

## 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday A

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Romans 5:12-15; Mt 10:26-33

Out of all birds, sparrows are the most common and the most plentiful of all birds. This being so, they are not valued very highly at all.

Yet from thousands of bird species we see around us, native and introduced, seabirds and shorebirds, Jesus in today's Gospel chose the most insignificant, least-noticed, pint size scruffiest bird, to speak to us about the greatest thing of all: God's love, God's care for us.

If God cares for the smallest and least significant of creatures, the sparrow, how much more God loves and care for us.

And if God is concerned about each of us, why should we be filled with fear?" Jesus asks, "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin?" "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. So don't be afraid."

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Our world is dominated by fear and more so today by the global pandemic. We all feel it often, whether in the workplace or at home, in the emergency room or at the altar.

For some of us it's a daily occurrence. It almost seems to be part of our very make-up, who we are as human beings. And yet, God seems to be telling us not to have any of these anxieties. Listen again to a few of the phrases from today's Gospel passage from Matthew.

**"Fear no one ... And do not be afraid of those who kill the body ... So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."**

Over and over again God tells us not to be afraid. That theme is all over the New Testament. So what role, if any, is fear to play in our lives? Is a life without fear realistic?

None have to tell us that fear is a powerful motivator. Individually and collectively. In a certain way, it can bring people together. Think of the recent demonstrations in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic across the nation and the new world we live in.

In the wake of George Floyd's tragic death we rallied around one another in the hope we could allay our fears – we now know where that led us – to more fear in recent days.

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The daily news often works this way too. Our fears heighten when we learn about the coronavirus spikes in many cities including Honolulu, the anticipated signs of the second wave and the threat of another lock down.

We are shocked by the looting and destruction by those taking advantage of the situation. We feel a sense of connectedness as we share these similar fears. For this collective fear can point us in a very specific direction. So is fear a good thing?

To some extent I'd have to say "yes". Our shared human experience tells us this. But Jesus is saying something else. So, what is Jesus cautioning us against?

Well, one thought certainly comes to mind. If we all agree that fear is a powerful motivator, then we can probably all agree that the real danger lies in allowing fear to become our principal motivator.

Remember God loves and cares for us more than we can imagine. If we all allow God's love to enter into our hearts and being, and consider ourselves to be very lovable, then fear can no longer have room in us.

After all, as St. Paul reassures us of God's gracious gift in today's second reading.

**"For if by the transgression of the one the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many."**

Indeed, just as through Adam sin entered the world, so through Jesus Christ did the grace of God and the gracious gift of God abound for all.

Let us, therefore, thank God for his incredible love for us - in the face of our own fears, weaknesses, and sins – boundlessly and not conditionally, generously and not stingily, willingly and not begrudgingly, continually and not once in a while. And if God loves imperfect you and imperfect me, then may we see ourselves in others, and be willing to give them the same gift God has given us - love.

**"So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."**