

## Investing for Eternity

### Matthew 6:19-6:21

**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."*

For the past several weeks, we've been considering some things the Bible has to say concerning God's generosity and our response to it.

We've dealt with Our Time, our Talents, our Spiritual Gifts and today Our Investments.

The title of my sermon this morning is: Investing for Eternity. Did you know that Jesus said this to us when He said, *"Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

I really do believe that our attitudes towards finances have more to do with our faith than it does with our money.

Giving is not about money; it is about our faith.

Stewardship is not about money; it is about trust.

Some people don't invest in Kingdom building because they have a spiritual problem – now listen – their trust is in their own ability to provide for themselves rather than trust God to pour out a blessing on them.

Remember what God said in Malachi 3:10 *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."*

Others don't invest in Kingdom building because they have lack the wisdom to realize what God wants to do with the investments.

In fact – let me say this – the most important investment you and I will ever make concerns what we do with our soul.

The Word of God teaches us that one day we will die and in that moment we will stand before Jesus Christ with nothing more than the decision we made in this life concerning Him.

At that moment it will not matter how much money you have when you die or how well you invested it, when you and I die none of it will matter.

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Somebody once asked the CPA of a wealthy millionaire who had just died, “How much money did he leave?”

And the CPA replied, “All of it.”

And let me say this – you ought to invest your money wisely as you go towards retirement, but what you do with your money is not nearly as important as what you do with Christ in salvation.

As we have already learned, there are many things we should make wise investments in:

1. You need to invest your time wisely
2. You need to invest your talents wisely
3. You need to invest your tithe and offerings wisely.

So this morning I want to talk to you about your money.

Now – I don’t believe anyone here this morning wants to miss this sermon, so stay awake and get excited because I’m going to tell you how to get a greater return on your money.

How many of you would like to hear that?

**How Are Your Investments Doing?**

**Have you looked at them recently? I’m thankful for the internet. Whenever I want to check my**

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**investments, I say, “Dru, would you go check what our investments are doing?”**

And within a few minutes, I know what is happening.

**Remember the old hymn "All to Jesus I Surrender"? (sing/speak the words of verse 1)**

All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live.

I surrender all, I surrender all  
All to Thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow,  
Worldly pleasures all forsaken, Take me Jesus, take me now.

**Well I’ve taken the liberty to re-write the words from the standpoint of the average person in our society today:**

**All to Dow Jones, I surrender  
All to it I sadly give  
I will ever watch and worry,  
In its presence daily live  
I surrender all . . . I surrender all  
All to Dow Jones, I surrender  
I surrender all.**

Now -

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Turn to your neighbor and ask them: "How are your stock market investments doing?" (Going up, going down, or staying the same?)

That's a silly question isn't it?

Just a few weeks ago Stock market investments everywhere were headed down, down, down.

One newspaper carried this, "Dow slides below 8,000 to '98 level: Triple-digit loss for 3rd day in row"

Do you remember the story in 2002:

"The Dow Jones industrials plunged below 8,000 Monday for the first time in nearly four years, as investors remain too preoccupied with scandal and earnings fears to shop for bargains.

In a seesaw trading session, the blue-chip index fell 234.68 points, the third consecutive triple-digit decline, to close at 7784.58. The last time the market tumbled to such levels was mid-October 1998, when it finished at 7968.80.

The drop continued the brutal sell-off of the past two weeks, punctuated by Friday's 390-point fall, the biggest one-day point drop this year.

Investors have coined a new phrase for the relentless declines: "irrational depression," a play on the famous phrase "irrational exuberance" uttered by Federal

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Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan to describe the stock-market surge of the late 1990s.

The bottom line of the story is this: if you'd invested \$10,000 in the basket of stocks that compose the Dow Jones Industrial Average in October 1998, your investment today would be worth \$9,768.

Of course, you could be doing a lot worse.

- If you'd invested \$10,000 in the NASDAQ last August, today your portfolio would be worth just over \$6000 today. That's a 40% loss.
- If you'd invested that same \$10,000 a year ago in an S&P 500 index fund, that fund would be worth just over \$6700 today. That's a 33% loss.
- If you'd invested \$10,000 in WorldCom in 1999, when the share price was \$60, your \$10,000 investment would be worth about \$28 today. That's a 99.75% loss.
- If you'd invested \$10,000 in Enron last November, today your \$10,000 investment would be worth just nothing. Zero. Zip. Nada. Nothing. A 100% loss.

**Have you ever thought of it this way - Maybe that's why Jesus uttered these prophetic words:**

Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)

***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.***

Let me ask you again: How are your investments doing?

**Now – let me ask – What does it mean to Invest in Kingdom Building? What does it mean to invest in eternity?**

**When Jesus said, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust corrupts ...*” – What does He mean?**

God is not talking about depriving your family of family needs.

