

May 24, 2015

Living For Causes Not Comforts

Various Scriptures

Big Idea: Life is too short, the prospect of reward too great to squander on causeless comforts.

In the past two decades of ministry in Calvary Bible Church I have had the privilege of witnessing the Lord doing some amazing things. He has been gracious to us as a church in 10,000 ways and it never ceases to amaze me that He chooses to use the likes of you and me to accomplish things for His glory. One of the reasons He has done that, I believe, is because the elders of this church have not hesitated to take the long view and the difficult path of doing whatever we believed God wanted us to do regardless of the perceived difficulty or risk. We have come to believe what Joe Oliver taught us years ago, that “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” Over the years our heavenly Father often assigned missions that were far too big for us to accomplish, yet we have watched with wonder as over and over again He has graciously and faithfully supplied all that we needed to accomplish His will.

I can remember times in the ministry of this church when I was so excited about what God was doing that I could hardly believe He was allowing me to witness it, let alone have a part in it. But I have to say that in this moment in time I am more excited about what God appears to be doing in this church than I have ever been.

Today, a very gifted and godly young man will arrive in Fort Worth with His family to take Pastor Brent’s place in the leadership of several critical ministries in this church. It is NO exaggeration when I say that his arrival is the culmination of years of prayer and seeking the Lord’s wisdom about who could possibly be qualified to fill Brent’s shoes. And yet today I can say unequivocally that the elders believe Keith Christensen (along with his wife, Katie, and the children) is God’s answer to those prayers. That’s what’s happening today.

Next week we plan to come together to enjoy our last mutual worship service before Pastor Brent and Les Trammel take 48 people to Mansfield, TX to plant Living Hope Bible Church. I’m excited about that service because we are going to spend some time together praising God and thanking Him for the wonder of His grace in the years leading up to this moment and for His sovereign and inscrutable plans for the future ministry of both churches. That’s next week.

In two weeks, Living Hope Bible Church will meet by themselves for the very first time and Calvary Bible church will experience the long-awaited joy of switching back to One Worship Service. And then, one week after that (Sunday evening, June 14) Calvary’s Summer Small Groups will launch for the first time. And to be honest, as much as I believed over the past few years that this kind of ministry needed to be the next step in our becoming a more unified, biblical church, I was a bit nervous about whether anyone else would share the elder’s conviction about it. Then, on Friday I received an email

telling me that so far, 153 people have signed up! And registration for the groups is still open! Now I can't tell you what God plans to do with these little home groups, but I know from experience that it is going to be great. Relationships are going to form and deepen in the rich soil of Community and true Fellowship and the HS will bear much fruit in us. And I can't wait! This is what God is doing in us now! Who knows what He has for us in the future!

One thing I know for sure, however, is that whatever God wants us to do it will require risk-taking investment, because that's the nature of Faith. It is the nature of faith because it requires us to move and act without knowing what the outcome will be. When we step out in faith we trust God's word rather than our feelings. We trust God's promises rather than what our eyes can see, or what our bank accounts suggest, or what a desire for comfort & security may demand. Not sight, but faith is "the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen," the author of Hebrews tells us. And God calls us to live by Faith; to live a risk-taking, Scripture-believing kind of life so that God might be exalted in us whether by life or by death.

With that in mind this morning, rather than stepping back into the Gospel of John and considering what the H.S. wants us to know about Judas (in the next section), I thought it might be good for us to use these few moments to blow a trumpet regarding God's call to live by faith; to step out of our cozy, cushy, man-made securities into the blessed risks of living for causes that glorify Christ in this world.

I believe the western church in our day is plagued by a ubiquitous devotion to personal comfort and ease. We don't want to step out of our little comfort-zones for fear that something out there might interfere with our sense of security and ease. But the only reason we do that is because we do not realize that a love for temporal comfort is the enemy of eternal treasure. Every day we make choices between two seemingly good things. Namely, temporary comfort and eternal riches. And often, when we choose momentary comfort we choose against the incalculable rewards that come by making eternal investments.

Jesus gave us a vivid illustration of this truth in His parable of the wealthy farmer in Luke 12:16-21.

Very briefly this morning I want to talk with you about what I see in this passage; namely,

1. The Question of Investment
2. The Heart of the Investor
3. The Futility of Greed
4. Wealth Indeed

I. The Question of Investment: (v. 16-17)

1. Read 16-17
2. Here was a man who found himself extraordinarily blessed with valuable resources. He had worked hard, he had planned well, and God had blessed him far beyond his need. Now he was faced with an interesting dilemma – What shall I do with all of this stuff?

3. Now the problem here is not that the man was rich. Wealth is never the problem! The question is never “Does a man have too many temporal resources?” Rather the question is, “How does a man invest his those resources?” It is a question of investment.

4. Here is where the man makes his fatal error.

II. The Heart of the Investor: (v. 18-19)

1. Read 18-19

2. What we learn from these verses is that this man didn't have a storehouse problem, he had a heart problem. Something was going wrong in his inner-man. In this same chapter (v. 34) Jesus says, “Wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Or in the case of this wealthy man, “Wherever your heart is, your investments are sure to follow.”

3. When it comes time to wrestling with the question of investment, the answer will always reveal the true affections of the heart. We tend to invest most in the things we love best. If we are going to take risks of any kind it will because we love something. And that is what got this wealthy farmer into serious trouble. The thing he loved best was himself. He loved his comfort, his security, and perhaps the power that wealth brings. So he invested the whole farm in the profitless business of his own comfort and ease. But it was a foolish investment.

4. This passage looks at the question of investment and reveals that the things we invest in (money, time, labor, etc)... what we invest in reveals what is truly going on in our hearts. It exposes what we truly worship, what God we really serve. The nature of the investment reveals the heart of the investor.

