ECHOES OF THE END

ILSE KLEYN

Artist Catalogue · 2026

A collection of works exploring endings, transition, remembrance and the promise of new life.

WHY PAINT SPARROWS — EVEN DEAD SPARROWS?

I know what you may be thinking: Why paint sparrows—and even dead sparrows?

The short answer is this: because even death can be beautiful, and without death, nothing new can be birthed.

During COVID-19, I lost my art gallery in Stellenbosch. At the time, I felt as though I had lost not only my business, but also my purpose and even my ministry. I had only just begun to walk in what I believed was my calling, and suddenly, it seemed that everything had been taken away.

Yet during those early mornings of lockdown, I found unexpected comfort in watching the sparrows outside my window. They did not know that the world had changed. They simply continued to live: building nests, searching for food and carrying on without worrying about tomorrow.

They reminded me of God's care for His creation. If He watches over the sparrows, how much more does He care for us, who are so much more precious in His sight?

Towards the end of the following year, I found a dead sparrow lying in the road. It made me think about death—not only physical death, but also the death of dreams, seasons, businesses and relationships. I thought about the death of my gallery and about the things in our lives that come to an end, sometimes without explanation.

But death is not necessarily the end. Jesus said in John 12:24 that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. A seed must disappear into the ground before new life becomes visible.

This is the mystery at the heart of this collection: what appears to be an ending can become the beginning of something new.

The almond blossom carries the same message. The almond is among the first trees to awaken in spring. In Jeremiah 1:11–12, God uses the almond branch as a picture of His watchfulness: He is watching over His Word to perform it. Aaron's rod gives another picture of life emerging from what appeared to be dead wood.

The sparrow reminds me that I am seen. The dead sparrow reminds me that death is not the end. The almond blossom reminds me that new life will come.

And the resurrection of Jesus reminds me that God can bring life from what appears to be dead.

So, even in seasons of loss, I choose to believe that God is still working. He is watching. He is remembering. He is bringing His Word to pass. And where there has been death, He can bring forth life.

01 · The Insignificant Ones I

Medium: oil on round canvas · 180 × 180 cm · Not framed · R 36,000



Artist's explanation

A small sparrow rises among delicate blossoms, its wings open in a moment of movement and freedom. The title points to the way we can regard small, ordinary things as insignificant, while Scripture reminds us that God notices even the smallest of His creatures. For me, the sparrow becomes a picture of a person who may feel unseen or unimportant, yet is fully known and remembered by God.

02 · The Insignificant Ones II

Medium: oil on round canvas · 140 × 140 cm · Not framed · R 28,000



Artist's explanation

This sparrow is caught in flight against a field of blossoms. The movement suggests transition—the leaving of one place and the entering of another. What appears small and insignificant can still carry great meaning. The painting speaks of God's attention to the overlooked and of the freedom that comes when we trust that He sees where we are going.

03 · Shaked (Watchful)

Medium: oil on linen · 70 × 70 cm · Not framed · R 14,000



Artist's explanation

The almond blossom is central to this work. In Jeremiah 1:11–12, the prophet sees an almond branch and God responds that He is watching over His Word to perform it. The Hebrew association between the almond and watchfulness makes the blossom a powerful symbol of God's alertness and faithfulness. Even when a promise seems dormant, God has not forgotten it.

04 · Awake

Medium: oil on linen · 50 × 50 cm · Not framed · R 9,900



Artist's explanation

These blossoms appear to be awakening into fullness. The painting reflects the moment when something that has been hidden or dormant begins to emerge. It is a quiet image of hope:
after winter comes spring, after stillness comes movement, and after an apparently barren season new life can begin.

