

THURSDAY, AUGUST 17

Luke 12:4-7

Valuable in God's Sight

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight." Luke 12:6

Toward the end of my final year of college, I found out I was one class short of graduating on time with the rest of my friends and classmates. I felt abandoned by God right at the finish line. It was as though I had messed up along the way and God's plan was marching on, while I was left behind and forgotten.

In Jesus' day, those who were poor bought cheap, plentiful sparrows in order to fulfill their sacrificial requirements at the temple. Jesus said that even though these birds cost only pennies, the Creator of all things still cared about them. We can be encouraged by his words. While God remembers the sparrows, God considers human beings to be more valuable than sparrows. When I read this verse, I remember that time in my life. If God is willing to remember something as small as a sparrow, then there is no way I can be forgotten or left behind.

PRAYER: Creator God, thank you for caring about the sparrows, and thank you for caring about me all the more. Amen.

Bryce M. Diener—Danville, Pennsylvania

FRIDAY, AUGUST 18

Malachi 3:13-18

Exceeded Expectations

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: You have said, "It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the LORD of hosts?" Malachi 3:14

When Babylon released the Israelites after seventy years of captivity, they rushed home to Jerusalem only to find it in ruins. With their expectations of an easy transition dashed, they questioned God's love and whether it was worth serving God at all.

Upon graduating from college, I, too, doubted God. My high hopes for finding work, financial security, and strong relationships were dashed. I moved back home to find a stagnant economy and a home church that was dying. In addition, my friends had all moved away. Fixated on the hardships of starting over, I complained, "If you really cared about me, God, my circumstances wouldn't look like this."

God reminded the people of Israel that there were advantages to living in a godly relationship. God said, "But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings" (Malachi 4:2a). As I learned to trust God more, I was able to view my challenges as the gifts they truly were.

PRAYER: I praise you, God, for opportunities to understand your unrelenting care for me. Amen.

Megan L. Anderson—Kokomo, Indiana