

## **Well-Invested: Treasure in Heaven**

Matthew 6:19-24

### **Investing Wisely**

These days it seems that everyone is on the lookout for investment advice and because of that there's no shortage of those who want to give it.

Such advice more times than not has to do with money. There are endless ways to invest when it comes to money—some good and some not so good.

Investing wisely though is so much more than a matter of money. Think about it, you and I have the opportunity every day to invest ourselves in ways that have absolutely nothing to do with money.

There's nothing like investing in people to make a difference for God's Kingdom.

Each of us is gifted in special, yet very different ways. How those gifts are used goes a long way toward defining who we are. We can invest ourselves in trivial ways or invest in things that really matter.

Most of the funeral services I do usually gravitate around the ways persons have invested themselves in faith, family, and friends. There's very little mentioned about one's net worth.

I've heard it said, "*There are no pockets in a funeral shroud.*" We can't take it with us, as much as we'd like to think so.

It comes to us then to invest in ways that rightly fit us for this life and the next.

Over the next few weeks we'll be talking about those sorts of investments.

No doubt we'll be talking about money, but more importantly, we'll be talking about how Jesus, the greatest investment advisor of them all, would want us to live.

**(Matthew 9:19-24)**

### **The Uncertainty of Storing Up Things on Earth**

In offering his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is quick to talk about those things where the rubber meets the road. He doesn't so much major in "*pie in the sky*" issues, but in real life.

In our scripture for today he talks about *“not storing up treasure here on earth where moth and rust consume and thieves break in and steal.”*

Jesus is quite aware of the transience of this life and the fleeting nature of the things we have.

He was clear about such things in the parable about the rich man in Luke 12:13 ff. In a word the man ran out of room for all the surplus grain he had.

The man thought, *“I’ll tear down the barns I have and build bigger ones and then I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, and be merry.’”*

In the seeming security of the veritable fortune he had amassed, the man’s life was demanded of him that day and he was left to wonder what good his possessions were now.

*“So it is,”* says Jesus, *“with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”* (Luke 12:21)

Cheryl and I moved this past week. The movers loaded us out on Wednesday and brought our stuff over here on Thursday. Boy, we have a lot of stuff. We’ve got some downsizing to do. No bigger barns for us.

One of the guys helping us load out some stuff I still at Centenary quoted this passage about building bigger barns. His comment, while intending to be funny, helped me realize what I already knew to be true.

### **When It Comes to Things, Nothing Is a Sure Thing**

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus puts us on guard by reminding us that worldly possessions have a way of wearing out.

In this regard he talked about clothes that are susceptible to moths. In effect, he is saying there is no permanence to possessions.

Clothes, as we know, are forever wearing out or going out of style. They can get stained or torn. They can even lose their appeal. How ironic that the very things we just had to have, eventually end up making their way to the Mountain Mission truck or given to the Goodwill.

Jesus talks about not storing up what moths or vermin can very easily destroy or thieves can pillage. Jesus knows that no possession is a sure thing.

There's no such thing as safekeeping when it comes to the things of this world. Possessions are just as easily taken as they are kept.

We have learned from the misfortune of others that the ravages of nature can be quite destructive.

Wildfires have consumed hundreds of homes in Southern California, the flooding from Hurricane Florence has inundated countless homes in North Carolina, and the winds of Hurricane Michael have level homes in Florida's Panhandle.

When it comes to things, nothing is a sure thing.

### **The Certainty of Storing Up Things in Heaven**

Jesus says that instead of "*storing up treasure here on earth*" we need to be much more concerned about "*storing up treasure in heaven.*"

Jesus, by way of comparison, makes his point. The stuff of heaven far outweighs anything here on earth.

We sometimes insist on just the opposite. We are so riveted upon the things we have, it's hard to put our vision on God.

Investing in the things of God's Kingdom has lasting effect. Investing our lives in God pays a dividend for live now and for all eternity.

Jesus knows that "*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*"

The thing about possessions is while we may think we possess them, in reality they possess us.

I like the fable told of the monkey who put his hand down the narrow opening of a cookie jar. As long as he kept his fist clinched around the cookie he couldn't get his hand out. He wouldn't let go though, for fear he would lose the cookie. By his own decision, he was doomed to carry around that old cookie jar. What he thought he possessed, in reality, possessed him.

If we are not careful when it comes to stuff, selfishness has a way of creeping in. Greed has a way of becoming a part of things without us ever noticing.

