

The Little Sparrow



Some things can seem like too big a problem for us to help with. It's easy to feel that we can't do very much. This is a story about a little sparrow who is told she can't make a difference, but still tries to help. Her actions inspire others, making them want to join in and help too.

Read the story 'The Little Sparrow.'

Thunder crashed. A dark storm grew in the skies. Lightning struck. A spark of fire began to spread through the forest. Seeing smoke, a little sparrow flapped her wings and flew up into the sky. "Fire, fire!" she shouted. "Get out, quick!"

From high above the forest, the sparrow could see the fire was spreading quickly. Tree after tree was beginning to burn. A few birds flew away, but some animals were already trapped by the flames. What could she do?

The little sparrow flew to a nearby stream. A few animals were gathering there, on the other side from the fire. "Please, help! We must save the forest!" the sparrow called. "It is too late," replied the other animals. "The fire is already too big for us. There is nothing we can do." "We should do what we can," the sparrow answered, and turned towards the stream.

The sparrow dipped her tiny beak into the stream and collected a few drops of water. It was scary, but she flew back, keeping high above the fire. She opened her beak and the little water drops fell onto the flames far below. It made just a tiny difference but she did it again and again. Flying to the stream then back to the fire, with her few drops of water. "I will do what I can," she said to herself.

One of the animals by the stream was a beaver. He'd watched the sparrow flying back and forth with her mouthful of water to put out the fire. At first he thought it was hopeless, but then his heart changed. He moved towards a tree and began to gnaw. If he could just clear a strip, that might stop the flames spreading so far. "I will do what I can," he said to himself.

A badger saw the sparrow flying overhead. He couldn't fly towards the fire. What could he do? Suddenly, an idea came to him and he began to dig into the earth. If he could create a deep burrow, it might create a safe space for animals to shelter. "I will do what I can," he said to himself.

A lark was sitting on her nest at the edge of the forest. She saw the sparrow and wanted to help, but she knew she could not leave her eggs. From the branches, she began to sing a hopeful song. "I will do what I can," she said to herself.

Gradually, more and more animals were amazed by the sparrow's effort and they all joined in, each in their own way. The night was long, some animals suffered, but eventually the fire was put out. Each animal had just made a tiny difference, but somehow the forest had been saved.

This story was inspired by Rafe Martin's retelling of a traditional Buddhist Jataka tale, 'The Brave Little Parrot'



I wonder, which part of the story do you like best?

I wonder how the sparrow felt when other animals said it was too late to help?

I wonder how the sparrow felt when the fire was put out?

I wonder, what other animals might have been there and how they could have helped?

I wonder if you've ever helped in a small way with a really big problem?

The little sparrow was deeply upset to see the forest on fire and other animals in trouble. Even though it seemed like she couldn't make a difference, she kept trying to do all she could to put out the flames. Eventually, when all the animals did the little they could, the forest was saved.

On some paper, you might want to draw some flames and think about a big problem you want to help with. Or perhaps you could draw a little bird and think about a small thing you could do that might make a difference. Or you might want to sit and think, or to create something different – whatever is right for you today.

If you would like to, you can say this prayer...

Dear God, Help us to have courage to face big problems and to do what we can, even if that seems too small to make a difference. Help others to be inspired to join in. Amen