

# **“Promises, Promises” – Pr Jim Sprengle, December 6, 2020**

- I. **2 Peter 3:9** - <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
- II. **Promises come in many different forms...**
  - a. We may have a friend or family member who promises to do something for us... maybe get their life back on track by stopping drugs or alcohol
  - b. They might come from politicians who try to get elected
  - c. The world around us is making all kinds of promises –
    - i. Beauty brands promising to change your appearance
    - ii. Infomercials promising to make your life better with a salad chopper
    - iii. Reporters promising to bring you the next big story
    - iv. And recently, we've been promised to receive a vaccine that will put an end to the pandemic
  - d. The idea of a promise is only as good as the person or thing behind it.
  - e. How many of you have been let down by the failure of someone or something to deliver on their promise?
    - i. When I was a teenager, I remember Geraldo Rivera making a huge deal out of finding the secret vault of Al Capone.
    - ii. He did a live, 20/20 special and hyped it for weeks leading up to the event... maybe some of you tuned in as well.
    - iii. After more than an hour of ad libbing by Geraldo, construction crews digging, and all kinds of crazy ideas about what could be in the safe... The moment of truth.
      - 1. By that time, I was on the edge of my seat, pretty sure that I was going to see the bones of some rival gangster or a huge stash of money.
      - 2. Well, most of you know what happened... the vault was empty... not a thing in there...
      - 3. All the hype, the promise of a gangster's stash, and a reporter who was at the top of his game – ended with a giant let down.
      - 4. Geraldo Rivera's career was never the same after that, because many people found it difficult to trust him – and he, for many, was put in the category of sensationalism and sideshow journalism.
    - f. I would like to compare Geraldo's Al Capone special with the world.
      - i. The world builds up all these things around us as worthy of our time and effort – as “just wait and see, it's gonna be good!”
      - ii. How many people do you know that were promised a good job and career after they got a college degree?
        - 1. Then they get out with \$125,000 in debt and can't find a job

- iii. Perhaps you know someone who spent their whole life working nonstop, and they get into their 50's and say, "This is nothing like I thought it would be... my success does not equal happiness or fulfillment."
- iv. Maybe you've purchased the latest and greatest thing – a new car or computer, or some other thing that promises to make your life better...
  - 1. You've just dropped a bunch of money, and as you are using your new thing... you feel some disappointment, like, this is not that great! I thought I would be much happier!
- v. Even the holidays become an empty promise sometimes – have you ever opened all your presents on Christmas and felt letdown?
- g. The world is a lot like Geraldo's Al Capone special – it promises to deliver all kinds of things, but it there is nothing of real value in the end.

### III. **Our readings today are all about promises.**

- a. The promises made by God.
- b. First, God speaks through the Prophet Isaiah saying that someone will come to prepare the way for the Messiah, the Savior of the world.
- c. Then we read in our Gospel lesson in Mark, sure enough, just as God said, a man came to prepare the way... John the Baptist.
  - i. Now John was making some pretty bold claims... Repent! Turn from your ways and get ready... because someone is coming far greater than me... I am unworthy to even be in His presence...
  - ii. Who knows? Maybe people went out there to see the Savior, the Messiah... and they got John the Baptist... a crazy looking guy who ate grasshoppers, and they were disappointed.
  - iii. Maybe they were expecting flash bang miracles and the rise of a great military leader – and all they found was a guy telling them to get their lives straight... repent!
  - iv. Their idea of what would save them was an empty promise.
- d. Jesus would come onto the scene... a poor, simple man... to fulfill God's promise to save us all.

### IV. **God's promises never lead to emptiness.**

- a. The things God points to and carries out in our lives are not fanciful or wishful thinking – they are real
- b. The first way we can know God's promises of salvation and love for us are real come in the person of Jesus Christ.
  - i. You see, God Himself, the Son, was born into a world of emptiness and sin to give us a way out
  - ii. No longer do we have to trust in the "to good to be true" promises of the world... we have a God who became one of us... He has the ultimate credibility as He put "boots on the ground"

- iii. Jesus led the way – He took the sins of the world upon Himself – and delivered forgiveness, life and salvation to all who believe...
  - iv. And better yet, the empty tomb was no letdown like Al Capone's vault – it was the ultimate promise that we who are baptized (Mark 1:8) will also rise again to life eternal.
- c. God's love is like that – not empty promises – but real and fulfilling.
- V. **He loves people so much that He's willing to wait.**
- a. Have you ever asked yourself why God allows all this suffering and trouble?
  - b. Certainly, many people in the world do not believe in a God who allows so much trial and tribulation... how can God be loving with all this trouble?
  - c. Some would even suggest that God is full of empty promises... but what does 2 Peter say?
    - i. God is not slow in fulfilling His promise to return in glory and make all things new and right... He just wants everyone to be saved first...
  - d. We face the trials and tribulations that are temporary, so that we might save people for an eternity.
  - e. All those people who have turned to the empty promises of sin, death and the devil – are the people God wants us to share the fullness of Christ with
  - f. Yes, we might suffer and struggle as Christians, but that is not a promise God ever made (that we wouldn't suffer) – instead, we can make the best of our suffering to win some for Christ – because God loves them too
  - g. The final days are coming – God's promises are always true – but it will be in His timing – which is based on love and grace
  - h. In the meantime, we live and love like He's coming back today... especially sharing the hope we have in promises fulfilled.
  - i. We don't have a bunch of hype, an empty vault, and false hope... we have a God who has never failed to do what He promises.
  - j. That's a message worth sharing... Amen.