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# **More Than Many Sparrows**

**# 994-B**

**Series: Let God Be God**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# More Than Many Sparrows

## I- A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR

We would have painted it all so differently. We would have had the Master returning to His hometown to such fanfare and to such a hero's welcome, Nazareth would never have been the same. There would have been banners across those tiny streets. Can't you just picture it in your mind?

“The King Has Returned!”

Another may have read:

“Welcome Home, Jesus!”

Or so it would have been had you and I been sketching on the canvas of time a picture of God's return to His earthly beginnings. Festive banquets would have been planned, and all of the city's leaders would be there. The “Fighting Nazareth Lion's Band” from the local high school would be blaring away. Native boy made good? I should say. Native boy made God! That, it seemed, would at least make the front page of the local Gazette.

But as Jesus returned from Jerusalem to Nazareth the silence was deafening. There were no “Welcome Home, King” posters in the local cafe; no “Jesus, The Hero” signs were evident anywhere. In fact, the pushing, shoving throngs that had been so characteristic of the Master's ministry everywhere He went were noticeably absent. He did not stay long, and no small wonder. For there in Nazareth, He not only did not receive a hero's welcome, He received little but the skeptic's glare and the questioning glance. Yes, He was theirs; but, no, they did not realize what it was...or who it was...they had sent forth into the world. And so we continue our journey in the footsteps of Jesus.

This study takes us through the next few major incidents in His life, and zeros in on two or three of the major principles those incidents brought to the surface.

Our title and our outline look like this: More Than Many Sparrows.

## More Than Many Sparrows

- I- A Prophet Without Honor
- II- Sheep in the Midst of Wolves
- III- Fear Them Not
- IV- More Than Many Sparrows

When last we looked in on Jesus, He had healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda; but He did it on, of all days, the Sabbath. His accusers, not at all concerned about the fact that this one who had spent his life in the dungeon of disease was now whole, focused on the fact that this one they called “Master” had broken their interpretation of the law. He had healed on the Sabbath. Jesus’ answer was straightforward, as always. He replied simply: “My Father is working; why shouldn’t I?” The Pharisees were livid. Jesus, rather than flexing His spiritual muscles in a show of power, as we would have done, simply pointed to His relationship with the Father, instead. He replied:

Verily, verily, I say to you, the Son can do nothing from himself,

(John 5:19b TLOCIS)<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord went on to explain to these doubting Thomases that He was the only way to the Father, and that the way to the Father was actually quite simple. He said this:

He who hears my Word, and believes Him who sent Me, has everlasting life and does not come into judgment (condemnation); but has passed out of death into life!

(John 5:24b TLOCIS)

From death to life! What a promise! And though those angry Pharisees missed the point of it all, for two thousand years now, men and women have opened their hearts to that passage of Scripture and asked Jesus Christ into their hearts personally. From that moment, they *literally had*, we *literally have*, eternal life. What a God we have!

It was then that Jesus went on to explain, though we won’t deal with it in this study, about the four witnesses He had to attest to who He was. We take up reading at that point:

<sup>1</sup>And Jesus withdrew from there <sup>2</sup>and came to His boyhood town; and his disciples were following him. And with the coming of the Sabbath <sup>1</sup>he began to teach them in their synagogue. <sup>2</sup>And many, on hearing him were astonished, saying, “Where did *he* get <sup>1</sup>all these things?” <sup>2</sup>and, “What is

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<sup>1</sup> The Life of Christ in Stereo: The Four Gospels Speak in Harmony; by Johnston M. Cheney; © 1969 Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon

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the wisdom that is given *him*, that such mighty works are wrought by His hands?” Is not this the carpenter, <sup>1</sup>the son of the carpenter? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? And his sisters, are they not all <sup>2</sup>here with us?” And to them he was a cause of stumbling.

Then said Jesus to them, “A prophet is not without honor but in his home town, and among his kinsfolk, and in his own home!” And he could not perform there any <sup>1</sup>mighty works, because of their *unbelief*, <sup>2</sup>except that he laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them. And he marveled over and over at their unbelief.

(<sup>1</sup>Matthew 13:53-58; <sup>2</sup>Mark 6:1-6a TLOCIS)

No hero’s welcome, indeed. The Living Son of God, the Living Word of God, the One who was in the beginning with God, and by Whom all things were made has come home. But the streets of Nazareth are empty. The Master retreats to the local synagogue to teach. Now, mind you, they were intrigued by the authority with which He spoke. But they couldn’t accept what He said, because He was too familiar to them. “Wasn’t this the carpenter? The son of the carpenter? Isn’t He the one who cut the beams for the front of our house? The one whose hands fashioned the cabinets we use? How could He be God? We know Mary; she’s a lovely lady, but *how could she be the mother of the Living God?* And look; there’s the rest of His family...James, Joseph, Simon, Jude, and the girls. They look pretty normal to me. I mean, gimme a break; how could they be God’s family? None of them does miracles.”

