

Matthew 10:24-33

One of the things that I really enjoy about our **home** here in Osceola, is being able to **watch** and **listen** to the **birds**. We have all kinds of different birds living in our bird **houses**, coming to our **feeders**, and flying around from tree to tree. I **appreciate** the variety of all the different **colors**, and **patterns** that God has given to them. I always **marvel** that a bird as tiny as a **wren** can have such a strong and beautiful **song**. God has truly done **wonderful** things for us in the marvels of His creation. I can only **imagine** what they must have been like back in the Garden of Eden when they were still **perfect**, before we had **destroyed** that perfection with **sin**. But God graciously **took care** of that problem. He sacrificed His **Son** on the cross - a death that paid for our **sins**, which had **wrecked** all the perfect things He had **created**. And then God **raised** His Son from the dead, declaring His **victory** over sin, death, the devil; and guaranteeing that **we also** will rise from the grave, to live with Him **eternally**.

Our text for today provides us with **Three Thoughts About Our Gracious God**. First of all, He is our **Master**. Secondly, His **care** for us is **great**. And finally, He wants us to **proclaim** His goodness to the world.

Our text begins, "*A **disciple** is not above his **teacher**, nor is a **servant** above his **master**. It is enough for the disciple to be **like** his teacher and the servant **like** his master.*" Jesus is our **Master**, but when we **hear** that, we don't particularly **like** the way it **sounds**. The term "**master**" is equated with **slavery** in today's society, and **slavery** is something which leaves more than a **bad taste** in everyone's mouth. Slavery brings to mind man's **inhumanity** to man - **hardship** and **pain** - **misuse** and **abuse**. And the **master** is the one who is **behind** it all. In this country we fought a **Civil War** in order to get **rid** of slavery. Unfortunately, it's still around.

In our text for today, Jesus was talking to His chosen 12 disciples, whom He was sending out into the **world** to be His **witnesses**. He told them that they would be **rejected** by their own people. He told them that they would be like **sheep** among **wolves**. He told them that they would be handed over to the **authorities** because they were His followers. But He also told them not to **worry**, because the Holy Spirit would be with them to **help** them in their time of need. Then Jesus did something very interesting. He compared His **disciples** to **Himself** - their **teacher** and their **master**. They would be going through the same kind of persecution that **He** would be going through, and since He is their **Master**, He wanted them to **imitate** Him.

Jesus also sends each of **us** out into this world, and He wants **us** to imitate Him too. It's our **calling** to declare the praises of God. It's our high **honor** to make our Savior **known** to others. But the conditions **we** encounter will not be **friendly** ones **either**. Jesus said, *"If you were **of** the world, the world would **love** its own. However, because you are **not** of the world, but I have chosen you **out** of it, for that very reason the world **hates** you."* People who have the **world** as their master don't like to be **disturbed** from their way of life. They become **angry** and even downright **vicious** to people who encourage them to **repent**, and **turn away** from their godlessness. But the **world** is not **our** master - **Jesus is**.

Sometimes, perhaps more often than not, we tend to **forget** that Jesus is our **Master**. In fact, all too often, we **reverse** that idea, and think of **ourselves** as the masters. We go to God and we want Him to do things **our way**. We want Him to give us good **health**, a good **job**, and a stable **family** life. We want Him to provide us with **money** in the bank and a solid **retirement** plan. We might even want to be viewed as **popular** and **influential**. But, what if that's **not** what **God wants** for us? Can we **handle** that? After all, **He** is our **Master**, and **we** are His **servants**, and as Jesus said, *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a **servant** above his **master**."*

Concerning **Himself** Jesus said, *"The Son of Man did not come to **be served**, but to **serve**, and to give his **life** as a ransom for many."* When Jesus came here to the earth, He came as a **servant**. He **obeyed** His heavenly Father in **everything** - even to the point of **suffering the punishment** for the sins of the entire **world** - and ultimately dying a most **gruesome** and **shameful** kind of death by **crucifixion**. So, how do **we** fit in as **His** servants?

