

"Investing for Eternity" Sermon Series
Part 1 –“What Are You Banking On?”
Sunday, February 19th, 2012 – Eastgate Community Church
Pastor Dale Campfield

Intro:

Today, we will begin our sermon series entitled, “Investing in Eternity”.

Key Text: Matthew 6:19-21

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Throughout this series based on Matthew 6:19-21 we’ll look at this question: “Do we desire the accumulation of treasures on earth and trust in them for our well-being, or do we desire to store up treasures in heaven and trust in our heavenly Father who gives us our well-being?”

A steward is someone who manages the affairs of another, and good stewardship is every Christian’s responsibility. Since everything we possess comes from and belongs to God, our task as stewards is to manage our time, talent and treasure in ways that glorify Him, storing up treasures in heaven, *Investing for Eternity*.

We may like to think the way we handle our money is none of God’s business. But the Bible equates our faithful management of money with maturity of character.

Our culture is so often consumed with greed. Everywhere we turn people are focused on getting more money and having more things. Sadly, Christians can be swept along in a pursuit of wealth and find themselves struggling to balance their checkbooks at the end of the month just like everyone else on their block. This isn’t the way God wants us to live. He has a plan for effectively managing our money.

The fact is, everything comes from God, belongs to God, and is dispersed by God. We are the stewards of His possessions. Do we recognize God as the owner of our belongings? This sermon series will help us put earthly things into a heavenly perspective so that God can use us to further His kingdom.

The Bible teaches that the wisest thing we can do with our resources is to learn to invest them in His kingdom, and that becoming a generous person is the smartest way to prepare for an eternal future. If you’d like to learn principles for wise giving and generous living, this series will both challenge and encourage you. Don’t be satisfied with earthly stock options and interest rates; learn the genius of generosity and expand your portfolio of eternal rewards!

It's time to begin *Investing for Eternity!*

It's 2012 and everyone is worried about the economy. It's one of the driving forces in the upcoming election for the President in a few months. Jobs are being lost, the economy is sinking, the national debt is beyond reach, etc. etc.

Have you ever heard this phrase, "Where are you banking these days?" That line went through my mind this week: Where are you banking these days? I started turning that over and over and over and all of a sudden I started thinking, "Everybody is banking on something." You bank your life on something. You're investing your life, *you* are banking on something.

What are you banking on?

The next promotion. I know some people who are banking their entire life, their entire future on their next promotion. "If I can just get that promotion, life will be cool from there on out."

On my kids. I know some parents who are banking on their kids. "My life hasn't turned out the way I wanted it to so I'm going to really invest in my kids and make sure they're successful and they achieve things that I didn't achieve. They're banking on their children, basically trying to live their life through their children.

Wealth, Fame or Success. I know some people who are banking on wealth or fame or success. Every spare minute of their life is invested in, "How do I make that next buck... close that next deal... accomplish that next achievement..." They're banking on it as if nothing else matters.

Having Fun. Then there are some people who act as if this life is all there is. All they're banking on is having fun. "I'm going to enjoy my hobby... I'm going to be as comfortable as I can be... I'm going to feather my nest and the rest of the world? Forget you! I'm here to enjoy life." "You only live life once!" That's what they're banking on.

There's two problems when you start banking on things that are temporary.

And everything is temporary.

#1: Nothing on this earth is going to last. Nothing. Even your life on this earth is not going to last. You get 60, 80, maybe 100 years.

#2: You can lose it all very, very quickly. I'd like to see the hands of those of you who bought stock in the past and lost it all very quickly. You know the meaning of losing it all very quickly.

That's why Jesus recommended that you bank with a bank that cannot go bankrupt. He suggests that you invest in light of eternity, that you store up treasure in heaven and you bank with a bank that can't go bankrupt.

On the top of your outline, there's a verse from the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus. Look at our main text again... *"Stop storing up treasures for yourselves on earth where moths and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. Instead, store up treasures for yourselves in heaven."*

Notice what that verse does not say. It doesn't say don't store up treasure for yourselves. It doesn't say that. It says don't store up treasures for yourselves where? On earth. Instead, it says it's wise if you store up treasure for yourself in heaven. He says you need to bank with the bank that doesn't go bankrupt. Everything here on earth you could lose. There are moths, there is rust, there are thieves. And He's saying this – here's the point – don't ever bank on anything that could be destroyed, eaten away by moths. And don't ever bank on anything that can be depreciated, rusted away by time. And don't ever bank on anything that can be depleted, taken away by somebody else, stole by thieves.

When you narrow it down you say, Ok if I'm not going to invest my time and my energy and my life and my reputation and my health and my wealth and all of that on things that can be destroyed or depreciated or depleted, what does that leave left?

The wisest investment you can have is to bank in the bank of eternity!

You bank in the bank of eternity. That's the wisest investment of your life. How do you do that? How do you bank in heaven? How do you store up treasure for yourself in heaven? You've heard it said many times, "You can't take it with you." You can't take your wealth and all this stuff with you to heaven. You're never going to see a hearse pulling a U-Haul. You're not going to take it with you.

