

Give to Invest in Eternity Luke 12:13-21; 16:1-9

Some investments simply don't work out - they decline in value or disappear altogether. In fact, from the Bible's point of view, all earthly wealth will ultimately lose all of its value unless it is converted into something of eternal value - PEOPLE. God loves people because people are made in His image, and they will all live forever, with Him or apart from Him. So invest your life - your treasure, your time, your talent - in helping people find and follow Jesus.

Turn to Luke 12

Continuing our Every Knee Series started last week - in case you weren't here...

- Sermon, introductory video, and all resources at everyknee.org
- Extra Every Knee Books at Information Desk
 - o Visiting parents feel free to take one – get to know the church your kids go to!
- If you have Every Knee book – turn to page 48 to write out this week's sermon notes

Recap: This 5-week Every Knee Series is about GENEROSITY

- Are we generous with our time, money, skills, resources?
- Every Knee will challenge each of us to give ALL WE HAVE and ALL WE ARE to Jesus

We're talking about it now because God is calling Grace to a courageous next step of faith

- That includes building our Creekside campus in the south part of town
- Planting our 4th local campus
- Preparing to plant 2 new university/family churches – one in the US and one overseas
- To fully fund those courageous steps + raise our normal operating budget for next 2 years...
- We need to raise \$32M over the next two years

BUT we want you to speak into this process by turning in a Commitment Card on May 6th

- = what you and your family commit to give to this initiative over the next 2 years
- Not a pledge card; won't call you, knock on your door, not a contract!
- If circumstances like job or health change – you're not held to this
- I will never see it. Elders will never see it. Only finance dep't will
- They will add all our commitments together and give us the total #
- Then we'll know whether God is confirming these next steps or not

If you want to turn your card in before May 6... come to our Advance Commitment Night April 27

- 6:30pm at the Ice House in Bryan
- Exciting, visionary night of worship, fellowship, celebration – rsvp online – childcare available

To prepare us for making this commitment we're taking 5 Sundays to answer the question:

WHY SHOULD WE BECOME GENEROUS AND JOYFUL GIVERS?

We talked about a lot of wrong answers last week

- Don't give to God because you think He needs your money, will make you rich, will like you more or let you into heaven – all of those are false!

Correct answer #1 last week: Become a generous and joyful giver because giving is how we worship and God is worthy of our worship

Reason #2: Become a generous and joyful giver because that is how you invest in eternity

When I was a kid dad had me read book on investing called “The Richest Man in Babylon”

- I was sold! Concept of compounding interest appealed to my analytical nature
- Grabbed a calculator – did math to figure out how to have \$1M by 35
- Realized all that was required = **delayed gratification**
 - o deny myself a pleasure or possession now, invest, and I’ll have much more later!
 - o that’s really good advice: delay your gratification now to invest in your future

Just make sure you choose the right investments... because some are better than others!

- Take you back to the ‘90’s... perhaps most ridiculous investment fad of all time: **Beanie Babies**
- Ty Warner – good at designing toys but even better at manipulating supply and demand
- One new design after another... but never producing quite enough to meet demand
- They’d sell out – if you didn’t get it on time, you missed out
- Created a sense of scarcity in the market which drove up demand and price
- Speculators jumped in – people spend savings accounts on beanie babies as an investment
- Even wrote a book on how to invest in beanie babies – here’s a page...
 - o \$5 to \$250... 270% annual growth rate – insane!
 - o Buy now because it’s predicted to be worth \$1000 by 2008
- Led Robinson family to spend \$100,000 buying 20,000 beanie babies
 - o buy at \$5 a pop, sell for profit a few years later, pay for 5 sons to go to college
- Just one problem... the market crashed! Now sell for 50 cents!
 - o Robinsons have 20000 beanie babies in garage rather than \$100000 for college tuition
- Horrible investment idea because they had no lasting value – just a bubble that burst

Sounds awfully reminiscent of one of Jesus’ most famous parables – Luke 12...

