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All Us Sparrows

Matthew 10:29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Here, Jesus is sending out his disciples on mission and teaching them that it is ok to trust God because God loves them more than they realize. Jesus is very blunt with the disciples. He tells them things will not always go well but that God has their hairs numbered just the same.

It is this week's Gospel reading that is the basis for the Gospel song, "His Eye Is on the Sparrow."

"I sing because I'm happy, / I sing because I'm free, / His eye is on the sparrow, / And I know he watches me."

It was Ethel Waters who made that song famous. Ethel Waters... an extremely talented lady whose life was supremely difficult. Born into poverty in the late 1800's to a mom who was only 12 or 13, Ethel never lived in the same place more than fifteen months. She said, "I never was a child. I never was cuddled, or liked, or understood by my family." She got married when she was thirteen to an abusive man and divorced him a few years later. She would end up being married 3 times but never had any children. At an early age she went to Philadelphia to be a maid for \$4.75 a week.

Although her talented voice would take her to many stages, her life continued in a downward spiral. She was cheated out of many of her earnings. The IRS seized her royalties. Tens of thousands of dollars of jewelry were stolen from her. She

said she had spent her life trying to give others happiness and her own life was lacking the gift she longed to give.

All that changed at a Billy Graham crusade in the 1950's. "In 1957, I, Ethel Waters, a 380-pound decrepit old lady, rededicated my life to Jesus Christ, and boy, because He lives, just look at me now. I tell you because He lives; and because my precious child, Billy, gave me the opportunity to stand there, I can thank God for the chance to tell you His eye is on all of us sparrows."

How's that for testimony? Ethel was the second African American to be nominated for an Academy Award. She was the first African American to have her own TV show, 17 years before Nat King Cole's show. She was the first African American to be nominated for a Primetime Emmy. Her 1933 recording of "Stormy Weather" is in the Library of Congress. She is in several Halls of Fame.

*And she sang, "Why should I feel discouraged
Why should the shadows come
Why should my heart feel lonely
And long for heaven and home
When Jesus is my portion
A constant friend is He
His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches over me
His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches me."*

By way of prayer, here is the poem "The Avowal" by Denise Levertov

*As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.*