

## All-Age sermon for Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2020

### Romans 6:1b-11 & Matthew 10:24-39

Preached by: Revd Andrea Ward

I wonder if you can guess how many smarties are in this jar? The answer is .....!

I know I can't award any prizes, but give yourself a good pat on the back if you got it right or came close!

It would be pretty impressive wouldn't it if someone could just take a very quick glance at this jar and be able to tell you the correct number of smarties it contains? Or even more amazing, if they could tell you how many grains of sand in this jar?

That would be amazing. But there's something we learn from Jesus in this morning's reading from Matthew 10, which is far more amazing!

We heard, in verse 30, that Jesus said,

"Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" or as it says in another bible translation, "God even knows the number of hairs on your head."

God knows exactly how many hairs are on your head!

If you're with other family members at home, we might want to try and see if you can count the numbers of hair on their heads! If you're on your own, have a look in a mirror and try and count your own hair.

Ok, so perhaps one or two of us don't have very much hair on our heads, and it isn't too difficult to count them. But for most of us, trying to count the number of hairs on our head or someone else's, is an impossible task! But it doesn't matter how much or how little hair you have, Jesus tells us that God knows exactly how many hairs are on each person's head at any one time! That's how well he knows you and me. Even if we don't feel anyone else really knows who we are, God knows you inside out. For all the huge issues of this world that concern God so much, he also knows and cares about the tiniest detail of your life.

Jesus loved using simple illustrations to emphasise something important that he wanted people to understand, and in our reading from Matthew 10, one of the important messages that he was trying to get across to his disciples was this: "Don't be afraid, because God cares for you."

Why should the disciples be afraid? Just before the reading from Matthew 10, Jesus had been warning his disciples that a time would come when they would face a lot of opposition and hate from people because of their faith in him. It wasn't going to be easy being one of his followers, a Christian. But Jesus goes on to encourage them not to be afraid of these people, even if they had the power to kill them for their faith in him. Well, I have to say, that I for one, would certainly have needed to hear some reassuring words from Jesus.

Let's remind ourselves of what Jesus said to his disciples in verses 29-30:

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

We have quite a few sparrows in our garden at the moment. They’re a fairly common bird. In Jesus’s time, they were very common too, and very cheap to buy for your evening meal. Go to the market and you could buy a couple of sparrows for a penny. But, Jesus, is saying, while we may think that sparrows are not worth much, God cares about every single one of them: “not even one of the little birds can fall to the ground and die without your Father’s knowing it”.

Many years ago, I was walking up the path to church one day, when I noticed a dead bee lying on the ground. And for some reason, I found myself thinking, “If I hadn’t noticed that bee, perhaps it may never have been seen or noticed by anyone else on earth. It could have lived and died without anyone knowing. And then I was struck by the truth that even if no one had ever known about that bee’s existence, God knew absolutely everything about it and every journey it had ever flown, each flower visited, and he knew and cared too about that bee’s final resting place.”

If that’s how God cares when a bee or a common sparrow falls to the ground, can you imagine how much more he cares for you?” Jesus says, “You’re worth much more than many sparrows (or bees) all put together!” So God must care for you and me immensely!

So, Jesus encourages us to not be afraid of whatever might come your way, because God cares for you and is watching over you.

Are you ever afraid? Do you ever worry? Perhaps we don’t have the same level of fear that the disciples had of being persecuted for their Christian faith, but we can still feel afraid of being laughed at by people or treated differently or unfairly if we tell people we’re followers of Jesus.

And we all have things that we can feel afraid about, just like everyone else - whether we’re following Jesus or not: What’s going to happen in the future as we continue to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic? Will I and my family stay well? When will I be going back to school (for those of you who haven’t returned yet) and what will it be like? Will there be a job for me when I finish college? Will I still have a job at the end of this pandemic?

Is there something you’re feeling afraid about at the moment? Jesus didn’t promise his disciples that they would escape suffering and difficulties: that would have been a false promise. But he did promise that God knew everything about them and cared about them deeply. There was nothing that could happen to them and there’s nothing that can happen to us that God doesn’t know and care about.

If we keep faithful to Jesus and say we believe in him, no matter what comes our way, we can be sure that Jesus will be faithful to us and our Father will be watching over us. And no matter what may happen, if we remain true to Jesus in this life, we are promised that we will share in his new, resurrection life forever.