- **Read Luke 12:16-19**
 - o So far, his plan makes sense – wise farmer – really a wise business man
 - o Had already accumulated everything he *needed* in life, but still had a big surplus left
 - o So what does he do – keeps saving it all for himself so he can have a life of ease
 - o But there’s one thing he forgot...
- **Read Luke 12:20-21**
 - o In the end he was a fool because no matter what things of this world you invest in...
 - o you don’t get to take any of it with you when you die – no u-hauls behind hearses!
 - o Let’s say you were a brilliant investor: invested that \$100,000 in Apple in 1996
 - you’d have around \$16M today – incredible return!
 - o But guess what... you still don’t get to take any of that with you when you die!
 - o A life completely dedicated to accumulating earthly riches... is a wasted life!
- **Clarify: NOT telling us that accumulating wealth or saving for retirement is bad**
 - o Farmer wasn’t rebuked for being good at business and saving a bunch of wealth
 - o Not rebuked for his original barns full of savings
 - o Rebuked because after he’d saved up ENOUGH to meet his needs... he hoarded the rest
 - o He didn’t share any with people in need; didn’t give any to God
 - o That’s what brought God’s judgment
- **God wants us to save wisely for the future for ourselves and our families**
 - o He tells us that in Proverbs and 1 Tim 5
 - o So please save for retirement, college, a rainy day – that’s good and responsible
- **BUT don’t ONLY invest in the things of this world because they won’t last**
 - o You will die and whatever \$ and possessions you’ve accumulated will all be left behind
 - o If we invest only in the things of this world, we will be fools, just like the farmer
- **Now everyone wants to know: how much should I save vs how much should I give?**

- I can't answer that for you! That is between you and God
- But I can give you a helpful grid for making that decision for yourself
- **read 1 Tim 6:17-19**
- First: if you are saving for retirement... biblically speaking you are "rich"!
 - rich = have more than you need for food, cloths, and shelter today
 - if anything beyond that you save/spend/give... you are rich – most of us!
- So what is Paul saying to who are rich by the biblical definition?
- **Doesn't tell us % to save vs. give... tells us not to put our hope or security in wealth**
 - SO easy to do! I do this! Had to stop tracking my investments daily
 - Because if that's where my hope and security are: I'll save too much & give too little
- **Foolish because my wealth is not secure and cannot satisfy**
 - Not secure: economy could tank; hackers could steal; medical bills wipe out
 - Can't satisfy: Luke 12, Jesus said, "not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." Money and possessions cannot satisfy your soul no matter how much you have
- So: save but don't place your hope or security in your savings
- Instead: place your hope and security in eternity and give your money accordingly

And here's why... because when you give to God and what God loves you are making an eternal impact

Give to make an Eternal IMPACT

- **Our money, homes, cars, cloths, electronics don't make it off this rock**
 - wear out, break down, eventually burn when this planet comes to an end
- **So what does make it off this rock? Read Rev 5:9-10 PEOPLE!!**
 - Look around this room – only thing here that makes it into next life = us! Humans!
- **If you want to invest in something that lasts beyond this life, invest in people!**
 - Give your time and money to help people find and follow Jesus
- **Point of a very strange verse – read Luke 16:9 (NIV)**
 - "worldly wealth" = money of this world
 - "make friends" → influence people to find and follow Jesus
 - spend your money on missions, evangelism, church planting, charity
 - to help draw more and more people into God's family
 - result → people who find & follow Jesus thru your \$ welcome you one day in heaven
 - clarify: God is sovereign – your \$ not required to get someone to heaven
 - if you don't give that person won't end up in hell
 - but you wouldn't have the privilege of being one God uses to save that person
- **Illustration: When many of us graduated from A&M... 1st thing we got... fundraising letters!**
 - From the university, your particular college, athletic dep't.
 - What word do all of them put at top in big, bold letters? LEGACY
 - A&M all about legacy – donate \$ towards buildings or scholarships that outlive you
- **Good to give to your alma matter! But let's be realistic...**
 - 200 years from now: building knocked down and scholarship will run out
- **An Aggie legacy is not forever... but a legacy for Jesus is!**
 - Want to build a legacy that lasts a billion years?
 - Use your \$ to help people find & follow Jesus... builds an ETERNAL legacy!
- **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20**
 - Believers in Thessalonica are Paul's legacy because he helped them find & follow Jesus
- **Illustration: when you were a kid and your parents came home**
 - couldn't wait to show them what you had made!
 - that's what it will feel like to show Jesus the people you helped find & follow Him
 - Paul rejoiced at that thought because he realized nothing else makes it off this rock

