

## Sermon: where is your treasure

Luke 12:32-40

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Fear not, little flock, Jesus said to the people who listened to him. He could have said this to us. He is our Shepherd and we are his flock. A little flock. No doubt about that.

And we have enough reasons to be afraid in life, so the advise - or rather, the command - by Jesus that we must not fear, is something we cannot hear often enough.

### 1. The encouragement: the Kingdom is yours

The little flock Jesus addresses is fragile and vulnerable. They were surrounded by the Jewish nation that would soon turn against them and persecute them. They were also part of the Roman Empire that was unfriendly to people who were critical of the State.

We are from many countries, and many of us are from places where the flock of Christ is a minority. We live between people of other religions, and some of us also have to deal with states that are not always fair and friendly to Christians.

To that small flock, Jesus says, be not afraid.

However, if we read the passage from the Gospel carefully, and if we look at what Jesus said to the people before the passage that we read, he is mainly speaking about money. Money and possession in general are probably the topic Jesus spoke most about.

He said to the people to not worry about what to eat and how to dress; do not be focussed on possessions.

"Yes, fair enough Jesus, but what about the education of our children? What about our pension. Should we not focus on money and work hard for it, because who knows what may happen tomorrow!"

But Jesus said, "O you of little faith! Seek the Kingdom of God and these things will be given to you!"

Focus on God and his Kingdom, and God will take care of you. And so, little flock, do not be afraid... for the Father - God - is benevolent to you. He loves you. He cares for you. He is, after all, your Father.

And a father takes care of his children. And Jesus calls God specifically: YOUR father. He is your father.

So no reason to be overly worried about your livelihood, because it is our father's pleasure to give you the kingdom.

God, for no other reason than it simply pleases God - delights God - for this reason alone - God gives us the kingdom. No worries. So get over all your anxiety, guilt, shame, unworthiness, wretchedness, etc., etc. You don't deserve it, but God is giving it to you anyway.

The kingdom - that was the hope and the expectation of the prophets of the Old Testament. It was the hope of all Jewish people at the time of Jesus.

The kingdom means, the new time that Jesus will one day inaugurate, when this world will be renewed. And this coming new world, this new creation, is already in a sense, ours. We are part of it. We already enjoy aspects of the coming age.

We already enjoy it because we already live under God's command, and in his care. We serve the king today, we enjoy the care of the king today. We enjoy the foretaste of what one day will fill the earth.

If today we enjoy the care of God, our Father, we can safely focus on him and on serving him, and we can let go of the worries about money, wealth, houses, cars, our pension. Because God cares for us.

Sure, work hard, take care of your kids, but do not overdo it. And do not put your trust in the value of the pound. Do all you do for God, with trust in him, and let go of your worries and fears.

## **2. The lifestyle: invest in the Kingdom**

To his followers - the disciples who would be sent into the world - Jesus spoke radical language. Sell your possessions and give to those who need it.

Actually, for a small flock in the midst of a dangerous world, it would be natural to not give away, but to keep and to be very careful. For people who feel threatened it is easier to be tightfisted. But Jesus tells us to have open hands even in the middle of a scary world.

The Father has given us his Kingdom - so we must like our heavenly Father be generous people who give away to others in need. Helping people should be our attitude - as children of our generous Father.

The generosity Jesus urges is not an accumulative good-deed-doing, to bank on earning you a ticket to heaven, but a rush of self-forgetting, a joyfully celebrative generosity that empties its purse without worries of a harsh future."

The Greek verb for "give to the needy" is actually what is called the aorist, present continuous tense. So it could be translated as: continually give. always give.

To be tightfisted can be dangerous. Possessions can be a dangerous distraction, that is why Jesus tells us to invest our money in the lives of needy people. And Jesus gives a stern warning as well. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be".

Do we take these words seriously? Jesus gives a simple rule of life. If you have many possessions, then automatically, that is where your heart is. If you have a house at the beach, then you often think about that house. If you have a wonderful bank account, you will often think about your money.

Our focus on our possessions, means that we focus less on seeking first the kingdom of God. While if we seek first the Kingdom of God, we will get all we need anyhow. A wise person can only conclude that it is not paying off to focus on increasing our wealth.

Our Lord's teaching is quite clear: man's heart yearns to possess wealth, a good social position, prestigious public or professional appointments, to provide him with security, contentment and self-affirmation; however, this kind of treasure involves endless worry and disappointment, because there is always a danger of losing it.

Jesus does not mean to say that man should forget about earthly things, but he does teach us that no created thing should become our "treasure", our main thing in life: that should be God, our Creator and Lord, whom we should love and serve as we go about our ordinary affairs, putting our hopes on the eternal joy of heaven.

It may feel scary to invest in our heavenly bank account, but that is what Jesus encourages us to do - fear not, God has given you his whole kingdom to live in - now and forever. He will take care of you.

So we can focus on serving God, and serving people.

So gird your loins. That is a wonderful outdated biblical expression. I will show you what it means. [show with rope]

So what does the expression mean? One bible translation says: be dressed for action. Work hard. Do not relax but be active in the service of God.

And keep your lamps burning. So, do not turn off the lights in the night.

Jesus then compares our service to God with servants in a house who are waiting for their master to return from a trip. They do not know when he will come, so as good servants they make sure that even if he returns in the middle of the night, they are awake, they have food and drinks ready to serve him, they have a bowl of water to wash his feet. Even if he comes at 3 in the morning.

This is what our Lord expects from us. He gives us all we need, the Kingdom and all blessings in the slipstream. So we do not have to be afraid of anything. The falling pound, daesh, global warming, ultimately nothing can hurt us because God is on our side.

But one thing, make sure you are ready, awake, active in serving Him. And no-one can tell the day or the hour when eternity will invade time and the summons will come to give account. How, then, would we like God to find us?

### **3. The reward: the coming King**

This Christian life of serving God and serving people, is how we prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will come at an unexpected moment. So we must always be prepared.

And did you hear the amazing promise for us, if we do serve Him vigilantly? Listen again to this line from the story Jesus told, Luke 12:37:

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he - that is, the Master - will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.

Now this is not your average master who returns after a long trip. This is Jesus Christ, upon his return. He will treat us as we have treated him. He will treat us as we have treated other people.

The small flock, suffering from oppressive religions and from an oppressive state, the small flock that has to give up its normal focus on money and possessions, this small flock that is worried - can we truly live like this, and serve our Lord? This flock will be fully rewarded when Jesus comes.

At the beginning of our Christian life, the Father gave us all - the kingdom. At the end of our Christian life - the Son will come to satisfy us and serve us and make all things well.

And in the in-between-time, we serve him through the power of the Holy Spirit. We take care of the needy. We live to serve others. and even in this time we experience Gods care for us.

## **Conclusion**

So what to do?

Trust more in God. He has given us all we need. The good father cares for his children and has given us wide access to his kingdom.

And focus more on this kingdom of God. If our heart is set on God and his world, our heart is free to not be tightfisted but generous for all who need help.

And question yourself. Do you really need all those things you are striving for. A bit less does not hurt - and others need your help.

And prepare better for his return. Make a start - today - to do what you know he asks of you. To love God more, and to live more for the sake of others and less for yourself.