That was their line of thinking. So they determined that it must all be a fraud; that this carpenter turned God must be an imposter who, somehow, had left town long enough to learn a little magic and returned to put on a show. That’s the gist of their appraisal. They said, “Where did HE get all these things? What is the wisdom given to Him?” In other words, “Who does He think He is? He sounds powerful, but what’s the catch?”

So they could not believe, and the hands of God were tied. That’s what it says...

<sup>2</sup>And he could not perform there ANY <sup>1</sup>mighty works, because of their *unbelief*, (Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5 TLOCIS)

Three principles stand out in this passage that bear remembering:

Principle 1- Often a person will receive the least respect in his

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newfound Christian walk among those whom he would like most to influence first...those closest to him. Jesus said,

A prophet is not without honor, but in his home town, and  
among his kinfolk, and in his home! (Mark 6:4 TLOCIS)

Interesting, isn't it, that He added "among his kinfolk, and in his home"? I believe Jesus wanted to speak a word of encouragement to the millions yet unborn who one day would find Christ, and find the very people they wanted most to share their new faith with, had the hardest time believing that such a miracle had taken place. "Isn't this my wife, the one who used to throw down the phone in anger when she didn't get her way? A child of God? Sure!" Or, "Isn't this my son, the one who got tangled up in drugs and messed up his life? Gonna be a preacher? Sure, he is!" No, you often cannot begin the process of evangelism at home. You must try. But you must not be discouraged if those who know you best wait till last to see if the miracle is going to last. Jesus was speaking peace to the hearts of those who would "get no respect" but rather get ridiculed for their newly blossoming faith. "To them He was a cause of stumbling", it reads. Not only was He unable to win them over, *He was a stumbling block*. That does not mean HE was at fault. It means that *because they were so familiar with Him in the natural realm*, they could not grasp who He was in the supernatural realm. That ought to give some of us real comfort.

Principle 2- The world will never understand in the flesh how seemingly untrained, seemingly unreligious, men or women can be used of God. "He's just a carpenter", they surmised. "He doesn't come from a religious background at all. "Where did HE learn to talk like that or do those things?" That, too, ought to be a source of comfort to those who may not have the world's credentials, but whom God has nonetheless both called and equipped for a ministry. God, it seems, so often uses "the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and the weak things of this world to confound the strong, that no man might glory in His sight." God often calls those who can't, so they will allow the one who can to work through them. Read Acts 4:13 again. It will encourage your heart. Remember? It says this:

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

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They were “unlearned and ignorant” men. But they possessed something the world’s most learned and brilliant men did not possess. They had a power; they had a wisdom; they had an authority the most scholarly of their age did not have. The world was amazed. They looked for a reason. They found one. *They had been with Jesus.* There was no other explanation. Beloved, if you have written off your effectiveness in the Kingdom, because you do not come from a learned background, because you have not attended the “right” schools, or because you did not grow up in the “right” church, take heart. Those are not the things that will make the difference. The time you spend with Jesus will make the difference. All of the difference. You spend time with Him and in His Word and you can, as the Psalmist promised, “be wiser than your teachers; wiser than the ancients.” That’s comfort indeed, from the lips of Jesus.

Principle 3- The final principle we will take note of from this particular passage is this, *By divine design, the unbelief of man can actually limit the power of God.* It cannot limit the power God has, but it can and does limit the power God can use. Jesus *could not* (not *did not*, *could not*) perform any mighty works there, because of their unbelief. There are churches today which no longer see the power of God unleashed in their midst because of their unbelief. They have taken the philosophy of the world and designed a theology that allows God to exist in the natural realm, but not to move in the supernatural realm. So, sure enough, God complies. They believe only in a God who can do the possible, and they are not disappointed. They never experience the God who does the impossible, because they do not believe He can. Individuals, as well, sometimes suffer as they grow older, from what they often call a more “settled” view of God. What they call a “settled” view is a “faithless” view. They have determined that life will go on as it always has, whether they pray or not. They miss what God is trying to do *in them*, and thus miss what God wants to do *through them*. Sure enough, nothing happens. *God cannot do anything more...*because of our unbelief.

One last footnote on this thought. God never ceases to be amazed at our faithlessness. It reads: “He marveled over and over at their unbelief.” Over and over He marveled. That means it was a constant source of heartache to God. Again and again, He must have wept over their absence of faith. “Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” He would one day cry,

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“How often I would have gathered thy children together, ...  
and ye wouldst not.” (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34)

How often, indeed.