God is not talking about food, shelter, basic necessities.

God is not talking about trampolines, stereos and all the other stuff.

The Greek literally says, “*Don’t treasure for yourselves treasures on the earth.*”

**What is a treasure?**

**In front of us is a Chest.**

**In this Chest there are some things I want to pull out.**

**You see – some people treasure these things so much that it robs God of Kingdom Investments.**

**Let’s take a look at them this morning.**

(Open Chest – Pull out items.)

**Let me try to explain to you what a treasure is to some people:**

**It’s a wealth or stuff that is stored up or hoarded.**

**It means to that person something of great value or worth to them.**

**It could mean a collection of precious things.**

**It’s like the man Jesus spoke of in Luke 12:15 when He said,**

***“15Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."***

**Let me answer my question:**

**You see – there’s nothing wrong with treasure.**

**There’s nothing wrong with money**

**There’s really nothing wrong with having a lot of money.**

**The problem is a heart problem.**

**It is determined by what we treasure and how we handle it.**

**Jesus was very blunt about this – our treasure ought to be in heaven – our investments ought to be made in light of eternity rather than what we will gain from this life.**

**Paul said in Colossians 3:1-3**

*1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

Paul said, “Set your mind on things above. Set your affection – set your heart – set your mind – set your focus on things that are above rather than on the stuff that we so often get caught up with like material accumulation, bank accounts, power and wealth and so forth.”

Why? Because our identity is not found in any of that as believers.

Our identity is hid – wrapped up in Christ Jesus.

Jesus asked this question, and every one of us today needs to answer this – *“What shall it profit a man or a woman if they gain the whole world, but lose their soul?”*

**People of Faith Invest in Eternity!**

**I. People of Faith Invest in the Eternal.**

**Why? Because Giving is rooted in the Heart and Nature of God! John 3:16**

*For God so loved us that He gave His only Son that we would believe in Him, we would not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Just for fun, I calculated what a \$10,000 investment in the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene would have returned in one year if a believer tithed and gave their extra offerings.

How would your investments be doing if you had given \$10,000 in charitable way to the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene?

**The results are pretty impressive:**

- If you are in the 15% tax bracket and itemized your deductions, you would have immediately saved \$1800 on your combined federal and state taxes – an automatic 18% return.
- If you are in the 28% tax bracket, you would have saved an immediate \$3100 on your combined federal and state tax – an automatic 31% return.

I don't know of too many investments today that can boast those kinds of numbers!

Of course, that's a completely ridiculous illustration, because you can't measure the value of investing your treasures in heaven in temporal things like dollars and cents.

You see – Believers listen to me - When you invest in the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene Spiritual Index, your return on investment is measured in a completely different way.

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It's not measured in dollars and cents, but in changed lives.

And the time frame on your investment is also different.

It's not measured in months or years, **but for eternity. Think of that!**

**Every time you put your tithes and offerings and Faith Pledge in the offering plate on Sunday morning, you are investing your money towards Kingdom building for all of eternity.**

So, on a more serious note, what does the prospect look like for investing in the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene Spiritual Index?

**II. Everything Invested in the Work of God Pays Dividends.**

Let's first look at those **Saved and Baptized.**

One way to measure the return on that kind of investment would be the number of people who will be in heaven as a result of your investment – the number of people who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior and been baptized into His name.

How would your \$10,000 investment in Pataskala Church of the Nazarene at the end of 2007 fared?

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As of last Sunday, your investment would have been a big part in seeing over 160 people saved and baptized into Christ in the last four years.

Over 160 people who will be in heaven. Over 160 people who will spend an eternity with Jesus instead of an eternity without Him.

And that's a very conservative estimate.

Those over 160 people are just the ones we've touched locally.

Just recently I spoke to a couple in our church. I won't mention their names, but this couple came to my house for a Sunday dinner after church.

They expressed how much our church meant to them. They expressed how much the sermons and teachings meant to their spiritual walk with Christ. They couldn't quite say the words of how much it meant to them.

Friday night Warren and I were talking about someone who had rededicated their spiritual lives to Christ and how much they had been growing spiritually.

But wait, there's more.

**III. God meets the Needs of Those Who Invest in Kingdom Building.**

**We Reap what we Sow.**

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Because approximately \$45,000 from the PCN is sent on to our missionaries on 153 different countries worldwide where the unsaved are coming to Christ by the droves/by the multitudes.

Your investment dollars could even go further.

I wish I had time to tell you about 1,000 new churches started in the Horn of Africa and literally thousands upon thousands of new converts coming into the Church of the Nazarene.

For every dollar you and I give to the Jesus Film movement, three hear the gospel for the first time.