05 · Provision

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 60 × 90 cm · Framed · R 16,800

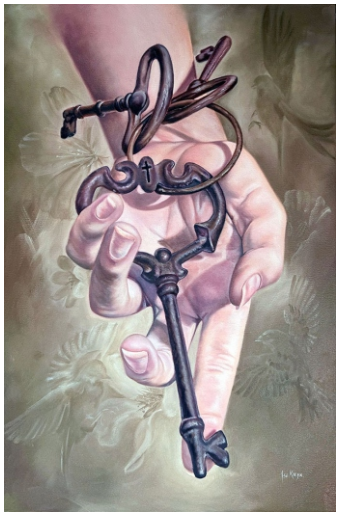


Artist's explanation

A sparrow bends down to drink, completely absorbed in the simple act of receiving what it needs. The scene speaks to God's provision in the ordinary rhythms of life. The sparrow does not appear anxious about tomorrow; it simply receives. This
painting invites us to release our fear of scarcity and remember the God who cares for His creation.

06 · Keys to Life

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 90 × 60 cm · Framed · R 1,600



Artist's explanation

The key is a symbol of access, opening and release, placed alongside delicate blossoms. It suggests that a closed door is not necessarily the end of the story. There can be an opening into another season, another possibility and another expression of life. The painting reflects the mystery of how God can use an ending to open a door we could not yet see.

07 · Transformation

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 60 × 80 cm · Framed · R 14,500



Artist's explanation

The sparrow rests beside wheat, bringing together bird and seed imagery. Jesus used the seed as a picture of death giving way to fruitfulness: what falls into the ground can become something greater than what was visible before. This painting therefore speaks of transformation—the process by which loss, surrender and hidden work can become the beginning of new life.

08 · Hanami

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 80 × 120 cm · Not framed · R 19,800



Artist's explanation

Hanami is the Japanese tradition of viewing and appreciating flowers, especially blossoms in spring. The painting celebrates beauty while acknowledging its fleeting nature. Blossoms are precious precisely because they do not remain forever. For me, this becomes a meditation on seasons, impermanence and the invitation to notice beauty while it is present.

09 · Promise of New Life

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 80 × 155 cm · Not framed · R 25,000



Artist's explanation

A fallen sparrow lies beside an opening blossom. This is one of the clearest images in the collection of the central theme: death and new life existing side by side. The dead bird represents endings, losses and seasons that cannot be restored in their former form; the blossom represents the promise that God can bring forth something new from what appears to be finished.

10 · Surrender

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 60 × 60 cm · Framed · R 12,900



Artist's explanation

A small sparrow rests gently in an open hand. The image speaks of trust, vulnerability and surrender. There is no struggle in the scene—the bird is held. For me, the open hand represents the place where we stop trying to control every outcome and allow ourselves to be held by God, even when we do not understand the season we are in.

11 · Budding Rod

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 120 × 60 cm · Not framed · R 18,000



Artist's explanation

The work refers to Aaron's rod, the dead piece of wood that miraculously blossomed with almond flowers. It is a powerful biblical image of life emerging from what appeared to be dead wood. The painting asks us to reconsider what we have called 'dead' or 'finished'. In God's hands, a barren branch can still produce evidence of life.

12 · The Lonely Sparrow

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 90 × 70 cm · Framed · R 18,000



Artist's explanation

A single sparrow sits alone on a branch. Its solitude is deliberately quiet rather than dramatic. The painting speaks to seasons when we feel isolated, forgotten or left behind. Yet the sparrow is not invisible. The very presence of the bird becomes a reminder that loneliness does not mean abandonment and that God sees the individual even when no one else appears to notice.

13 · New Season

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 40 × 50 cm · Framed · R 9,000



Artist's explanation

A delicate blossom opens against a soft, atmospheric background. It represents the beginning of a new season—the first visible evidence that something has changed beneath the surface. The flower does not arrive all at once; it unfolds. This is a reminder that new beginnings can be small at first, yet still carry the promise of what is to come.

14 · No Worries I

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 30 × 30 cm · Framed · R 4,500



Artist's explanation

The sparrow is captured in flight, light and unburdened. The title echoes Jesus' teaching that we should not live consumed by anxiety about tomorrow. The bird simply flies, trusting the world around it. The painting is an invitation to loosen our grip on fear and to remember that our lives are held by a Father who sees and provides.

