

HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW

A Devotional Inspired by Nature: Volume I

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SONG SPARROW

British Columbia

Melospiza melodia

Common

The male song sparrow has been gifted by God to sing as many as 20 different melodies on any given spring morning. As evening approaches, he may have improvised as many as 900-plus variations on his basic theme. This musical gift of serenading with such variety and passion wins the heart of his mate and then courtship begins. After all their duet singing, she lays 3 to 6 eggs and incubates them for 12 to 15 days. An inspired singer as well, she gets them singing and ready to fill the world with music in about 10 days, as one by one they leave the comforts of their own recital hall. They become virtuosos like mom and dad as they make their way from one forest concert hall to another, glorifying God and bringing joy to all who are listening. The male's four-note basic theme has been described as very similar to the opening theme in Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony." Then off he goes with many, many variations sung very loudly and very clearly to keep danger far away from the growing choir under conductor mom. She conducts with a baton of love and joy and the youngsters create new compositions as they learn to be outstanding musicians. By fall, this sibling choir has matured into accomplished solo performers who continue in the same traditions of mom and dad. This is nothing short of stunning, miraculous and humbling for some of us less-talented musicians.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Matthew 10:29-31

As we read about all the positive qualities of the song sparrows and God's plan for them, we must stop and worship Him, our Creator. We are so much more valuable to God than we realize, and so much more gifted to do His work here on earth than the sparrows. Can we take a moment to marvel at their obedience? Yes, their obedience is a God-given instinct and, yes, we have been given free will. How can we work on surrender and obedience in the days ahead? Let's always take time to listen to God's still, small voice as we pray and as we read His word daily. Why? Because He loves His sparrows, but how much more does He love you? Can you give God first place in your day? Show your obedience by praying with a sincere heart.

Prayer: Lord God, Creator of all life, this is the first day of the rest of my life. I need you more than ever! I am beginning to realize how marvelously you have created me and I do want to know your future plans for me. Help me to grow spiritually as I read through and absorb these devotional pages. Give me Holy-Spirit power to apply the word of God to my life and to share my progress with others who need to hear my testimony. Show me, Lord, where I am going wrong and where the next right path leads. I confess that I often want what I want. Forgive me and restore your closeness to me. I love you, Lord, because I know that you first loved me, in Jesus' name, Amen.



SANDHILL CRANES - calling

New Mexico

Grus Canadensis

Uncommon

These calling cranes are most likely announcing, to let others know, that it is mating time. They are well-known for their “tribal war dance” or “wild courtship antics.” If you are invited to this performance, you will likely tell others the next day that it was your most memorable sight ever in the avian kingdom. The eggs the female lays are incubated both by mom and pop crane. In 30 to 32 days, these sandhills become parents and look after their young for about a year. You may agree that this photo is stunning, from the long legs reflected in the pools of water to the sunset reflected in the background. God is to be praised!

“As God’s fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For He says, ‘in the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.’”

2 Corinthian 6:1-2

God is calling the cranes to start a new generation, and in their instinctive obedience to call out to each other, we might want to stop and listen to the word of God in 2 Corinthians. Could the calling cranes be reminding us that God often calls out to us? Have you heard God’s call for salvation, the unmerited grace to receive forgiveness for your sins? Today is the day of salvation, a free gift from God. Or maybe you are saved but a bit backslidden from close fellowship with Jesus, our Redeemer King? He is a jealous God, and He may be calling you back to safety underneath His wings. He wants intimacy with you in His secret place, your heart! Can you allow God’s heart to invade your heart so you can become more like Him?

Prayer: Lord God, forgive me when I take my relationship with you for granted. I am all too often self-centered, busy with what is good, but not with what is BEST! To know you and to hear your voice, Lord, I know I must spend quality time with you. That is how close relationships are formed and blessed. I want to spend time not only talking with you, but also listening and waiting for your answers. Today, I receive your death on the Cross of Calvary as payment for my sin debt. Come, Holy Spirit and fill me with your power to set me free from the bondage I have accepted as life. I desire the best, the new life in Christ and a daily time in your presence that I might hear you and live for you and your purposes. Lord, be glorified in my life, in Jesus’ name and for His sake, Amen.



BLACK SKIMMER – mom and chicks
Long Island, NY

Rhynchops niger
Fairly common

The next two photos make up a black skimmer family. Here is mom and her chicks. The black skimmer is a gull-like bird. Most unusual is the fact that both male and female have the exact same coloring. Their bills are unusual and exactly alike. The bottom bill grows longer than the top, which is only half as long. God created them this way to help in grabbing fish out of the water and securing it for the ride home to the nest. Mom sits here in the sandy nest overseeing and protecting the newborns. Today dad is bringing home “take-out” because they are too young to leave the nest.

“He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Colossians 1:15-17

The family – mom, dad and offspring – is God’s creative plan for filling the earth with goodness and grace. Raising a family in a fallen world is not an easy task, but none of us who have children and grandchildren would want it any other way. God is still holding everything together with His powerful word, and we continue to be blessed, day after day, by our families. An attitude of gratitude is in order! If you belong to Jesus, you also belong to the family of God here on earth, and will enter heaven and live forever with all of God’s family. Thanks be to God, our Heavenly Father!

Prayer: Lord God, there are no words to express my gratitude for your amazing grace and protection that has brought me through thick and thin, storms and pain, hurts and bad habits, graduations, weddings, new babies, anniversaries, sad deaths and frustrating circumstances. Through it all, you and your loving presence has brought comfort, healing and hope. Your love never fails! Lord, protect my family today from the evil one as you continue to hold your creation together with your powerful word. I, your humble child, give you highest praise and lift up on high the name of Jesus, my Rock and my Redeemer. Please save all my family, write their names in the book of life so they will be filled with hope for tomorrow, Amen.



ROSEATE SPOONBILL- Preening
Florida

Ajaja ajaja
Uncommon

The adult roseate spoonbill, when mature, has a spoon-shaped bill. The odd bill is used to strain food items out of water. His bright pinkish-rose coloring leads many Florida tourists to think they have seen a flamingo. In this photo, “Billy” is taking a few minutes out of his busy day to do some preening. Selecting some troublesome, old feathers that have lost their purpose and color, he plucks them out and discards them. God does the same thing with us when a bad habit needs to be eliminated and replaced with a healthier one. God calls it sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit alive in us. We feel so much better when we cooperate with God in this process. When we are changing to be more like Jesus, He is glorified and we are being sanctified.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9

Have you ever gained too much weight on a vacation trip and then struggled to get back to a healthier weight when back home? Maybe you got a ticket for exceeding the speed limit in your car? Or maybe you have spent time gossiping about a neighbor or church member and realized that sin separates us from God. Confession and repentance is the only way back into fellowship with Him. So don't put the treadmill on eBay or try to sell it at a garage sale. Dust it off and get on it for 10 minutes to start, and then work up to 30 minutes by the end of the month. Today is the day to start preening! All things are possible with God. Our obedience shows God our love for Him.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the example of preening to remind me that you desire my sanctification. When I knowingly sin, I will confess and repent to keep the needed changes in my character moving into a likeness of you, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. I want to be holy as you are holy! The cross has made it all possible, and I am forever grateful to you, Lord, for shedding your blood to set me free from sin and death. I know that I need daily preening, because I have areas where I need to change how I live, speak and act. You are my only hope for change, Lord, and I am in love with you, my Holy God, in Jesus' name, Amen.