

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (YEAR A) Sunday 21 June 2026

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

COMPANION ANIMALS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Instructions for the disciples (Matthew 10: 24-39)

After Jesus commissions the twelve disciples to go out on their first mission, Matthew presents the second of the five blocks of teaching that give distinctive shape to the Gospel. In this second block of teaching, sometimes known as the 'missionary discourse', Jesus equips the disciples for their work. The teaching contains two main ideas. First, the disciples can expect to be treated no better than Jesus himself is treated. They will be persecuted. Second, God cares about them and will take care of them. God cares for the sparrows and they are of more value than many sparrows.

The image to stimulate reflection on God's care for the sparrows and on God's care for us is *companion animals*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Matthew 10: 29-31; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground
unperceived by your Father.
And even the hairs of your head are all counted.
So do not be afraid;
you are of more value than many sparrows.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you show care for the birds of the air.
Help us to share your concern
for all living creatures,
that we too may know
your care and love for us;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Matthew 10: 24-39

‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

Whom to Fear

‘So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 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. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. ‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

Not Peace, but a Sword

‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Matthew 10: 24-39)

Begin to explore Matthew's account of Jesus' teaching to equip the twelve disciples for their work by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- How do you read Jesus' emphasis on equality between disciple and teacher?
- How do you feel about Jesus' warning that the disciples will face the same criticism as the teacher?
- How do you read Jesus' teaching that he has come not to bring peace but a sword?
- How helpful do you find the teaching about the sparrows?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Compare other places in Matthew's Gospel that speaks of God's care for birds or animals.

- Matthew 6: 26
- Matthew 12: 12

Compare a similar saying recorded by Luke.

- Luke 12: 2-10
- Luke 12: 51-53

Explore images of birds in the Old Testament.

- Job 38: 41
- Psalm 84: 1-3

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Matthew's teaching concerning God's care for the sparrows and God's care for us by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Images of sparrows in the Bible
- Images of companion animals
- How to make an origami bird/swan

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Matthew's teaching concerning God's care for the sparrows and God's care for us is *companion animals*. Draw on your experience of companion animals. For example:

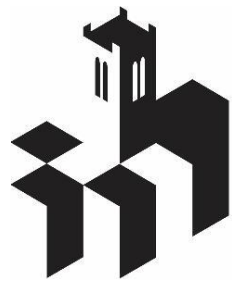
- What is your experience of caring for companion animals?
- What is your experience of being cared for by companion animals?
- What is your experience of God caring for you?

What have you learned about companion animals?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Matthew's teaching concerning God's care for the sparrows and God's care for us, or on the image of companion animals.

- Make origami birds to place in your church.
- Make a collage of images of birds, 'God cares for the sparrows'.
- Make a poster displaying companion animals, 'God cares for us'.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on Matthew's teaching concerning God's care for the sparrows or on the image of companion animals.



Liverpool Cathedral

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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