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# FEAR NOT: THE GOD WHO KNOWS EVERY SPARROW

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Pastor Rebecca's sermon from 21  
June 2026, St Anne's Lutheran Church  
in London.

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Fear Not: The God Who Knows Every Sparrow

Matthew 10:24–31

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Earlier this month, the Racial Justice Enabling Group of Churches Together in England met to talk about our purpose and our work, we found ourselves asking some hard but necessary questions: why racial justice matters, why we must keep going, and how the Church should respond in a world where racial prejudice, hate crime and exclusion are still very real.

We were honest about our hopes, but also honest about our fears and our limitations. And it was striking that right at the centre of our conversation were centred on this Gospel passage and the words of Jesus: “Do not be afraid.”

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus is speaking to the twelve disciples as he prepares them to go out on mission. He sends them out to share the good news, but he does not pretend that it will be easy. In fact, he is very honest with them. He tells them to expect rejection, hostility, suffering, and even danger.

Jesus is not naïve. He does not promise safety or success or that everyone will welcome them. Instead, knowing exactly what lies ahead, he says: “Do not be afraid.”

Three times he says it. Not because there is nothing to fear, but because fear must not be the thing that defines or controls their lives. Jesus knows that fear can shape us, shrink us, and even stop us from following him fully.

And so he is clear: courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is when fear is not in charge. Courage is choosing faithfulness, even when we don't know how things will turn out.

This week we mark Refugee Week, and the theme this year is courage. The UNHCR has also highlighted the courage, resilience, and contribution of refugees, and the importance of protection, dignity, and hope—especially as we mark the 75th anniversary of the Refugee Convention.

Refugee Week tells the story of people who have had to leave home, family, and everything familiar, who have travelled through uncertainty and are trying to rebuild life somewhere new. It is about real courage—lived courage, everyday courage.

But it also reminds us that courage is not only theirs. It is something we are called into as well: the courage to welcome, the courage to listen, the courage to stand alongside those seeking safety and belonging.

And that matters, because Jesus is speaking these words not to people in comfort, but to people stepping into uncertainty. People who will have to trust God in places where they have no control.

That is why this Gospel speaks so directly into our own world.

We live in a time shaped by anxiety and division. Fear is often in the background of our conversations and decisions. We fear change. We fear instability. We fear losing what we depend on. And sometimes, if we are honest, we fear people we do not know or do not understand.

And fear never stays private for long. It becomes something bigger. It shapes how communities think, how societies behave. It can turn neighbours into strangers, and strangers into threats.

And when that happens, something else changes too: we stop really seeing people.

We start seeing labels instead of faces. Categories instead of stories. Problems instead of human beings. But the Gospel keeps calling us back to something different. It calls us back to seeing people as God sees them.

That is part of the Church's calling: to resist anything that takes away human dignity, and to keep saying that every human being is a child of God. That is not just a social idea. It is Gospel truth, because it reflects the way God looks at every one of us.

And that is exactly where Jesus takes us next. Not to kings or rulers. Not to the powerful or important. But to something small. A sparrow.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father."

Sparrows were the cheapest, most ordinary birds in the market. Easy to miss. Easy to ignore. And yet Jesus says God sees them. God knows them. God cares about them.

And if that is true, then how much more is it true for us?

How much more does God notice those rendered invisible, vulnerable and insignificant among us?

No one is invisible to God. That is the heart of Jesus' message. No one is invisible to God.

As Archbishop Michael Curry often reminds us, the way of Jesus is the way of love—a love that is not selective or limited, but one that reaches across every boundary we build and embraces every person as beloved.

And so Jesus says, "You are worth more than many sparrows."

Our worth does not come from what we achieve, or where we come from, or what others think of us. It does not come from status, nationality, success or productivity. Our worth comes from God.

Every person is made in the image of God. Every person is known by God. Every person is loved by God. Every person matters to God. Even the very hairs of our heads are numbered.

This is not sentimental language. It is something much deeper. It is the truth of God's grace.

Martin Luther understood that fear has a way of turning us in on ourselves. When we are afraid, we cling tightly to what we can control. We defend ourselves. We become suspicious of others. Fear makes us small.

But the Gospel breaks that cycle.

In Jesus Christ, God has already spoken the final word about our lives. We do not have to prove our worth or earn our place, because Christ has already claimed us as his own. At the cross, God shows that no life is disposable, no person is forgotten, and no one is beyond God's love.

And so we are set free.

Free from having to secure ourselves. Free to love our neighbour. Free to welcome the stranger. Free to live without fear having the final word.

That is why Jesus says again: "Do not be afraid."

As we mark Refugee Week and reflect on the theme of courage, may we hear these words again, as if for the first time. May we resist the fear that divides us. May we refuse the voices that dehumanise others. And may we learn, slowly and faithfully, to see one another as God sees us.

May we become a community where strangers are welcomed, dignity is protected, and love is stronger than fear. And may we trust the God who knows every sparrow, who counts every hair upon our heads, and who never forgets a single one of his children. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.