Can we **follow** that example? Obviously, not **perfectly**, and not in the same **way** as our Savior did. But we can **start** by appreciating everything our gracious God has **done** for us. Our God has provided us with **forgiveness**, **life**, and **salvation**. God's care for us is **great**. Jesus made that very obvious in our text when He compared us to **sparrows**. He said, *"Are not **two** sparrows sold for a **small coin**? Yet not **one** of them will fall to the ground without the **knowledge** and **consent** of your Father. And even the **hairs** of your head are all **numbered**. So do not be **afraid**. You are worth **more** than **many** sparrows."* God the Father almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, tells us that He preserves even the most **insignificant** creatures He has made - like **sparrows**. Back in the days of our text, two sparrows sold for a **small coin** - a coin that was worth **less** than half an hour's wage. Today we would say that they weren't even "a **dime** a **dozen**." Yet those

same sparrows were **not overlooked** by God. They were included in the heavenly Father's **personal care**.

And of course **we** are worth more than **many** sparrows. How about that! Not only are we worth more than “a dime a dozen” to God the Father, but we are worth the **perfect life** of God's own **Son**. From the foundation of the world, God **chose** us in Christ to be His very own. What a **privilege**, and what a **blessing**. But we turned **away** from Him, and **banished** ourselves from His family. That was when God showed us how much we were **worth** to Him. Our God gave up His one and only **Son** for us. Jesus shed His holy, precious **blood** on the cross to set us **free** from the **punishment** which our sins deserved. That precious **sacrifice** restored us to God's **family**, so now we can look forward to that special place in **heaven** which He has prepared for each one of us. We can be sure that God will continue to **watch over** us and keep us **safe** from all harm, because we always have the comforting promise of His Son, *“I give them **eternal life**, and they will **never** perish. **No one** will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. **No one** can snatch them out of my Father's hand.”* We are truly God's **children**, and God **always** takes **care** of His children. Our heavenly Father is **intensely** concerned about us, even down to the **tiniest detail**. We never need to worry about **anything**, because we can always count on His **love** and **care**. God's care for us is **great**. That should lead us to more than just an **appreciation** for what God has done for us. It should lead us to **proclaim** His goodness to the **world**.

Every day God gives His believing people a **song** to sing, just like He does for the **birds**. It's the song of **God's goodness**, and that song goes out into the **world** in a lot of different ways. We sing it whenever we have a **baptism**, and we proclaim that this child is being baptized *“In the name of the **Father**, and of the **Son** and of the Holy **Spirit**.”* We sing it whenever we bring our cares and concerns to the LORD in **prayer**, confident that He will **hear** and **answer** us. And we even sing it when one of our loved ones has passed away, and entered the eternal rest of heaven as we proclaim, *“I'm but a **stranger** here, **heaven** is my home.”* God has called each of us to **faith**, and He has given us the joy of singing out the song of His **goodness** to the world.

But confessing our faith in Jesus as our Savior can often bring on lots of **trouble** and **suffering** for us, so we can easily become **afraid** to speak out about the **goodness** of our gracious God. We can be **mocked** and **ridiculed** - we can be called **ignorant** and **out-of-touch** - we can even be **ostracized** and **deserted** by family and friends. But the LORD doesn't **want** us to be **afraid** to keep on

proclaiming His goodness. He **knows** our fears, and He gives us the **strength** and the **encouragement** we need to **overcome** them through His Word and Sacrament.

In our text for today Jesus said, *“Do not **fear** those who kill the **body** but **cannot** kill the **soul**.”* The people of our unbelieving world may be able to cause us **grief**, or hurt our **feelings**, or damage our **reputation**, and at their very **worst** they may even be able to **kill** our **body**, but they **cannot** kill our **soul**. They cannot cause us any **eternal** harm because the Bible assures us, *“(God) gave us a new **birth** into a living **hope** through the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the dead, into an **inheritance** that is **undying, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.**”*

Dear friends, we don't need to **ignore** all the terrible things which are going on all around us, but we don't need to be **afraid** of them either. Let's focus our attention on the wonderful things which our God **has** done and **continues** to do for us. Let's remember that our gracious God is our **Master** - that His **care** for us is **great** - and that He wants us to **proclaim** His goodness to the world. Amen.