Covetous is the same way. In comparison with the rest of the world we are some of the richest people walking the face of this earth, yet we continually compare ourselves to those who on face

value seem to be doing better than we are. Quietly, and sometimes not so quietly, we wish we had what they had and because of that we're never satisfied.

Our eyes stay fixed on an elusive prize, whatever that is, and we are forever frustrated.

The amount of debt that's accumulated yearly speaks to this fact more than any other. For so many living beyond their means is nothing more than simply living a lie.

Let's hear it again. The stuff of heaven far outweighs anything here on earth.

We would save ourselves all sorts of worry and all sorts of anxiety by investing in the things of God rather than in the things of this world.

### **Distorted Vision**

Jesus talks about the eye being as *"the lamp of the body."* *"If the eye is healthy,"* he says, *"the whole body is healthy."*

Jesus also talks about the opposite. *"If the eye is unhealthy,"* he says, *"the whole body will be full of darkness."*

What Jesus talks about is the importance of having right vision. In the same breath he cautions us about distorted vision.

Instead of seeing the things of this world for what they are, our vision gets skewed. Things take on much more importance than they should. When it comes to the next best thing we're thinking about we are like a kid in a candy store picking out our next treat no matter how much it costs.

In taking a closer look at what Jesus means by an eye that is *"healthy"* and one that is *"unhealthy,"* he's really talking about whether one's spirit is generous or not. The Greek words used here seem to bear that out.

A generous eye sees as God sees.

There is nothing like generosity that leads us to a clear and undistorted view of life.

We are able to see people as people rather than objects. We are freed to add value to life rather than being so concerned with *"what's in it for me."*

Adding value to life means helping out where you can, building up those around you, and supporting others whenever possible.

I ask myself all the time, *“How can I add value to this life and those around me?”*

### **Called to Decide**

Jesus, as he so often does, calls on us to decide. Will we serve God or money?

For Jesus, it comes down to a matter of the heart.

*“No one can serve two masters,”* he says, *“for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*

### **Christ’s Generosity Leads the Way**

Some might read what Jesus says here in his Sermon on the Mount as something next to impossible to attain.

Can we really be free from the ties of this world? I am thankful Jesus challenges us in this regard.

I like what Tim Keller in his book *Counterfeit Gods* says about such things. He talks about Jesus being the very one who gave up his treasure in heaven in order to make us his treasure.

Jesus gave generously, even to the point of giving his own life, so we might live.

Because of Christ’s generosity we can be well-assured that God loves us and wants to provide for our every need, even to the point of forgiving our sins.

Such generosity should lead us to respond with the deepest devotion and every desire to serve.

Let’s join then the Apostle Paul where he writes in Philippians 3:7, *“I count it all loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:7)

### **Who Am I to Doubt God’s Provision?**

I mentioned our move a few minutes ago. Along with that came the sale of our home in Lexington. We waited for what seemed like an eternity for it to sell. Our faith has been tested all along. There’s nothing like getting out on the edge financially to test your faith.

All along we have so desired to remain faithful in God's provision. For me, it was a matter of practicing what I preach.

When we put our home on the market, a friend of ours in Lexington prayed with Cheryl for the family who would move into our home. At the time I selfishly would have preferred her to have prayed for us.

As things worked out the fellow who bought the home has ties to Centenary. His parents are very active there and we talked often about him and his two daughters.

He's just now starting a new career, a new marriage, and a new season of life. The home is going to be perfect for them. I am thankful to have played a part in the answer to somebody else's prayer.

Who am I to doubt God's provision or his timing for that matter?

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)*

Those of you have been on the Emmaus Walk are aware that two questions are asked right out of the gate that challenge everyone in attendance to consider their priorities.

- "How do you spend your time?"
- "How do you spend your money?"

How you answer goes a long way in defining what you really consider important.

I am thankful to Christ for the advice he gives about being *"well-invested."* He is clear that *"storing up treasure on earth"* is simply futile when compared to *"storing up treasure in heaven."*

I am thankful to Christ that he challenges me to change course, if needed. As with an investment advisor sometimes there's some tweaking to do and at other times only wholesale change will do.

I am thankful that Christ challenges me to adjust my focus and to consider what's really important.

I'm thankful that Christ challenges me to consider who I'm really serving, even though that can be quite revealing, if not uncomfortable.

*“No one can serve two masters,” says Jesus. “Either you hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”*  
(Matthew 6:24)