

HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW

There are many species of birds mentioned throughout the Bible. Eagles are one of the most mentioned birds in Scripture, often used to symbolize strength and the character of God. In Psalm 103:5 God says He will renew our youth “like the eagles” and Isaiah 40:31 famously echoes this statement, saying He will renew our strength. Turtledoves and pigeons are referred to 66 times in the Old Testament and 11 times in the New Testament (e.g. the Holy Spirit descends “like a dove”). Chickens also make the list--In the Gospel of Matthew, a rooster crowing three times signified Peter’s betrayal of Jesus and Jesus likens Himself to a mother hen who gathers chicks under her wings. And, the lowly sparrows are referenced frequently and are a subject of the Gospel lesson for Sunday, June 25th. (Matthew 10:5, 21-33). In verses 29-31, Jesus talks about sparrows to illustrate how valuable and loved God’s children are, and how no detail goes unnoticed by our Creator. *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.*

Sparrows are small brown and gray birds that tend to always be in the company of others. They are abundant throughout much of the earth. Sparrows like to build nests in trees and bushes as well as the eaves of homes or other nooks and crannies. Most are musical and sing sweet songs, but in biblical times, sparrows were held in contempt. They had little worth and were seen to be annoying. The sparrow, however, was what Jesus referred to when illustrating our worth to God the Father.

This text always reminds me of a hymn popular in Baptist hymnals that was a favorite of my grandmother.

His Eye is on the Sparrow.

*Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart be lonely
and long for heaven and home?
When Jesus is my portion?
My constant friend is he;
His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know he watches me.*

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

Civilla Durfee Martin (1866-1948), a schoolteacher, is credited with authoring *His Eye is on the Sparrow*.-Together with her husband, Walter, a Baptist minister they often wrote gospel songs for revival meetings. She describes the context out of which the hymn was born: “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 twenty 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. 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 response was simple: ‘His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.’ The beauty of this simple expression of boundless faith gripped our hearts and fired the imagination. The hymn ‘His Eye Is on the Sparrow’ was the outcome of that experience.”

If God cares about the tiny sparrow, how much more will He care for your needs, my brothers, and sisters? That is the message and meaning of this phrase, ***“His eye is on the sparrow”***