For every three dollars, one person comes to know Christ as their personal Savior.

I don't know about you, but that the kind of return I like on my investments.

**I'm going to ask Terry Garner, one of our Finance Committee members to come up and help me with this part of my sermon and the possibilities of greater ministries.**

**(Let Terry Garner speak for about 3 or 4 minutes.)**

Another area of our giving from this local church is the area of Home Missions. This is new Church plants that our church helps to get established.

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One of our new church plants that began almost four years ago is now running over 250 people every Sunday because of our commitment to give not only to this local church, but our church then gives to our district in establishing new churches.

While the number of people who will spend eternity in heaven because of your investment in PCN is a powerful return, it's not the only important measure.

Take for example, our church's benevolence ministry, we call it Storehouse for Jesus.

Your dollars that go to the Storehouse for Jesus is spent to help families with groceries and children's clothes.

For the last three years we have given ourselves to helping needy families in and out of our church.

The Gale Latham home renovation.

The John Brown home renovation.

The Chuck and Teresa Howell home renovation.

If it wasn't for your help monetarily and physically with your talents, we would never have been able to do these things.

Do you think these renovations were worth the dollars invested and the talents and skills invested?

I wish that I could tell you the individual stories of the families and individuals that we have helped, but because of confidentiality, I can't.

Again, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

- It doesn't include the annual Crisis Care kits project in which we provide needed toilet articles to children and parents who faced crisis's every year.

Last year we provided Christmas gifts to a number of children through Shop with a Cop and through the Storehouse and the Franklin Country Firemen

This year we have opened up our church for the Home Schooler's of this area and every Tuesday we have over 220 students that fill our building and have school with other children.

A \$10,000 investment in the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene Spiritual Index would have increased the available funds for doing greater ministry if we had it available.

As we continue to grow – it is vital that all of us stay committed in our giving to His church and the Building of His Kingdom.

## BABIES AND CHILDREN

Let me give you another reason why we need to be faithful to give unto the Lord and His Church.

If salvation, baptisms and benevolence aren't the return on investment you're looking for, **what about the investment in our children?**

Right now in our society we are facing a moral decline in America, and we as Christians need to adopt a mission-field approach to our nation rather than a battle-field approach.

It hasn't been all that long ago when we were the country sending most of the missionaries around the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, but now we have become a mission field ourselves.

Not long ago, pollster George Barna released the results of a new poll on American's concerns about the future:

[A] widespread sense of disappointment has reduced people's confidence in opinion shapers and cultural influencers. When asked to describe their level of confidence in seven types of influencers, only one of the seven - teachers - was awarded "complete confidence" or "a lot of confidence" by at least half of the public (53%).

At the bottom of the list were executives of large corporations (12% had "complete" or "a lot of confidence" in them), followed closely by the producers, directors and writers of TV and films (13%), elected government officials (18%), and news reporters and journalists (20%). . . .

Researcher George Barna, whose firm conducted the survey, is the author of **A Fish Out of Water**, a newly-released book on leadership challenges and practices.

In his book, Barna notes that the primary means of gaining people's trust and confidence is by demonstrating strong character.

"People rely upon their leaders, whether they are in the business sector, in ministry, government or within their own family, to model virtuous behavior and appropriate values.

By virtue of the opportunities they encounter, every leader will be tempted to grab for power, prestige, publicity or other perks.

What separates the good from the bad is not their skills and abilities but their character - and there are always cues that reflect the person's true inner nature.

When commitment to profits and position trump commitment to propriety and purity of motive, such moral failures are virtually inevitable." . . . .

Barna's research showed that most people believed that these corporate scandals were related to moral choices, and that the best strategies for preventing these kinds of moral scandals in the future weren't aimed at adults, but had to start in childhood:

The most prolific support was shown for "parents spending more time teaching their children appropriate

spiritual values that the church teaches from the Word of God."

Three-quarters of all adults (72%) said that had parents done so the recent crises might have been completely or mostly avoided.

Similarly, almost two-thirds of adults (62%) said if American society had a stronger moral foundation such affairs might not have happened. . . .

The research also drove home the importance of a person's upbringing as the mirror to both their character and values.

"More than many people want to admit, how we train our children determines their values, views and behaviors as adults.

If you want a moral society, you must develop it by raising children who understand and embrace good values and standards.

Leadership based on consensus is always prone to satisfying the lowest moral standard. Leadership based on firm and unchanging standards of virtue never goes wrong."

Listen again to what George Barna says:

More than many people want to admit, how we train our children determines their values, views and behaviors as adults.

If you want a moral society, you must develop it by raising children who understand and embrace good values and standards.

Every week almost 1 out of 4 people (25%) attending the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene is under the age of 12.