- Invest your life in helping people find & follow Jesus because that makes an eternal impact

Give to earn an Eternal REWARD

- **Word “eternal” is key because there are a lot of false preachers teaching a prosperity gospel**
 - o Give to God and He will reward you NOW – make you prosperous NOW
 - o Video clip I show in class: prosperity preacher telling people to bring \$ to stage
 - o Shout the command: “MONEY, COME TO ME, NOW!”
 - o They believed if we give \$ to God He will give us even more in this life – right now!
 - o As with most lies, there is a seed of truth – if you give to God, He will give back to you
 - o BUT NOT IN THIS LIFE... in the next life
 - o Prosperity preachers have wrong time frame – reward is for the next life, not this one
- **Read Matthew 6:19-20**
- **Don’t store up earthly treasures**
 - o Not a command against saving \$ or buying a house
 - o About FOCUS – don’t focus all your efforts on building earthly wealth
 - o Because earthly wealth will not last – will eventually be like beanie babies – worthless!
- **Instead, focus your efforts on maximizing your treasure in heaven**
- **Now what is this “treasure in heaven”?**
 - o **We know that it’s not heaven itself!!**
 - o Getting into heaven is by faith alone
 - o **But God wants more for you than just getting you in to heaven! Wants to reward you**
 - o **What is that reward? We don’t actually know!**
 - o Described as crowns of honor in some passages
 - o In others: as new opportunities to rule with Jesus in His coming kingdom
 - o **We don’t know exactly what it is...**
- **We just know it will be greater than anything this world offers! Read 2 Corinthians 4:17**
 - o For Paul: “momentary, light affliction” = being imprisoned, beaten, whipped, stoned
 - o But all that pain was nothing compared to the glorious reward stored up for him
- **God promises to reward your sacrifice in this life so richly in the next life that no suffering can compare**
 - o So as missionary Jim Elliot wrote 6 months before he was killed on the field...
 - o You are WISE when you sacrifice wealth and comfort for the cause of Christ
 - o because it earns you a reward you can never lose – treasure in heaven to enjoy forever
- **So important to notice: Jesus did not say, “stop storing up treasure for yourself”!**
 - o Some Christians assume God never wants us to think about ourselves or what we want
 - o All we should care about is the glory of God and good of other people
 - o NO! Jesus wants you to store up treasure for yourself... as long as it’s in right place
 - o **What Jesus wants for us is what we might call “enlightened self-interest”**
 - o God wants you to pursue what’s best for you – that is NOT selfish
 - o Selfishness = seeking your gain at the expense of others
 - that’s what happens when you’re storing up all your treasures in this life
 - you will end up stepping on others in your quest to get rich
 - o But when you seek gain in next life: it is not at the expense of others... it is actually for the good of others!
- **Realize: God will never make you choose between what’s best for you & what’s best for others!**
 - o They are the exact same SO LONG AS you are thinking long term
- **Read Phil 4:17 – “I seek for the profit which increases to your account”**
 - o Philippian believers made huge financial sacrifices to support Paul’s church planting
 - So, clearly that’s best for Paul and his ministry
 - o BUT it’s also best for them! Because every sacrifice they made to support Paul bore interest in their eternal account with God – it earned them eternal reward!

- They didn't have to choose between what was best for Paul's church planting ministry and what was best for them – they were one and the same so long as they're defining what's best for themselves from an eternal perspective rather than an earthly perspective.
- **God will reward you in the next life for everything you sacrifice for Him in this life**
 - So the choice we face in this life with our money and time and resources is NOT between what is best for us vs what is best for God and other people
 - The choice is whether or not we will delay our gratification till the next life
 - Will we make the hard choice and sacrifice in this life for the cause of Christ?
 - If so, we will reap reward for all eternity AND we will help others into the kingdom

So, let's summarize what we've learned:

- Bad news about wealth: You can't take it with you...
- But good news: you can send it ahead!
- What you give to Jesus and the things Jesus loves – His church, missions, charity – you are investing in eternity – you are winning men and women to Christ who will enjoy heaven with you for eternity and you are earning eternal reward to enjoy forever.

That led David Livingstone, British missionary to Africa, to this conclusion near end of his life...

So why become a generous and joyful giver... because every dollar and every hour you give is an investment in eternal impact and eternal reward you will enjoy forever!