

And If the Sparrow Falls to the Ground?

Sermon for the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity

Sermon Text: Matthew 10:26-33



*<sup>26</sup> "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. <sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> Fear not, therefore; you are of more*

*value than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup> So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, <sup>33</sup> but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."*

If I had 20 Euros in my hand, then you would all know the value of this money and what it means. With this bill, if it's a real one, I can do lots of things. I can buy something nice, pay a bill, and so much more. If I take a piece of paper from my printer and print the number 20 on it, then all of this no longer applies. One of the important things that we teach our children is that they learn what money actually means. Otherwise they would simply throw a valuable piece of money into the trash.

It is the same with our Lord Jesus. It is important that we know what His true worth is. Otherwise we would misunderstand or even throw away the most valuable gift that God could ever give us through Jesus. With some money, I can perhaps buy some food and a cellphone or something else. Jesus has a completely different currency than this bill. What is on Jesus is God's mark and seal. And that means: life forever with God, forgiveness of sins, and freedom from the devil. All of this was naturally not clear when Jesus was born. When Jesus was born, King Herod thought that Jesus wanted an earthly throne. That's why he did everything he could to kill Jesus. And even when Jesus was healing the sick with His disciples, it was still not completely clear who Jesus was and what He would do. Over and over again people thought that they could make an earthly king out of Him and He would finally drive out the Romans. Or do some other similarly great things. Jesus Himself didn't reveal His goal and His worth immediately, but gradually. And even then, most did not understand much. Only after His crucifixion and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit would everything become clear. Only then would what Jesus previously said in secret be proclaimed from the rooftops. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world! Jesus came to save us from sin, death, and the devil! In Jesus you can be close to God! In Jesus you have the right to be children of God! You have been pulled out of the world and no longer belong to Satan, but now you belong to God! All of this must be openly and clearly proclaimed from the rooftops because the danger is great that people would change the meaning of Jesus. Some have made Him to be a new Moses by telling people that they should keep many new laws if they want to be a real Christian. Others have made a politician out of Jesus so that they can use Him for their own political purposes. All

these things are dangerous. They are as dangerous as counterfeit money. If lots of counterfeit money was spread throughout the world, it would mean that people would no longer believe in the idea of money at all. This is because they can no longer distinguish between the real and the false money. It is the same in our times. Many people no longer want to believe in God because others misused God and Jesus for their own personal, political, or other purposes. That was also the case in Martin Luther's time. That's exactly why Martin Luther must continually and clearly say: We should not falsify Jesus! Christ alone died for the sins of the world and no one else.

If this Christ is openly preached and people believe in Him, then they are pulled out of the hands of Satan. Naturally Satan isn't happy about the fact that people become God's children and are taken out of his hands. That's why he does everything he can so that believers no longer believe in Jesus. In Iran and in other countries Christians are thrown into prisons or even killed. In Europe, where the preaching of the Gospel isn't forbidden, many people say that there is no sin at all from which we must be saved. But if there is no sin then people don't need a Savior from sin, death, and the devil. People don't need Jesus. Anyone who preaches openly against all these things in such a situation knows that it isn't easy. It is certainly not easy in Iran to stand up and say: Christ died for your sins. It is also not easy in Germany to believe in this Jesus or to pass on His Word. Jesus knows about these dangers and speaks very openly with His disciples about this, saying that people will want to kill them. He uses a parable about a sparrow that has fallen to the earth. As evangelizers we are not always like eagles that fly from one height to another. Sometimes we will be nothing but sparrows who have fallen to the ground. Who isn't familiar with such days? You wanted to speak the Gospel to a friend. And then he immediately gave so many arguments against God and Jesus that you didn't know what to do next. Then you felt like a soaking wet sparrow whose wings are so heavy that it can no longer fly. Or maybe you once lived in a live-threatening situation yourself. You wanted to be a Christian, yet you knew that to be a Christian would mean the end of your life. How powerless we then feel! Fear paralyzes us! We don't know what to do next! Maybe then you also thought that it wasn't worth talking about Jesus anymore. You would love to leave this thing to others. And be silent. If it feels like this, then the words of Jesus are especially for you. If God even knows the sparrow that falls from the sky, how much better does He know you! God has even counted the hairs on your head. And so much more! When I finish reading this sentence, then I realize that it isn't so much about my own courage to acknowledge God. It's also not only about how brave I am or what wise words I find to share the Gospel. Because in the following sentence Jesus says to us: That He will acknowledge us before God! When I share the words of Jesus I never stand alone! The crucified Jesus personally stands behind me. When He became a man and was crucified for me, He stated His commitment for me and for the whole world! He was saying that He stands by us. And that He wants us! The first disciples who were supposed to share the Gospel had no textbook or handout with all the explanations of what they should say. Instead, the death and resurrection of Jesus were so burned into their hearts that they simply expressed what was in their hearts. They received the strength to do so through the Holy Spirit. That still happens the same way today. It is Jesus Himself who rose from the dead and sent us the Holy Spirit. It is He who to this day is still with us and accompanies our preaching with power. He is at the beginning. And this same Jesus also stands at the end when He will acknowledge us in heaven. And yes, He is also in the middle. Now, where we are. And when we are weak to confess Him, He still stands by you and speaks in your stead. Jesus is at the beginning and the end. And yes, He is not missing from the middle either!

Since this is the case, nothing can really go wrong. Really, the only danger is that I will separate myself from Jesus. If I don't have Jesus, then I have counterfeit money. If I have counterfeit money, then no matter how good the paper is and how professional the forgery is made, the money is and remains fake! It is the same with us humans when we rely on ourselves instead of Jesus. If I build on my own courage, understanding, or anything else, then I am lost. I let myself get cheated by counterfeit money. However, in Jesus, I have the seal of the living God. Then all discussion is at an end. If I throw this real 20 Euro bill into the dirt or trample it, it will still remain real money. Because you can't make real money fake. It is the same when we are in Jesus. No one can take this value away from us. Amen.