III. The Futility of Greed: (v. 20-21)

1. Read 20-21

2. As the man sat there sipping his fine wine over his architectural drawings for bigger barns and a booming business, the terrible angle of the Lord appears in his living room and says to him, “You fool. This very night your soul is required of you.”

3. The word “fool” here is not used flippantly, but in the OT sense of one who rejects the knowledge and precepts of God. A fool is one who lives by His feelings and impulses rather than according to word of God. A fool is one who worships anything other than God. A fool is one who makes an idol out of his comforts and pleasures and securities rather than trusting in the precious, life-giving promises of God. Such people always live for the wrong things.

4. In Mark 8:36 Jesus asks His men: “What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Here is His own answer to that question. It profits him nothing! To pawn off your soul so that you can purchase the whole world is a bad investment! And when you finally realize that the trade you made was the ultimate in

foolishness, what will you do? "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" In other words, you could never accumulate enough resources to buy it back.

5. "So it is," (vs. 21) "with the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

6. Now, let's take a few minutes to look at that last line. What is Jesus saying there. What does it mean to be rich toward God?

A. Is he saying that it is wrong to store up treasure for yourself?

B. If He is, then what does he mean by "rich toward God".

7. I think what Jesus is saying here is that there is a kind of investment that leads to true poverty, and a kind of investment that leads to eternal wealth. And that leads us into the final point, what is true wealth? What us...

IV. Wealth Indeed:

1. Why did this man fit the description of a fool? It wasn't because he was wealthy. It was because His wealth was invested in worthless things rather than things of eternal value in the eyes of God.

2. "Rich toward God" literally means "Rich in God's sight." Robertson Nicoll translates it, "rich with treasure laid up with God."

3. Its not wrong to want to be wealthy. But there is a kind of wealth that foolishly elevates and falsely magnifies the value of temporal comfort and ease, and there is a kind of wealth that appropriately elevates and legitimately magnifies the glory of God. The former is only valuable for the moment. But the latter has value that will last for eternity.

4. Far from exhorting us not to pursue wealth, Jesus explicitly commands us "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal (Mat. 6:19-20)

5. In other words, don't cheat yourself by making bad investments. Rather, put everything you have to work in an account that is eternally secure.

6. Okay, well then how do we do that? How do we invest in the securities of heaven?

A. Luke 12:33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity." In other words, invest in the needs of other people. Not just money, but time, and care, and comfort, and instruction, and encouragement. Take the risk of investing in other people's lives to help them know the love of Christ and become more like Him.

B. Luke 18:22 To the rich young ruler Jesus said, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven." In other words, God's people use their money and other material resources to help the poor. Almost every week we learn of people in the church

body who have run into significant material need. Invest in them. If you are unaware of the needs, send a note to the elders and ask. Proverbs 19:17 “One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.”

C. 1 Tim. 6:17-19 “Instruct those who are rich... to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.” In other words, you store up treasure in heaven by serving others with our food and our time and our money and our possessions. Now, I realize when you think of rich people you are probably thinking of someone else in the church. But if you live in America, you are materially RICH! But even more importantly, if you are a child of God you are fabulously wealthy in spiritual resources. Use it for other people’s good. Invest what God has given you in the lives of other people.

7. Let me sum up in the simplest terms I know. Eternal treasures are laid up in heaven by living for causes not comforts. We live for the glory of Christ in our service to other people. We live for the spread of the gospel around the world. We live to invest what we have in whatever is needed to magnify the glory of Christ. We live to hear Jesus say to us one day, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You have been faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things” (Matt. 25:21)

8. This is what motivates us to take the risk of sharing the gospel. This is what motivates us to take the risks involved in planting churches, or sending teams to Uganda, meeting with someone for discipleship or learning how to counsel people with really difficult problems. And yes, this is why we joyfully give money to our church and other ministries, and to individuals who have need. These are wise investments, calculated risks designed to magnify the glory of our King. To do otherwise is to be a fool, no matter how wealthy we may be.

9. In the words of Colin Marshall,

If this is really what God is doing in our world then it is time to say goodbye to our small and self-oriented ambitions, and to abandon ourselves to the cause of Christ and His gospel. God has a plan that will determine the destiny of every person and nation in the world, and it is unfolding here and now as the gospel of Christ is preached and the H.S. is poured out. Is there anything more vital to be doing in our world?¹

8. And that’s what it’s all about. That’s how we lay up treasure in heaven. We invest our lives in God-exalting causes rather than Christ-belittling comforts. The worst thing that can possibly happen to you is to get to the end of your life and realize you have made no eternal investments; that all of your energy and resources have been foolishly squandered on temporal comforts.

¹ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, (Matthias Media, 2009), 38

Conclusion:

1. So this morning I am here to sound the trumpet that God commands you to take risks. Make investments. Get rich toward God and accumulate treasure until heaven is filled with what you have laid aside for the last day to the glory of Christ.
2. Stop living for your own temporal comforts and start investing lavishly in the spiritual and material needs of people for the glory of God and your own eternal joy. Share the gospel with someone. Serve a neighbor in need. Become a discipler. Help plant a church. Join a small group and use your gifts to build others up in Christ. Volunteer for children's Ministry (Children's church probably needs 3 couples to volunteer to invest in the lives of our children)
3. O beloved, perhaps we should learn to live by the motto of young Jim Elliot who risked his life (and lost it) in the jungles of Peru by pursuing the salvation of the Alcu (Wadani) Indians. In his personal diary he wrote: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."
4. May we be found faithful in pursuing great gain for the glory of Christ in the investments we make in other people, because... **Life is too short, the prospect of reward too great to squander on causeless, Christless comforts.**