15 · No Worries II

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 30 × 30 cm · Framed · R 4,500



Artist's explanation

A second moment of flight continues the theme of freedom from anxiety. The lifted wings suggest movement, possibility and trust. Together with 'No Worries I', this work forms a visual reminder that faith does not mean that difficult circumstances disappear; it means that we do not have to carry tomorrow before it arrives.

16 · Precious in Your Sight

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 30 × 21 cm · Framed · R 3,900



Artist's explanation

A solitary sparrow rests quietly on a branch. Its smallness is central to the message. Scripture repeatedly uses the sparrow to show that God notices what the world may consider insignificant. If the Father knows when a sparrow falls, then the human life that feels overlooked is not overlooked by Him. The title is a declaration of worth and remembrance.

17 · Almond Blossom I

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 30 × 42 cm · Framed · R 6,300



Artist's explanation

The almond blossom becomes a visual promise of spring and fruit yet to come. Its delicate flowers appear before the fullness of the fruit, making them a fitting image for promises that are visible only in their earliest stages. The painting speaks of patience: what God begins, He can continue to bring to maturity.

18 · Almond Blossom III

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 30 × 30 cm · Framed · R 4,500



Artist's explanation

This close arrangement of almond blossoms focuses attention on the beauty of unfolding life. The flowers appear fragile, yet they carry the future fruit of the tree. The work reflects the quiet confidence that beginnings do not have to look impressive to be significant. A small blossom can contain the promise of an entire harvest.

19 · Almond Blossom II

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 30 × 30 cm · Framed · R 4,500



Artist's explanation

The blossoms in this work are layered with warmth and depth, suggesting abundance rather than a single isolated bloom. They represent hope multiplying—one sign of life followed by another.
The almond blossom is a reminder that God can bring beauty after a barren season and that His promises may be developing even when we cannot yet see the final outcome.

20 · Dwelling Place

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 29.5 × 21 cm · Framed · R 4,500



Artist's explanation

A sparrow rests among blossoms, creating a sense of shelter and belonging. The title draws on Psalm 84, where the sparrow and swallow are pictured making their nests near God's altar.
The image is deeply personal to me: the smallest creature has a place. It is welcomed, protected and given room to dwell in the presence of God.

21 · Watching over the Sparrow

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 20 × 29.5 cm · Framed · R 3,900



Artist's explanation

An adult sparrow feeds its young. The tenderness of the scene became a visual expression of care and provision. The parent bird is attentive to a small, dependent life—an image that echoes the way Scripture describes God's care for His creation.
If He watches over the sparrow, how much more does He watch over us?

22 · Tsippor

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 27 × 21 cm · Framed · R 3,900



Artist's explanation

Tsippor is a Hebrew word used in Scripture for a bird or sparrow.
This close portrait removes the bird from a wider landscape and asks us simply to look at it—to notice its character, detail and presence. The painting is a visual meditation on the God who sees individual lives, even those the world might pass by
without a second glance.

23 · Death of His Saints

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 21 × 27 cm · Framed · R 3,900



Artist's explanation

The dead sparrow is deliberately difficult to look at, because death is difficult to look at. Yet the painting is not intended as a celebration of death. It is about remembrance, the reality of endings and the biblical assurance that death is not insignificant to God. Psalm 116:15 declares that the death of His saints is precious in His sight. What looks like an ending to us is still held within God's eternal perspective.

24 · Not Overlooked

Medium: oil on stretched canvas · 14.5 × 21 cm · Framed · R 3,200



Artist's explanation

Two sparrows stand together, small and ordinary, yet fully visible. The title comes from the truth expressed by Jesus that not even one sparrow falls without the Father's knowledge. The painting closes the collection with a simple message: nothing is too small for God to notice. We may feel forgotten, but we are not overlooked.