

Sometimes it feels as if the Bible is an instruction manual for eagles, and I am only a sparrow.

Elisha was an eagle, called by Elijah, slaughtering the twelve yoke of oxen. ~~He made~~ ^{He made} a great fire with the wood and harnesses that held ~~the oxen~~ ^{the oxen} together, ~~and cooking~~ ^{He cooked} the flesh that had provided his work, feasting as a sign that he was leaving it all behind to follow God's call. Elisha was a eagle, depending on God from that moment on, but I am a sparrow.

Peter was an eagle, James and John and Andrew and Matthew also. Jesus called "Follow me," and they left boats and family, workplace to go with him. Immediately. They left their life behind. Jesus became their life. Eagles, but I am a sparrow.

Maybe the folks who came to Jesus that day were sparrows like me.

I will follow you wherever you go, said one. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head, was Jesus reply. Though nothing more is said, I think he probably went home to his pillow and mattress.

To another Jesus said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." An eagle would follow, but what does a sparrow do?

Another said, "I will follow you Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

I don't leave my family, I don't give up all that I have. I don't ask you to do those things. I am a sparrow among sparrows, when ^{it serves} Jesus wants to build the kingdom with eagles.

As ~~we~~ we read on we find that Jesus gathered seventy eagles, seventy who went where he directed. They went with no purse or bag or sandals.

declaring the kingdom of God to be near. Then they returned to him with joy, saying, Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us.

Jesus is looking for eagles here today. Maybe you are one. But alas, I am not.

If you are an eagle, follow Jesus. If his call to you is to leave a life behind and find a new life in him, then follow. Soar in your faithfulness, your courage, your sacrifice. Family, possessions, the work that you have done will mean nothing to you beside your Lord. Follow.

But what of the sparrows? Jesus spoke a word about us. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight.

Not forgotten.

There is a symbol here before us, a cross. Today I ask you to see not a cross, but ^{an} eagle's talons there. For the eagle was the military standard of the Roman Empire, the cross the claws that brought death to sparrows.

He became a sparrow. The mightiest eagle of all became a sparrow. Became me, became you. He went to his death not proud and noble but mocked, betrayed, whipped.

Not a sparrow is forgotten.

Not me, not you.

If we are not able to soar, then our Lord has descended to where we hop. Not as a great bird who would strike fear in our hearts, but as one of us.

He gathers a flock of sparrows ~~at the~~ because the talons of the eagle could not hold him. He is alive, not only up in heaven, far from here. He is alive in you.

Jesus is gathering the sparrows.

We will bury our fathers and our mothers, we will feed our children, care for our homes, do our daily work. But through it all we will belong

to our Lord. We will belong to him in a way that we do not belong to all of this. He will own our hearts and our hopes. he will lead and together as a flock we will follow.

Eagles fly alone, needing no one.

We must fly together, stay together with the sparrow whom the eagle could not hold. Along the way we will gather all the sparrows for God wants every one of us in his house forever. Amen.