

Investing In Heaven: Matthew 6:19-24

So let me just open up with where we're going in this passage: what we do with our money is always a spiritual matter that controls our heart.

Every dollar you receive has spiritual implications.
Every dollar you give or spend has spiritual implications.
Every dollar you save, you give away - every bit has spiritual implications.

Because money and wealth have the ability to uniquely affect our heart in a way not many other things can. And because of that, Jesus is concerned about our wallet and our property as much as he is concerned about anything else in our lives.

And just to be clear: money is not bad, although we can use money in bad ways. Money is also not intrinsically good, though it can be used to accomplish many good things.

It's kind of like fire. Fire can be really good. It warms my house in the winter, fire makes the engine in my car run, I like s'mores roasted over a fire. But fire can also burn down buildings and forests and take lives. It's powerful.

That's how money is - it's powerful. Every single time we deal with money - or Jesus calls it treasure and mammon - there are spiritual issues at stake. That's what Jesus is getting at here: what we do with our money is always a spiritual matter that controls our heart.

Our passage here is laid out in 3 sections: 1 command and 2 warnings.

- 1) The command to invest in the eternal Kingdom
- 2) The warning against greed
- 3) Warning us that we can't invest and be greedy

1) Jesus commands us to invest in the Kingdom. Read 19-21

So as we've seen, throughout the Sermon, Jesus gives us a negative command: do not lay up treasures on earth. Then a positive command: but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.

What does Jesus mean when he says treasures? Then at the end of **Vs. 24** he says you cannot love God and money - but the real word is mammon. So we've got treasure and mammon. What is mammon? It's possessions, wealth. Treasures are the same thing. This is basically anything we would consider an asset. It could be money - the Romans had coins, there were bankers who dealt with currency. It could be gold or silver. It could be material possessions: clothing, property. For us it could be vehicles, electronics, baseball cards, tools, toys, guns, collectibles.

And the basic prohibition here is do not lay up those things for yourself. Don't protect them and keep them in a safe.

Look over at **Luke 12:13-21**. This is Jesus saying essentially the same thing in parable form. But I think it's helpful because he paints a great picture. **Read**

So what Jesus is actually getting at is that the man is greedy. The man has an inheritance dispute with his brother. You want to see a family ripped in pieces in short order, watch them fight over an inheritance. It's amazing how greedy people can become - that's what's happening here. Which is why Jesus told the parable about greed.

It wasn't bad that the man received a windfall crop. Who gave that to him? God did. It's what he did with it. He got caught up in the luxury lifestyle. I mean, how ridiculous is it to say "Ah, these old barns! They're not good enough for my wheat - I need new barns to hold my wheat. Newer and bigger. And I'm just gonna put my feet up here for the rest of my life and hit cruise control."

The wealth he had just came into wasn't neutral. It had spiritual implications. He wasn't generous. He became foolish with what he was given. And he forgot that death is a possibility. The windfall won't be his forever; it'll

pass to someone else. And Jesus ends with almost the exact same phrase that we saw back in **Matt. 6**.

Read 21

If our lives are marked by greed and constant accumulation what we're doing functionally is denying God's existence and the work he has called us to in the Kingdom.

Now, the reason I think this parable is helpful is because we see some of the excesses that Jesus is warning against. Because at this point a lot of us are asking: well, is it okay to have some savings? Is it okay to have a retirement account? Is it okay to have multiple pieces of property or hang on to a gun your grandpa gave you?

The answer is that I think it's wise to have savings. I think it's wise to have retirement. It's not wrong to have sentimental things.

Prov. 13:22: A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.

So that's totally biblical. The problem is that those things tend to slowly take over our lives and we don't even realize it. We begin going to great lengths to preserve what we think will last forever and the reality is it won't last forever.

Now this guy in the parable is fictional, he never existed. But if he had existed and we could have a conversation with him I'm guessing he might have convinced us that everything he was doing was reasonable. "Oh, those old barns - they're coming apart. They can't hold that grain. I need something that's going to last a long time. And besides, those old barns were an eye sore to the neighborhood - I don't want to be *that guy*. And I've been working for decades, this old body can't work forever - I need to slow it down if I'm going to keep going. And I can enjoy all this wealth. God gave it to me, didn't he?"

And pretty soon he's got us thinking, "You know, I could use a new barn too. Ziggy's has a sale. I need to remodel this and that. Look at him, he's got the right idea and clearly God blessed him." No. God called him a fool.

Because he became greedy and didn't even realize it. His wealth began to control him. He had the same heart as the brother who wanted more of the inheritance.

Our desire to accumulate and accumulate and invest and prosper and protect what we have usually doesn't usually just explode all at once. It happens slowly over time. We get that nice car and we park in the far back because we don't want people to breathe on it. I kid you not, I have to check my heart with how much fertilizer I buy for my yard; because how much money should I really spend on grass? I could spend a lot. Why? Because I want my yard to look green and nice. Is my treasure in life really green grass? I hope not. But it's easy to justify spending time and money. Am I storing up treasure on my lawn or storing up treasure toward God?