But you can send it on ahead. **While you're here on earth you can actually start storing up treasure in heaven. How do you do that? By investing it in people who are going there.** By blessing other people here on earth who are going to heaven and they take it along. You do your givin' while you're livin' and then you'll be knowin' where it's goin'. We're beginning this series today on "Investing for the Kingdom", God doesn't just bless your life so you can feel good. He blesses you so you can help other people; it's about the Kingdom. Whenever you help others and you're a blessing to them you're actually storing up treasure in heaven.

Matthew 6:19-6:24

Let me ask you a question: "What direction is your compass pointing to?"

In the movie, "The Pirates of the Caribbean," Captain Jack Sparrow has a compass. It is no ordinary compass. Rather than pointing north, it points toward whatever the person holding it wants most. It might be treasure, or a person, or a location. But it only works if

the person holding it knows what they want.

But Captain Jack, self-centered as he is, doesn't really know what he wants and so the compass doesn't always work for him. In the second "Pirates" movie, when he is trying to find the chest containing the still-beating heart of Davy Jones (which, by the way, gives a whole new meaning to "where your treasure is, there your heart will be") Jack can't get a heading from his compass. So he convinces Elizabeth that finding the chest will reunite her with her true love. And because her heart is more certain at that moment than his, they get their heading and continue their journey.

What if you had a compass like that this morning? Where would the needle point? What is it that you treasure most in your life? Those are the questions that Jesus is dealing with in the passage that we'll be focusing on this morning. So go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Matthew 6 and follow along as I read beginning in verse 19:

Matthew 6:19-24 (ESV)

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

In order to build a firm foundation on where we are going;

Let me share with you [seven foundational principles](#).

Foundational principle #1: God owns everything

Foundational principle #2: God has appointed us to be stewards of what He owns

Foundational principle #3: We will be held accountable for our stewardship

Foundational principle #4: Stewardship is required in all areas of my life

Although at first glance it may appear that Jesus is making three unrelated statements, He is actually using a common Rabbinical technique of parallelism in which He is communicating the same underlying principle with three separate illustrations.

Jesus is sharing some crucial investment principles with His followers in this passage – not some hot stock tips to generate temporary wealth in the stock market, but something far more important – principles that will enable us to be rich for eternity as we invest in His kingdom.

Although on the surface Jesus seems to be dealing primarily with our financial resources, the principles that He lays out for us here deal with every area of our lives. Our stewardship is not limited to our financial resources and possessions – it is also required of our time, our talents and of the gospel that has been entrusted to us.

Foundational principle #5: I must choose to treasure the things that God treasures

The story is told of the husband who was on a business trip and decided to buy a gift to bring home to his wife to show her how much he appreciated her.

The lady at the cosmetics counter showed him a bottle of perfume for \$75, but the man thought that was a bit expensive. So the clerk pulled out a smaller bottle of the same perfume, which cost only \$50. Again, the man explained that this was a bit expensive. The clerk, trying to conceal her frustration, showed him the smallest bottle available, priced at \$20.

The man shook his head and said, “I think I’d like you to show me something really cheap.” So she reached under the counter and showed him a mirror.

What this man demonstrates is that what we treasure in life is demonstrated a whole lot more by our actions than our words. While he may have claimed to value his wife, his actions said otherwise.

Jesus uses an interesting play on words in verses 19 and 20. He literally says “Do not treasure for yourselves treasures on earth...but treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Here Jesus is using earth and heaven to distinguish between two completely different worlds – our temporary life here on this earth where we are merely sojourners and our place of permanent citizenship – the kingdom of heaven.

The point He is making here – one that is confirmed throughout Scripture – is that we are not to treasure what the world values, but rather we are to treasure what God values. And if our treasure is truly in heaven, then we will invest our time, talents and treasure in those things that have value in that kingdom rather than in the things that have value here on earth. And what we choose to treasure will clearly demonstrate where our hearts are.

Since that is the case, then the question we must ask is this:

What does God treasure?

Obviously we don’t have time to discuss a complete answer to that question this morning, but let’s focus on two of the most significant:

• People

Four times in Exodus and Deuteronomy, God refers to His people as a “treasured possession”, culminating with this verse near the end of Deuteronomy:

And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments,

Deuteronomy 26:18 (ESV)

God values people. He values them so much that He sent His Son to this earth to die on a cross to provide eternal life. Jesus described just how much God treasures people in this familiar verse from His conversation with Nicodemus:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (ESV)

When Jesus uses the term “world” in that passage, He is not speaking of the physical sphere on which we live, but rather the people who inhabit the earth. God treasures every single life so much that He was willing to put His money where His mouth was, so to speak, by sending His very own Son to this earth to provide the possibility of eternal life for every person.

Let’s look briefly at the second thing that God treasures and then we’ll take both elements together and see if we can’t draw some practical applications.