### II- SHEEP IN THE MIDST OF WOLVES

It was at this point in Jesus’ ministry that He called the twelve together, commissioned them, and sent them out, two by two. His motivation? It reads:

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion toward them, for they were harried and desolated like sheep that had no shepherd. Then said he to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful indeed, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest that he thrust out laborers into his harvest.”

(Matthew 9:36,37 TLOCIS)

So He sent them out. With specific instructions, He sent them out. With clear guidelines, He sent them out. With unwavering warnings, He sent them out. When they were refused, they were to “shake the dust from their feet as a witness against them,” and move on.

Then we come to the final segment of today’s lesson. Jesus gives this charge to the twelve:

“Lo, it is I who sent you forth—as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be wise therefore as the serpents, and guileless as the doves.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a bondman above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the bondman like his lord. If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they those of his household!” (Matthew 10:16,24,25 TLOCIS)

Jesus was never one to mince words. Never did He paint the picture less than what it was. We Christians could learn something from that. But never did He couch His honesty with bitterness; always it was laced with love. Here, the Lord is clearly giving the twelve a warning about the *kind of reception the world would give them, were they to tell it like it is*. The warning is still good today. He was saying that the Christian, in the world, trying to win the world, is in essence, like a sheep in a den of wolves. Hardly friendly territory. That’s what living in the world will be like, Jesus said, if you are available to be used. But Jesus has a plan. He said your outlook is important. You must be wise as

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a serpent, but as guileless as a dove. What that means is, that you are to have the perception of a serpent, but the character of a dove. The serpent is described as “wise”. He knows where he’s going. He is cunningly aware of his environment. He is not stupid. He does not blunder through. He is aware of his enemies. He is alert to danger. He moves with confidence. He is, by all accounts, wise. But his *character* leaves something to be desired. So Jesus warned the twelve to have the smarts of a serpent, but to have the *character* of a dove. That character He described as *guileless*. Transparent. Vulnerable. Not deceptive. Not crafty. Open-hearted, and open-handed. That’s an unusual combination. Usually, by the world’s standards, men are either crafty and deceitful, or guileless and unwise. Jesus said take the best of the two, and you have the wise, but sensitive saint.

You may say, “but that’s okay if you’re living in an easy world.” No, Jesus was saying that to a group of men He was sending into battle...a group of men He was telling that they were sheep going into a den of wolves. Men, He was saying, were going to be treated like their Master; and their Master was accused of being the devil himself. With that unusual set of marching orders, then, He sends them off to war.

### III- FEAR THEM NOT

Jesus must have sensed the apprehension in these men’s faces as He described for them what was ahead of them. He was telling them they were like sheep heading for the wolf’s house; He was telling them they would need the wisdom of a snake to deal with the enemy, all the while being as vulnerable and guileless as a dove. Then He told them they were no better than He was, and the world hated Him. He added this:

For this reason *you should fear them not*:

“And fear not those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.”  
(Matthew 10:26a,28 TLOCIS)

“Fear them not.” That’s a needed word of encouragement for a herd of sheep fixin’ to move into the wolves’ home territory. Don’t be afraid of the enemies of the Gospel. The most they can do is kill you. And if they kill you, you’ll just see the Lord more quickly. No, they can’t hurt you. The more they persecute you, the more blessed you become. Jesus promised that. Jesus said the thing to fear is wandering into the clutches of Satan. He has the



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power to lure men from the Cross where they'll lose everything. But somehow, God telling us not to be afraid as we head for the Lion's den or the wolf's lair is not quite enough. So Jesus wraps the package up in the tenderest wrapping of all.

### IV- MORE THAN MANY SPARROWS

He has given them and us a *charge*. He said the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few. He has given them and us a *challenge*. He has said that He is sending us forth as sheep among wolves. He has given them and us a word of *caution*. He has said the disciple is not above His Master. We too, must suffer persecution. He has given them and us a word of *confidence*. He has said: Fear Not. Now He gives to them and to us a word of *courage*. And tucked within the context of this statement of the Master's is one of the most beautiful, one of the most restful, one of the most comforting promises ever made by God to man. Listen carefully:

Are not two sparrows sold for one copperpiece? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father.

And as for you, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not, therefore, you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)

More than many sparrows! That's how God described the infinite worth of man. More than many sparrows! That's how God tenderly wove into the fabric of man's confidence a word picture of the Sovereignty of His God. More than many sparrows! A living essay of the love of God for man.

Oh, what tenderness. Oh, what perfection. Oh, what love.

Now listen carefully, as we explore the depths of what our Savior meant when He whispered to them and to us...more than many sparrows! Such is My care for you.