That's the question we have to ask ourselves. Now, let's look **back** at **Matt. 6**. Why don't we store up this treasure on earth? What's the answer that Jesus gives us? **Read 19**

We don't store it up because ultimately it doesn't last. The old quilt from grandma will eventually break down and be thrown away. Does that mean we should just throw it away now? Of course not. Enjoy it now. Share it now with others.

Your home will eventually be owned by someone else who maybe doesn't appreciate all the things you appreciate about it. My grass will one day be owned by someone else who probably doesn't take care of it like I do. The money you're saving for retirement or to give to your kids. It probably won't last much longer than a generation. And they won't appreciate it like you do and so will spend it way differently than you imagine.

Solomon talked about this in **Ecc. 2** where he says there's this evil under the sun where someone toils and toils to get and get and then they must leave it all to someone else to enjoy it. Then later on in **Ecc. 5** he talks about how people lose all they have in a bad venture and they have nothing to give their sons.

Jesus says, "Look, one way or another, everything that you accumulate in life will be destroyed." Moths will eat your clothes. Rust will eat your guns. A fire will burn your house. Mileage will destroy your car. So you could spend a lot of money and time trying to stave that off, or you could invest it in the Kingdom.

See, remember this whole sermon is Jesus calling people into the Kingdom. We are citizens of the Kingdom of heaven and one of the problems is that as citizens of the Kingdom of heaven we can get bogged down with the stuff of the earth. And we spend all this time and energy on the things of the world that won't last, that we miss what's going on with the Kingdom.

So don't lay up a bunch of treasure here because it won't last. What do we do instead? **Read 20**

What we do instead is invest in the Kingdom of heaven. Is he talking about tithing? Giving to the church? Not precisely, although that's part of it. Jesus is talking about the bigger picture of spending our money and possessions on things.

If you've got an extra car, offer it to the person who's hard up. If you've got a big house, offer to house a missionary who's on furlough - and maybe consider supporting them financially. If you've got a big retirement account, consider allocating some of that to a faithful ministry when you die.

I don't know about you, but I love finding deals on things. I know most of you well enough that you like deals too. And I get excited about good deals.

But let me ask you: When was the last time you found a good deal on the Kingdom and invested big time? You bought low and watched your Kingdom investment go supernova? We probably wonder what that even means. How would you find a bargain investment for the Kingdom? We don't usually think like that but that's what Jesus is saying. How we treat our earthly investments ought to be how we treat the Kingdom.

I'm always on the hunt for a faithful missionary that our church can spend money on. Not because they're so great - missionaries are just normal people with problems and struggles like you and me. But they are a unique opportunity for us to invest and take the gospel where it's not known. The rest of us self-fund our missionary work to our co-workers, neighbors, family, and so on.

What about investing in your neighbors? Do you invest in your neighbors? Invest in money to buy food to have them over for dinner? Invest in time to get to know them so that you can talk to them about Jesus? That's buy low, sell high in Kingdom terms.

Sending a kid to camp whose family can't afford it. Taking your friend out to lunch to pray with them. Discipling someone in the church: buying them good books that you read together. Sharing your goods with those who are less off financially in the church.

It sounds weird, but we should be looking for gospel bargains.

Because it's actually those bargains that last for eternity. I recently had a guy reconnect with me on Facebook and we've messaged back and forth. I hadn't talked to him in 20 years. But he invested in me when I was in high school. He did Bible studies with me and my friends. And he had a unique voice of godly counsel in my life. He'd take me out to lunch, spend time with me. Much of my desire to disciple other people came from him. He probably spent 20 bucks on cheeseburgers and changed my life forever. That's what I'm talking about.

When you make that investment it will never perish. It won't go bad. The rewards will be waiting for you in heaven when Jesus says "Well, done good and faithful servant." I don't think Jesus cares too much about the green-ness of my grass. I think he cares about people becoming fully mature disciples.

And this is the principle that drives that. **Read 21**

If you put your money in the Kingdom, you'll want it to grow and you'll want to protect your investment. If you put your money worldly stuff, you'll want that to grow, and you'll want to protect it.

Whatever you put your money into, you become interested in it. Your heart is in it. Spend \$30k on a car? You're going to want to keep it clean. Spend \$200k on a house, you're going to want it just your style. Spent \$1000 on a phone, you're going to get cover and cases and so on to protect. Where you put your money, that's where your heart is.

Shameless plug to support the SMIs: imagine you decided to give each one of them \$100 this summer for working at camp. Do you think when you talked to them about camp you'd be more or less interested in them? Would you be more or less inclined to be diligent to pray for them? More. Why? Because you're investing. You want to see how the investment is going and pray that it would bear fruit.

So don't stack up treasure here because it'll eventually fade. Stack up treasure in heaven, where it will never fade. And if you do that it will change your heart.

2) Jesus gives us a warning against greed. Read 22-23

What in the world does that mean? It is one of the most confusing parts of the sermon. Does the eye take in light and process it in a good way or a bad way? Or does the eye project what's already in our hearts? The translations we have are also more like interpretations.

Literally: If your eye is single in purpose, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil your whole body will be full of darkness.

