



Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



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God's Word on the Use of Resources

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Introduction:

Two weeks ago we talked about debt and credit and how God does not want us to be servants to debt but He wants us to serve Him only. Last Sunday we talked about saving and investing and how God's word teaches us to work hard, save and invest so there is a return on the resources that pass through our hands. Today we are talking about the safest place to put our treasure. We have to find the balance between being focused on the profit that might be gained from investment and being focused on the kingdom and its future. The goal of the believer should be to work hard, invest, save and use the resources for the kingdom of God, while at the same time, keeping an eternal perspective.

Perhaps you have watched a National Geographic documentary about people who search for shipwrecks. It is amazing the artifacts, money, gems, valuable bowls, dishes, etc. that are recovered from the wrecks of ships. People spend years searching for a wreck and millions upon millions of dollars and the things they recover are worth lots of money. What is your treasure? And where is the safest place to store it? The investment we make should be in something that will endure. When you look for a place to put the resources you are trusted with, you should look for a place that is sound, safe and will give you a good return on the investment.

We said last Sunday that it is not wrong to save and it is not wrong to invest but financial markets as well as commodities fluxuate. If you invest in the markets you will get some kind of return on your investment, but will it last? What will it be worth in ten years, twenty years or even one hundred years? Banks are robbed, the stock market has been in a decline for many months, even owning real estate is not valued at what it was 12 months ago. I am not saying this to alarm you but so that we can have a proper view of the resources of this world. They are fleeting, temporary and prone to rust, decay and thieves. Despite that fact, these temporal resources are tools that are important to eternal things.

So what is your treasure and where is the safest place to put it? What do you consider treasure? Webster defines treasure as (1): wealth such as money, jewels, or precious metals, stored up or hoarded buried treasure (2): wealth of any kind or in any form, a store of money in reserve, something of great worth or value; also: a person esteemed as rare or precious (3): a collection of precious things. Treasure is anything that we value and believe to

have worth. Jesus in His words recorded in the gospel of Matthew warns us about placing the treasure of our lives in the things that are not eternal. Listen to His words that are recorded in **Matthew 6:19-21 - Don't store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves. Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be.**

I. Treasure stored on earth will deteriorate or be stolen.

It doesn't really matter what you try to save on earth, everything is in a state of decay. It will not last. If a thief doesn't steal it, it will eventually rust out or rot. Jesus is pretty clear here that the best and safest place for treasure to be stored is in heaven. Heavenly treasure is eternal. Heavenly treasure will not deteriorate; it will not be stolen and it will never be lost. If any of you have ever had something of value stolen, you know how violated you felt. That which you valued and worked hard to possess has been snatched from you without regard. You felt cheated; you felt invaded. It is an awful feeling. It happens without warning. It is something that you thought was safe and now you realize that it really wasn't safe at all.

II. The only treasure that has lasting value is eternal.

To accumulate stuff that is only going to be temporary is not wise. Have you ever tried to collect bubbles? You and I know that those bubbles have a very fleeting and short life span. You really have no way of containing them. You can blow them and they are beautiful but within moments they turn colors and get little black dots; they pop and are gone.

That is exactly what happens with stuff that we try to save here on earth. It is short lived. Beautiful while it lasts, but deteriorates with time and its value decreases. Finally all that is left is a memory.

Rust is scientifically called *oxidation*, which occurs when *oxygen* comes in long-term contact with certain metals. Over time, the oxygen combines with the metal at an atomic level, forming a new compound called an oxide and weakening the *bonds* of the metal itself.

III. Your treasure and heart are connected.

Where is your heart? What do you value the most in life? Are you living for time only or for eternity? The people you love, the relationships you value, the investment in your family, resources that impact people to find God, these are among the important valuable eternal treasures. If your heart is set on things that fade and die and decay or are stolen and disintegrate, the same thing will happen to your heart. If your heart is in a place of safety, then those things cannot happen to you.

IV. Handling worldly wealth is a practice for handling the true riches of heaven.

Luke 16:10-12 - Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's money, why should you be trusted with money of your own?

These verses we just read indicate the concept of being faithful and trustworthy in small things. This faithfulness will bring confidence that what was practiced in small ways will also apply in larger ways. What you do with temporal resources is an indication of where your heart is and how you handle the eternal riches of heaven. If you are careful, if you handle the resources as a sacred trust, if you invest well with the hope of a return, then you will have the joy of handling heavens true eternal riches. Are you squandering temporal resources on yourself and things that will not last? Are you hoarding temporal resources because of fear? Putting them in the ground so to speak? Are you investing temporal resources and expecting a return on the investment?

How are you doing? Practice, practice, practice. When I was in college and getting my degree in music education, I had to spend time every day practicing. The only way you perfect something is to practice. Any of you who have skills know that if you don't keep using those skills, the edge and sharpness of your knowledge will be dulled.

Life here is a rehearsal for what's to come. The choices we make, the ways we respond, the opportunities we seize are all factored into the future. This rehearsal includes how we handle worldly wealth. Will we let it control us and dominate us and become a slave to it or will we make it our servant to do the work of the kingdom? While practicing for something, we do make mistakes, but more importantly, we are learning how to perfect what we are doing, so we minimize the mistakes.

V. One needs to have a united heart for service.

Conclusion:

My challenge to you this morning is to evaluate where you are in the way you look at resources, evaluate where your heart is, because there you will find your treasure. If your heart is focused on the temporal resources here, then your heart is in the wrong place. If your heart is focused on investing in eternal riches, then your heart is in the right place. How you direct and manage the resources you are given is a powerful indicator of what you value and how trustworthy you will be in handling the true eternal resources of God's kingdom.

I hope I have laid the foundation of understanding the connection between money here and the eternal kingdom of God. Use money here that is temporal and cannot be kept safely to advance the eternal kingdom of God. Believe me; it will pay tremendous eternal dividends.

Matthew 6:24 - No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Having to serve money and debt brings bondage and God wants us to serve Him not money or resources. God wants us to be free to serve Him and not be worried about debt. He wants us to have the liberty to invest the resources that come through our hands so they can do eternal good. What Christ says here is true; we cannot have two masters. One will be hated and the other loved.

True devotion is single minded. When our son, Justin got a dog over one year ago, he became the master to that dog. We all love the dog and the dog loves all of us, but his total devotion is to Justin. The dog only has ONE master. The same should be true in our lives. We should only have one master, Christ Jesus. It's impossible to serve both God and money.