Every week 2 out of 5 people (41%) involved in some kind of Christian education is under the age of 12.

If you expand your definition of kids to include teenagers, then more than 1 out of every 3 people here on Sunday morning (34%) is age 20 or younger.

And what are those children and teen-agers receiving every Sunday morning?

Firm and unchanging standards of virtue, rooted in the characters, stories, and principles of the Word of God.

Each week they're learning about the importance of character, values, and morals.

How does all of that happen?

It takes the dedicated efforts of paid staff, dozens of volunteer teachers, caregivers, sponsors, and leaders – who give wholeheartedly of their time and their talents to serve our kids and our teens.

And it takes the coordination and direction of Pastor Karen, our full time Children's Pastor, and Pastor Derek, our full time Youth Pastor.

It takes the coordination of Rob and Jane Erhman and their staff to effectively do Upward Sports, which by the way is one of the most effective outreach ministries we have right now.

But it also takes money! Without your investments in these areas we cannot do the effective ministry we need to do. Again let me say, we do this from your biblical tithe and offerings you give every Sunday morning.

Our annual budget for Children's and Youth Ministries is close to \$15,000. Let me be honest to say that this should more like \$30,000.

What kind of fruit would an investment of \$10,000 in the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene Spiritual Index look like if you looked at the results in Children's and Youth ministry?

According to Barna Research the probability of accepting Christ is much greater among children, than by teens and adults.

In children between the ages of 5 and 13 the probability of accepting Christ is 32%.

It drops to 4% for those between the ages of 14 and 18, and picks up to only 6% for the rest of life.

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Pat Verbal, children's ministry author and consultant for the International Network of Children's Ministry (INCM), states that "75-85% of Christians today made their commitment to faith before the age of 15."

Again, not a bad return on an investment when you are faithful to give your tithe and offerings to your church.

### **How Are Your Investments Doing?**

Remember the words of Jesus?

Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)

*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.*

If you'd invested \$10,000 in earthly treasures, your returns wouldn't be very impressive.

### **Conclusion:**

Let me summarize what I preached to you this morning.

As believers and as members of this church, by the way whether you are an official member or not, as long as you attend this church or any other church it does not excuse you from the responsibility of tithing.

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You see – there are some people that have the mistaken idea that if they are not members, they're not obligated to give their tithe and offerings.

Let me set that right here this morning. The Word of God teaches us that every believer must tithe and give their offerings to the building of God's Kingdom.

You see- when your heart is right with God, there won't be any problem here. You just want to give and you give it cheerfully.

You have a spiritual responsibility to invest in the Lord's work today.

When you invest in the ministries of this church you are making an eternal investment that will last forever.

All the stuff that we have now on this earth; houses, cars, boats, trucks, jewelry, diamonds, things that you value will someday be completely destroyed when the new earth and the new heavens come.

When you faithfully and regularly invest your 10% plus your offerings in the Kingdom work, souls will be saved.

Every soul that is saved is one you have a part in if you help pay the way.

Every soul that is taught and trained to be a disciple is one in which you have made an investment.

So how can you invest in the Lord's work today?

1. With your tithes – you automatically give 10% or more of your gross income to the ministries of this church.

2. With special offerings and Faith Promise Pledges – these offerings are given as the Lord blesses you over and above the tithe.

The Word of God calls them heave offerings in the O.T.

Whenever you give extra to support our children and youth you are giving heave offerings.

When you give to Faith Promise you are helping missionaries stay on the mission field and help lead people to Christ.

Whenever you give over and above your tithe, whenever you swing a hammer for a renovation, or you help a shut in – you are adding your time and talents.

3. Not only should you invest in the Lord's work today, but it could be possible that you will invest after you die to His work here in this church.

**There are two ways in which a Christian may view money –**

**“How much of my money shall I use for God?**

**“How much of God's money shall I use for myself?”**

The answer to that question will determine whether you do anything with what you've heard today.

What are you investing your monies in that will eventually be gone?

Has your treasure been here on earth in the form of stuff or status?

Or has your treasure been in heaven where only what you've done for the name of Jesus Christ really matters and will last for all of eternity?

A few short years ago corporate scandals on Wall Street caused the decline of the stock market. It discouraged a lot of people and caused them not to have trust.

Listen again to what George Barna says:

Only 12% of those surveyed had "complete" or "a lot of confidence" in corporate executives. 62% said if America had a stronger moral foundation, that the corporate crisis might have been prevented. 72% say that this needs to start with giving our children stronger moral standards.

Which leads me to believe that we have the answer to the problem: If years ago more people had invested their treasures in heaven – in the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene Spiritual Average or other godly causes – would we still singing "All to Dow Jones I Surrender" or would we be singing a different tune?

