

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵ “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. ³⁹ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” (NIV84)

Theme: Treasure Christ’s Gifts!

I recently had the opportunity to hear F.B.I. Director, James Comey, speak. During this 20 minute speech, which was on a different way to be—behaving and doing things differently than many people in the world, he talked about the message he shares with high schoolers when he has the opportunity to speak to them. He says that many people think that life is all about moving forward—getting better. You want a better spouse with a better family, a better job—a higher paying job, so that you can afford a better car and a better house, and so on—you move forward in life. But Comey goes on to tell them that this is not the proper way to look at life. Instead, he tells them, picture yourself old and gray, thinking back on your life. He said at that time, you won’t be concerned so much about what you did or what you had; rather you are going to be concerned about who you’ve been. Many people are focused on one thing and one thing only—having a better life here on earth by gaining for themselves better things. But

today we see a different way to live. Instead of focusing on earthly possessions, we treasure the gifts that Christ gives us.

It’s important that we do this on a daily basis, because you never know when the Lord is going to return again. To make his point Jesus brings up a thief. If you know at what time a thief is going to come to your house to steal from you, you would be prepared for him like Kevin Macalister in *Home Alone*. But since that is just a movie, and in real life you don’t know if and when a thief will try to break into your home, you have to be prepared at all times. You lock your doors, buy security lights, or even a security system. You don’t want any money or possessions stolen from you, so you do whatever you can to make it secure.

In the same way Christ is going to come when you least expect him. He is going to come like a thief in the night. We know that he is going to come, but we don’t know when he is going to come. It is up to us then, to be ready—to be prepared at all times and in all places. Of course, the Lord isn’t going to come and steal from us, but he is going to come to steal us from the pain and torment of hell.

So we want to be prepared for his coming. But what exactly does it to be prepared for his coming on the Last Day? On that Last Day Christ will judge the living and the dead. He will separate everyone into two groups—the sheep and the goats, believers and unbelievers. The sheep, believers, will be saved; but the goats, the unbelievers will be condemned.

So what does it mean to be prepared? To believe in Christ as our one and only Savior—it is as simple as that. But as you know, it’s not really all that simple.

We often become distracted with the ways and things of this world. We strive to move forward in life. For many people, their goal, their passion, their energy is devoted to making their lives better. Maybe it’s getting an education, working more hours at your job so you can earn more money and buy more things and better things. Maybe it’s getting yourself into a position to get a promotion or to make a name for yourself. Perhaps it’s playing sports because you enjoy it or getting and staying in shape so you can live a longer and healthier life. None of things are sinful, in and of themselves, of course. But our lives can become wrapped up in moving forward in our lives, that

Christ and his Word often get left behind. That is what the devil tries to do—he tries to use your passion against you. Anything that keeps us away from God, becomes a sin. Sin separates us from God and anything that doesn't agree with God's Word moves us further away from him. And all who are living in sin are unprepared for Christ's coming. Without being in the Word on a regular basis our faith gets weaker and weaker and the more we stay away from the gospel, the less we often want the gospel. As we move forward in life, we often move back in our faith, and when Christ comes again, he will catch many unprepared.

So what the Lord tell us to do in view of his coming? **Sell your possessions and give to the poor.** What good will that do when it comes to Judgment Day? It's not as if our works get us into heaven. So why does he tell us to sell our possessions and give to the poor? Because so often, it is our money and possessions that keep us away from God.

We don't want to be caught off guard when he comes. So we get rid of anything and everything that so easily entangles us. We sell off our possessions and give our money away if it leads us away from Christ. What good would it be to gain the whole world but to lose our soul for eternity? None! So we do anything and everything possible to get rid of the things that distract us from God and his Word. So to prepare our hearts and minds for Christ coming we strive to serve him in this life in everything we do while keep him and his Word front and center in our lives.

