

7th July 2022

Sparrows

**"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.
So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."**

Bible, Matthew 10:29, 31

Following my piece on swallows recently as I reflected on the origins of my house's name, I was reminded that the swallow isn't the only bird mentioned in Psalm 84. For the Psalmist reflects on the sparrow finding a place to rest as well as the swallow building a home for her young.

Passer Domesticus – the House Sparrow – is the most widely distributed wild bird in the world and has a long history of association with human habitation. Not surprisingly, references to it spring up in literature through the ages. The ancient Greeks associated sparrows with the goddess Aphrodite, and, perhaps because of their perceived lustfulness, they're also mentioned by Chaucer and Shakespeare. But it's Jesus' reference to sparrows in Matthew's Gospel that is my focus today.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" Jesus asks. Common, ubiquitous, familiar ... look at the sparrows, little birds to which you give little thought and which you may not even value. And yet, not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's care. So, my friends, if God cares that much for the common *Passer Domesticus*, why would you worry about whether He cares for you? It's a given, isn't it? For are you not worth more, much more, than many sparrows? A powerful message indeed.

I came across a gospel hymn recently called *His Eye is on the Sparrow*. It was written in 1905 by Civilla Martin, with a melody by Charles Gabriel. It's closely linked with the actress-singer, Ethel Waters, who also used the title for her autobiography. The lyrics are full of Christian symbolism, but I was taken with these lines from the middle of the song.

*I sing because I'm happy; and I sing because I'm free.
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.*

We can't sing all the time, of course, and happiness isn't our constant state of mind. But when we have freedom, and when, despite everything, we know we matter, that we're still worth looking after, isn't that worth singing about along with the sparrows?

A prayer for today

A God who helps me when I fall and waits for me to sing His praises ... I like that. Amen