

We've all heard or even made promises that never happened. For example, we've listened to the sales person at the hardware store tells us that the car battery we are about to purchase will last ten years, only to have it die in ten months. Perhaps we've told our children that we'll attend their important school functions only to have "emergencies" come up at the last minute. Promises are made. Promises are broken. And through this repetition of life's disappointments, society has become increasingly skeptical of promises. We have become skeptical of promises.

What happens when we become skeptical? We get fearful. We become afraid that the person making the promise won't be able to fulfill his or her promise. Jesus is getting closer to his death and his leaving on this earth. He knew that both his death on the cross and his leaving this earth was going to cause fear in the hearts of his followers, as it would appear that he wasn't keeping his promises. So, he gives them a promise. **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."**

**"Do not be afraid."** These words have been repeated over and over throughout the Bible. Jesus said it to a group of professional fishermen who knew their boat was sinking. The angels said it to the women at the tomb and to the shepherds in the field. Here Jesus even calls his disciples a **"little flock."** They had every reason to be afraid as they would soon be going out into the world to bring the message of Jesus to others. Compared to the size of the unbelieving world, they were a **"little flock."** Elsewhere Jesus would also tell them that they were going to be like sheep among wolves, and the devil was going to be a roaring lion looking for them to be devoured.

Our hearts are filled with fear. We fear what the doctor might tell us about the test results might say. We fear we will not have enough money for retirement. We fear our children growing up and facing all the dangers in this world. We fear our jobs being lost. We fear the debt we face on our credit cards. We fear that we are just a **"little flock"** in a really big world. As we face all these fears, we try to grab onto something to take away those fears?

Jesus tells us not to trust in the things of this world to take away our fears. Why? The treasures of this world can only wear out. Thieves can break in steal and destroy our things. There is so much to lose in this world, right? But Jesus says to us: **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."** God's flock cannot lose. They have nothing to fear. Look at what Jesus says: **"Do NOT be afraid."** He says NOT. God has already done what He wanted to do. He has given you the Kingdom.

Jesus knows how easy it is for to get distracted by the things of this world. He knows how easy it is for us to get so wrapped up in the gathering of stuff, that we forgot to treasure what is truly important. He knows how easy it is for us to compare ourselves to others and feel like we are falling short. He knows how easy it is for us to have expectations in our hearts, and then feel like we are falling short. After all, why would the Father **"give you the kingdom?"**

What really matters in our lives? It not what you have done or failed to do, it is what Jesus did for you. Jesus wants his disciples to take their eyes off of themselves, and direct them to Jesus. He wants us to see what Jesus has done for us. The heavenly Father took out his wrath on Jesus. He wasn't going to take out his wrath any more on us. He wants us to see the treasure that we have in Jesus. As you trust in his promises, you have true treasure. **"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."**

Think of all the gifts that we have received from God. He gives us his love. He gives us promises that he never has broken. Instead of us focusing on ourselves, he says focus our eyes on both Jesus' words and works. How do we put this into action. Jesus says: **"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** There is not a single thing in this world, that will not wear out at some time and in some way. Even the most expensive of purses will wear out. Where do you find treasures that will not wear out? That kind of treasure can only be found in Jesus. Finding the treasures in Jesus, it helps us to handle the other treasures given to each of us.

As we focus our eyes on the treasure of Jesus, it helps us to watch for his coming again. The servants that Jesus speaks about in the words of our text do not know when the master will return. Since he could come at any time, they have to be ready to serve at any time. Thieves don't phone ahead to tell you that they are going to break into your house. If they did, you would probably have the authorities there to stop them from stealing your stuff.

What's Jesus' point in these illustrations? He wants us to keep focused on what really matters. He wants us to trust his promises. Yet, Jesus also knows how easy it is for us to get tired. As we wait, we grow weary. As we walk this road of life, the road seems long. The Father seems a long way off. Slowly the sheep begin to stop off the side of the road and doze off. Some snooze a short while until someone comes and wakes them. Some doze a little longer. Maybe some never wake up. That's what happens to us as we stop watching and praying to our God. So, what does God do? He brings us together so that we can help each other to keep focusing on this treasure in Jesus.

How do we do this waiting and watching? We ask Jesus for help. Prayer looks back to see all the good things God has done for us, and it asks God to help us look forward to see all the good things he will do for us. It takes our cares and concerns from our backs and necks, and it throws them on God. **"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."** (1 Peter 5:7).

How do we know that God will help us as we watch and pray? **"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."** The things that we own in our lives are truly blessings from God. The greatest of the blessings we have is the Kingdom of Heaven. May we thank God that Kingdom of Heaven is Yours. May he help us to focus on his promises always. Amen.