But still, we hesitate to do just that because we love the things of this world so much. The Lord has certainly blessed us greatly; and we treasure the gifts that he has given us; but we do that so much that we often aren't willing to give them up. And if we do, then we only give up a little bit, so we can feel better about ourselves without having to change our lifestyle. The Lord isn't demanding that we sell all our possessions to give to the poor—because if we all did that we'd all be poor and in need of a handout. Based on all of Scripture, we see that we are given more than we need so that we can take care of those who don't have enough. And if money or possessions, or anything else in the world keeps us away from Christ, then we should be willing to get rid of all of it so as to not put our soul in jeopardy.

And there is no reason for us to worry about what we have or don't have. Through faith we will receive even greater gifts, eternal gifts that will never wear out or go away. But there is another reason not to fear or worry: Jesus says in our opening verse, **Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.**

The Lord has given you everything you have on this earth—but the greatest gift of all is the salvation that Christ won for us and gives to us freely. Because of him our sins are forgiven and eternal life is ours. And that is worth more than any amount of gold or silver. And he has brought us to faith in him and adopted us as his own. By his love and mercy he chose you to be his sheep, to be part of the small flock of believers, whom through faith, receive all that he has done for us. You already have Christ's kingdom. Christ already rules in your heart through faith. Because you are part of God's flock and a citizen of his kingdom you know that your sins are forgiven and soon you will be taken to his heavenly kingdom.

You don't need anything else, if you had nothing else, you'd be perfectly content; and yet the Lord has graciously given you more and more! But faith, by which he rules in you and you receive all that he gives you, is the only thing that is truly important. And so it is what you truly treasure. As Jesus reminds us, **where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** If you want to know where your heart truly lies, at what is important, look at your bank account. This general truth applies to all matters. If your "treasure" is worldly things, then your desires, your plans, and your actions will be directed toward getting earthly riches.² In the same way, if your treasure is in heaven, your heart will seek ways to use your time, your abilities, and your earthly treasures toward obtaining and securing heavenly things like spreading the good news of forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Let us do all we can to use our time, our abilities, and our offerings to help spread the gospel. So that we may hear the gospel, grow in our faith and closer to God, and so that others may hear the Word and become part of God's flock!

We do this as we wait the return of the one who could come at any moment. Christ is like the master who was attending a wedding celebrating in the parable he told. Jesus in his heaven right now, celebrating his victory. He has defeated death, crushed Satan's head,

and has paid the eternal punishment for our sins. The party has already started and it is going on into eternity.

And soon Christ will return. We don't know when exactly, so we must be ready at all times. The master in the parable could have returned during the second watch of the night—between 9 p.m. and midnight or the third watch of the night, between midnight and 3 a.m. And the servants had to be ready for his return. And all whom he finds ready, he will take to heaven to be with him.

And the tables will be turned. The Lord will serve us! He not only saved us and will take us to his perfect, eternal home, but he will also give us blessing after blessing and serve us for eternity!

That is something we don't want to miss. That is something that all who believe will receive. Those ready and willing to serve the Lord will be rewarded with something so great and unimaginable that we can't really comprehend it.

We treasure our earthly possessions and go through great lengths so that someone doesn't steal them from us. But Christ and his salvation is our greatest treasure, so don't steal it from yourself! Don't be caught unprepared. Don't let the things and enticements of the world distract you from God and his Word. Push aside anything so entangles you. And if you need to, sell your possessions. Christ and his gospel comes first! Prepare your heart and mind for his coming, and use your time, talents, and treasures to help spread the gospel so that many more will be prepared for when he comes again.

Director Comey's message is a good one not just for teens, but for everyone who lives in this sin-filled world. Let's take that same thought and apply it even more so to our topic today: many people are focused on moving forward in this life and are worried about being better and getting nicer things. But when death is near or when Christ comes again none of that matters. What matters is faith which receives what Christ has done. So this question becomes important, "what have I done to help spread the gospel and bring more sheep into God's flock?" That is a different way to be—let Christ be your treasure; may his gospel dwell in your heart and guide your life, for soon he will come to take you home and we want everyone to join us. Amen.