

Matthew 10:29 – How Much Are You Worth?

[Jesus said] **Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's consent.**

We are oh so good at manipulating numbers. Before the IRS we are poor, before the rest of the world we are rich. Which is the truth? How much are we worth is a truly haunting question too often defined simply by wealth and money. Are we worth what we can afford? What can we afford? Do we have enough to be comfortable now or to retire? What has the pandemic done to our retirement? How much is enough?

Scripture tells us that we are worth more than many sparrows. That ought to comfort you. It really should! The God who made, sees, and knows all creatures as His own does not value lightly what He made. We heard last week from the creation story of Genesis and how God judged all He had made as **"very good."** So you are at least worth that.

God made, sees, and knows you as part of His creation. You are His very own, fearfully and wonderfully made. He made You the crown of His creation. To mankind God gave dominion over all other creatures and the charge to exercise His Lordship as stewards over all that God made. You are at least worth that.

God deems you to be worth more than everything else in all creation. As comforting as this is, our anxiety is because of sin. Sin changed it all. The sin and rebellion of Eden exchanged God's value for a lie and death. We whom God claimed as His best, became His enemies because of sin. In theory we had great value to the Lord but in practice we had exchanged God's gift for the cheap trinket of a moment of self-expression that led us to death. Like the prodigal son, we were left to our regrets and our dreams of what might have been if we had not exchanged our birth right for a pot of porridge.

So how much is **"worth more than many sparrows"** in real terms? A wise person said that nothing has a value until someone is ready to pay for it. In other words, what someone is willing to pay for it determines its worth. We think our homes are valuable until we find out how hard it is to find someone to buy it for the price we think it is worth. Ask any realtor.

How much are we worth? The truth is sin had devalued us. We were not worth much until God decided to pay for us. Now our life is valued not by our estimate or the esteem of others but by the actual value of the holy and precious body and blood Jesus expended on the cross to save us from our sin and restore us to the Father. So how much are you worth? You have been deemed by God to be worth the price of the holy body of Christ in suffering upon the cross to redeem you, a lost and condemned sinner.

God has decided you are worth to Him nothing less than the precious blood of Christ expended upon the cross for you and in which you were washed clean from your sins in your baptism. God has made you worth the price of Christ's life which was given in your place to the death of the cross that you might be redeemed, bought back, and restored.

Self-esteem can be a terrible lie and curse. I warn you even as I warn myself against judging our worth on the basis of how much money we have, what we have been able to accomplish, how many people honor or respect us, or any other pure and unadulterated vanity. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, says the preacher of Ecclesiastes. So don't listen to the commercials. Your worth is not in you. It is in the value God has placed on you.

You remain a wretched sinner wearing an expiration date. The ground waits to reclaim you. But God considers you to be priceless. He has bought you with a price and paid for you with something worth far more than silver or gold. He has purchased and won you with the holy and precious body and blood of Christ. Nothing

has any value until somebody is willing to pay you for it. Christ paid for you with His very life. That defines how much you are worth.

Don't let it go to your head. This great value God has placed upon you is part of the paradox in which we live – sinners worth His wrath and saints whom He has redeemed all at the same time. Apart from this, self-esteem is a trap and a lie. That is, except the self-esteem that wells up from the cross of Christ. This is why we Christians cling to the cross. Here we see our value to the Lord. There we learn how to live this new life given to us freely but at the great cost of Jesus' death and resurrection. There we learn that God has not purchased our life from sin and the grave only so that we can squander it on ourselves, on self-indulgence, and the vain pursuit of personal pleasure and happiness. God has redeemed us from something more noble than the freedom to pursue desire to its dead end.

If our lives have any value at all, that value is expressed by taking up the cross and following Jesus, serving God by serving our neighbor in love, learning self-control over our passions, and from Jesus to love others before ourselves. You are worth more than sparrows. You have been purchased and won by Christ's holy and precious blood, the same food you will soon eat and drink here. Don't waste the value God has placed on your life. Make it as noble as the price Christ paid to set you free.