- **The eternal**

As Paul writes to Timothy, he provides us with some good insight into God’s heart in this area:

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (ESV)

The principle here is clear. Because God treasures the eternal much more than the temporal, we are to focus our lives on those things that will make a difference for eternity, not just invest in those things that will bring temporary pleasure. And when we do that, the irony is that God actually gives us the ability to enjoy the temporary treasures which He has entrusted to us much more than if we treasured those things in the first place.

So when I combine the idea that God treasures people with the idea that He also values the eternal, I can rightly conclude that if I am to treasure the things God treasures, I must invest all that God has entrusted to me in developing the lives of people in a way that will equip them for eternity. While that might mean I begin by meeting their physical needs, my long term goal must be to do all that I can to help them become a mature disciple of

Jesus.

Foundational principle #6: I must choose to focus on the things on which God focuses

Think of the example of wearing glasses. Here's a testimony I recently heard, "For much of my life, I had bad eyes. Because of the shape of my eyes I was unable to focus on any object that was more than a few inches away. But then I had LASIK surgery where a doctor used a laser to reshape my eye to enable me to be able to see clearly objects that are both nearby and far away. So because my eyes were transformed from 'bad' to 'healthy', I am now able to focus my eyes properly."

Here in this passage, Jesus is making the point that we all need spiritual LASIK. The key here is to understand what Jesus meant when He said, "if your eye is healthy..." The word translated "healthy" in the ESV is rendered "good", "clear" or "single" in some other translations.

It is a Greek word that is hard to translate into English with just one word. The word literally means "without folds" and its most basic meaning is "single" or "simple". Jesus is contrasting that here with a "bad" eye. In Jewish literature, the idea of a bad or evil eye is often associated with stinginess. We see this in a couple of places in the Proverbs, including this verse:

Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy;
do not desire his delicacies,
Proverbs 23:6 (ESV)

If you read this verse in your ESV Bible you will notice a footnote that indicates that in Hebrew, the word "stingy" is literally "whose eye is evil." So when Jesus refers to a "healthy" eye, he may be speaking of one who is generous as opposed to stingy. But my sense here is that there is a broader point that Jesus is making – one that seems to fit in with the overall theme of the Sermon on the Mount.

Obviously Jesus is using the eye here in a figurative sense. He is dealing with our spiritual eyesight rather than our physical eyesight. And in the spiritual realm our eyes can either be used to see and to focus on that which is bad – those things that are opposed to the kingdom of heaven - or we can use them to see and to focus on that which is healthy – those things that advance the kingdom of heaven.

We've already seen that principle confirmed as Jesus taught about prayer, and especially when He taught about asking, seeking and knocking. Those three activities were all to be focused on God and on His kingdom rather than our selfish needs and desires.

If I have a "bad" eye, then I will view life as an opportunity to invest in those things that bring me comfort and pleasure. But if I have a "healthy" spiritual eye I will view life as an opportunity to invest in what God focuses on – His kingdom.

Here's how Paul summarized this principle:

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (ESV)

Foundational principle #7: I must choose to serve God as He wants me to serve

"No man can serve two masters."

Although most of us are very familiar with these words of Jesus, I'm not sure how deeply we've considered the seriousness of what He says here. This is not a suggestion. Jesus does not say, "You should not serve God and money." It's actually not even a command. He does not say, "You must not serve God and money." What Jesus is describing here is an impossibility. "You cannot serve God and money."

How much frustration would we all avoid if we really believed what Jesus is saying here and then lived our lives in accordance with those words? This is not a new problem at all. In fact, we find throughout the Bible that the greatest obstacle to man's relationship with God is his attempt to serve God while still hanging on to something else. For Israel, it was often trying to worship God while still thinking they could hold on to the Gods of the people whose land they had conquered or made political alliances with.

But in many ways, we're no different at all. We invest all our time, talent and treasure trying to achieve the "American Dream" and then we just add on God as an appendage and ask Him to bless our efforts.

In the New American Commentary, Craig Blomberg does a pretty good job of describing the typical Christian in the United States in the 21st century:

We try so hard to create heaven on earth and to throw in Christianity when convenient as another small addition to the so-called good life.

If you've ever tried to straddle a fence for any period of time, you know just how uncomfortable that is. The only way to ultimately be comfortable is to choose one side or the other and get off the fence. But far too many of us, and I include myself in that group far too often, are stuck on the fence. We want to be Christ followers, but we also want to hang on to the things of the world. But Jesus said that's impossible. We have to make a choice and get off the fence and choose one side or the other.

The words of Jesus to the church in Laodicea are relevant to us here:

I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.
Revelation 3:15-16 (ESV)

Conclusion:

If I want to be effective in investing in the kingdom of heaven, I have to make three important choices:

1. I must choose to treasure the things that God treasures – developing people so they are prepared for eternity.
2. I must choose to focus on the things on which God focuses
3. I must choose to serve God as He wants me to serve

And as you do these things.... You watch, You wait, You'll see!