days.

But that doesn't change the overall point of the story. And that is where we need to sit a little bit today.

Because in the midst of this big, loud, noisy world, when you were struggling to find Woodstock, how cool is it to think that God never loses you in the big picture?

He knows exactly what's going on with you. He knows exactly where you are, knows exactly what you're dealing with, and is right there with you in it.

[14 : 40] But it's so easy for us to not feel that. So easy for us to forget that. I want to take us to a different place with this because we can get that idea that his eye is on the sparrow and feel the encouragement that comes from it.

But the verse, the verse that's underneath it, you heard Louie read it today. And I want us to sit with it for a little bit. So we're in Matthew 10, if you want to follow along.

And I'm just going to read the verses that are about the sparrow part. So we're going to start at verse 29. Matthew 10, 29. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?

Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid.

You are worth more than many sparrows. Sparrows. Just like Sarah shared in her reflection, right? Sparrows are common. We tend not to pay attention to them.

[15 : 44] And that they're not the big pretty birds that everybody goes looking for, right? But they are under God's care.

God sees and watches them. So then how much more do you think God watches and cares for you? The key about this verse is let's put it back into its context.

See, the story here is Jesus is sending the disciples out in mission. And he knows that they're afraid. Because he knows the world is going to be hostile to what they have to share.

He knows that people aren't going to just be open to receiving the message that they're going to preach. And he's reassuring them. Now, with that in mind, what's the story?

Just like the Doolittles, what's the story you're telling the world? You know, because those friends of yours who know you go to church, if when you are overwhelmed and when your circumstances go sideways, do you look like the rest of the world?

[17 : 04] Or are you a person that can bear witness to a God whose eye is on the sparrow and cares about you? When things get hard and aren't going exactly according to plan, does your behavior look like everybody else?

Or will you testify with how you move through life that God's eye is on the sparrow and I know he is with me?

See, that's the power of this. Because we tell our story whether we are consciously telling our story or not. And that is where we need to pause.

You see, because all of us have our times. All of us have our stuff. And as we said, it's real hard sometimes not to feel invisible in this big, loud, noisy world.

But in the midst of it all, are you holding on to the hope you profess? Are you bearing witness to the fact that God has indeed made a difference for you?

[18 : 28] Because if God has made a difference for you, hear the words. Why should I feel discouraged?

Why should the shadows come? Why should the shadows come? You hear that? Why would I be discouraged?

See, because that's who your God is. That's what he's done for you. And if even in the midst of your storm you know that this is your truth, then hear the rest of the song.

Sing because you are happy. Sing because you know you are free. Because if you don't know, maybe you need to get reminded.

Because sometimes we forget. As I said, them circumstances will creep on in, right? We will have our moments. We'll stumble. We'll fall. It gets heavy. It gets hard.

[19 : 37] Y'all know me well enough to know I don't come up here and preach fairy tales. This is the real world. And with that, did you hear a witness today?

Nancy gave us a powerful witness this morning about his eye is on the sparrow. Let that remind you.

Sarah came up here today and gave you a powerful witness. His eye is on the sparrow. We sing because we're happy. And we sing because we're free.

That's who our God has been to us. So now, when the storms rise, when the shadows come, let your story tell that story.

Don't be the person who, folks, will see that little jewelry hanging around your neck but then wonder why you are so broken, why you are so sad.

[20 : 46] Hear me and don't get it twisted. You will have your feelings. If someone in your life dies, you're supposed to be sad. Okay? If you get laid off from your job, no one's going to ask you to smile.

But your joy, but your peace, are about something much bigger than your circumstances. You will have your feelings.

But don't ever let it get to the point where you forget that you have indeed been set free. That you have indeed been seen, loved, and understood by the almighty sovereign creator of the universe.

and that no matter what is happening in front of you, your God, your almighty sovereign saving God is right there in it with you.

His eye is on the sparrow and know he watches you. Amen? Amen.

[22 : 04] Loving and gracious God, we know that you have shown us the depth of your love. That you have shown us the immense grace and peace that flows from being connected to you.

And Lord, when our storms come, because we know our storms will come, we can trust that we are with the one who commands the wind and the waves.

the one who can speak peace to the storm. The one who can speak peace to a broken and hurting heart. The one that can heal a hurting and pain ridden body.

God, we know that you are who you always promised and said you would be. So let us not sink into discouragement. Let us bear witness.

let us testify like those we have heard today. Your eye is on the sparrow and we know that you watch and walk and hold and care for each and every one of us.

[23 : 20] Amen. Amen. Now y'all sang that line. Everybody sang it, right? All my life, all I know, God's been good.

All right. So now that we can say it out loud, full throat, and we know it to be true and you know that you are seen, understood, and loved by God, bear witness in this broken and hurting world as to who our God truly is.

If you're looking for ways to live your faith this week, a couple things I want to draw your attention to. First, clipboards should have gone around today and let you know that we have needs for VBS. If you want to donate any of those materials, make sure you sign up for that.

We have a new Bible study starting on Thursday, which is going to be the study of Elijah. We're going to be talking about Elijah the prophet. And so if you want to be a part of that, we're going to be on our regular Thursday schedule, Thursday morning session, Thursday evening session, and Thursday evening session will be online as well.

Plenty of opportunities to also give to other ministries. We have Feeding Hope coming up. There's the Clara's Closet Need. They sent out a call for some donations as well as ongoing thing for Christmas in July.

[24 : 34] If you want to talk about any of that, you can see DJ after church or you can look further in your bulletin. Now with that, let's receive our benediction. in the name of God, our creator and king, and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our advocate and our sustainer.

May God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children. Amen.