The sparrow is hardly a valuable creature. They seem to multiply like rabbits and appear to serve no earthly purpose, whatsoever. But Jesus says the Father has a place in His heart for the sparrow...a place so special, that not one can fall to the ground "without the Father". Now that phrase "without the Father" means more than "without the Father's knowledge". Much more. It means without the Father's permission. It means even the marksman's bullet aimed at the helpless bird who sits perched unexpectedly on the treetop will only make its mark with

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the permission of a Sovereign God. It means disease will only strike the sickliest of those birds and take its life if the Living God okays it. “Apart from the will of your Father” is how the NIV translates it. Now think about that. Your God has a plan so intricate, that it takes into account the basic needs of every sparrow that fills the skies. Each one is known by God. Each one is cared for by God. And not one falls to the earth without God’s permission. Not one.

“Now,” Jesus adds, “Let’s make the spiritual switch. If your God is that concerned about the welfare of a useless sparrow who has no soul, *how does He feel about you?* I’ll tell you.” He goes on, “He has numbered the hairs of your head.” In other words, His knowledge of you and His concern for you are infinite.

Now I get weary of some of the newest theology that says God’s not concerned with the details of your life. There are some who say, “Just pray about the major choices, and then the rest is up to you. Don’t bother God with which car to buy, which girl to marry, which job to take.” “*Don’t bother God?*” He who has taken the time to count the very hairs on our head? What detail could be too inconsequential for Him? He cares about *everything we do*. The Psalmist wrote, “Even when I awake in the morning, He’s still thinking of me.” Our God cares. Our God cares about every tiny detail of our lives. That’s why we don’t need to be afraid! That’s why we as sheep can march into that pack of wolves without worrying. That’s why we can be wise as serpents, but guileless as doves. *Because our God will not let anything befall us unless it be within His will. Not anything.* And should He allow us to suffer, then it is for His Glory, and for our good, and we have all the more reason to praise Him.

“Fear not, therefore; (Jesus concludes) you are worth more than *many* sparrows!”  
(Matthew 10:31 TLOCIS)

Literally, He is saying: “God loves every sparrow enough to care for every detail of his life. Now multiply that love times infinity.” It means “More than all the sparrows in the world.” It means more than you or I can count. More than many sparrows! God cares that much for you. He cares that much for me.

It means that tomorrow when I go out into the world, and the enemy threatens, and my heart begins to sink, all I need to do is whisper to my soul. “More than many sparrows is my Saviour’s love for me!” and my heart will be at rest. It means that when

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I begin to fear the unseen and become anxious over apparent failure, all I need to do is look to heaven and whisper, “More than many sparrows, that’s how much my Savior cares!” and suddenly my soul will find its peace. It means that even as I go forth with the Gospel as a sheep, tender, seemingly unprotected into that world that seems to be populated with ravenous wolves, all I need say to my anxious spirit is...“More than many sparrows, that’s how much Jesus cares!” My spirit will leap within me and cry, “Praise God!”

That is the message Jesus gave to those trembling twelve as they embarked on their first real venture of evangelism. And that is the message He is whispering tenderly to each of us today. It worked for them. And it will work for us, as well. For both they and we now know just how much He cares. Don’t we?

### MORE THAN MANY SPARROWS

More than many sparrows  
Describes our Jesus’ care;  
He knows each tiny bird that flies  
And who they are; and where...

He watches over every one  
And when its wings are bruised;  
He ne’er forgets them till they’re healed  
Or till that wound is used...

Every sparrow’s in His hand...  
Each bird beneath the sun  
Is in His tender, loving care;  
And He’s not lost a one!

More than many sparrows  
More than the eye can see;  
More than many sparrows  
That’s how much God loves me!

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### For Application

1- Jesus understands the problems a person has trying to relate his or her new faith to family and friends. What do you think are some of the reasons this problem exists? What advice would you give a new believer on how to communicate what has happened, with a maximum of effectiveness, and a minimum of offense? What did Jesus do?

2- Jesus' neighbors *stumbled* over the fact that He had such authority and wisdom, yet He was *only a carpenter*, and *only a carpenter's son*. How did He deal with that? How would you deal with that? What does Acts 4:13 tell us is the key to wisdom and power? Name some "plain folks" in history who have changed the world. What was their secret? Jesus obviously also used the educated and the important people of this world as well. What was the common denominator?

3- Have you ever seen the unbelief of man limit the exercise of the power of God? What can the church do to keep this from happening?

4- Memorize Matthew 10:28-31. When fear or doubt strikes this week, quietly breathe it back to God as a prayer, and see if God does not honor His word by giving you fresh power.

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