What Jesus is getting at here is what he's gotten at in the rest of the sermon: that the person who follows him has to be single in their devotion to him. The inside and the outside have to be lined up. Jesus isn't looking for people who look good on the outside and who are greedy on the inside. The Bible calls that being double-minded or doubled souled. You can't follow Jesus and be double minded. Your eye has to be singular: singularly focused on the Kingdom.

The opposite of that is if your eye is - literally - evil. You've heard of giving people the evil eye? That was actually a thing in ancient times. In ancient cultures giving someone the evil eye meant to curse them or cast a spell on them. It was to practice witchcraft. In the Bible, it's to be greedy and selfish. **Look over at Matt 21:1-16.**

This is the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. The point is that all who come to Jesus for grace will receive it no matter when they come in life. **Read**

So the point is that everyone gets the same eternal life in Christ no matter when the Lord calls them into service. We talk about 11th hour conversions. This parable is where that comes from. The 11th hour, by the way, wasn't 11pm. The 11th hour is the 11th hour of the day that starts at about 6am. So this was 5pm when this person was put to work and he got the same wage as the person who worked all day.

Well, imagine you were a roofer or day laborer working all day and some Johnny-come-lately shows up an hour before quitting time and the boss gives him the same amount he promised to give you except you've been working all day. How would you feel?

Probably like these guys. But that's how eternal life works. Some people come when they're young, others when they're middle age, others when they're much older. We're not all called into the Kingdom at the same time in life, but when we're called we enjoy the same eternal life. And we work for God's glory with the time we have left.

What does that have to do with the evil eye? Look at **Vs. 15. Read**

Again our translations all have different things:

NIV: Are you envious?

ESV: Do you begrudge

KJV: Is thine eye evil because I am good.

Good ol' King Jimmy is the most true to the original. The landowner is saying to this guy: "Are you giving me the evil eye?" "You getting greedy at my grace?"

Our eyes are evil when we're greedy. We don't want to spend our treasures on others. Our eyes are evil; when we don't want God to pour out blessings on others. Our eyes are evil when we want to store up treasure for ourselves.

Proverbs 23:6: Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies, for he is like one who is inwardly calculating. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten,

Literally, do not eat the bread of the one with an evil eye. Evil eyes are stingy, greedy, always thinking about how they can get more even when they're pretending to be generous.

Look over at **Deut. 15:7-11**. How were the Jews to deal with poor people in their land? How were they to treat them? **Read**

If there are poor people in the land be generous. And you probably guessed, but **Vs. 9** where we are told to not look grudgingly, or show ill will, NASB: eye is hostile. Literally, do not let your eye be evil toward them. Most of you have a footnote that confirms this.

What am I getting at? Jesus is saying the same thing back in **Matthew 6**. Your eye needs to be singular, whole, inside and out in terms of generosity toward others. So when we're talking about laying up treasures in heaven what we're really talking about is being generous with our finances toward those around us.

The evil eye is stingy, ungracious, looking to take from people. The singular eye, the eye that looks to Jesus, is generous with others.

The problem is that once you go down the road of stinginess, the road of greed and selfishness, it's hard to stop. **Read 23**

If you're greedy, it leads to all kinds of problems. Or as Paul says in **1 Tim. 6:15**: The love of money is what? The root of all kinds of evil. Greedy people are dark. Kingdom people are defined by what? Light and generosity.

What does that have to do with the eyes? Because the eyes are how we view the world. Either we view people as a means by which we can be kind and compassionate and generous. Or we can view them as objects to be exploited.

3) Warning that we can't have it both ways. **Read 24**

So here's the temptation we run into: maybe I can stack up some mammon - some treasure here on earth - **and** be generous with others and thereby stacking up treasure in heaven. I can have the best of both worlds!

Jesus says nope. You missed it. Because you can't actually do that. One master will always win. Either you love money and hate God. Or you are devoted to God and despise money. But you can't have it both ways in Jesus's Kingdom. And just to make it crystal clear: he says you can't serve God and money.

What does it mean to serve money? It means to do things to gain more and more of it. Serving God is just the opposite: doing more and more things to be generous with money. Doing more and more things to give it away.

This is catastrophic downfall of Dave Ramsey's philosophy. Don't get me wrong, I like a lot of what Dave says and I like his system. But his last baby step: baby step 7 is build wealth and give a bunch away. The problem with that is that's not Jesus's model.

Giving a bunch away isn't at the **end** of Jesus's model for the Kingdom. Giving it away in generosity is the whole of Jesus's model. This is where I think as American Christians who know a lot of wealth comparatively speaking we really need to consider Jesus's words.

Because we're prone to try to play both sides of the field. To find comfort in our IRAs. To find security in a pension or life insurance plan. Jesus says actually the only truly secure investment is when you invest in the Kingdom.

But if I save all my life and give all of it away when I have millions won't that be better? Well, we're not guaranteed there will be that time at the end of our life. We could get hit by a meteor tomorrow. Also, if we're not generous now with little, why do we think we'll be generous later with a lot?

And this gets to the principle of investing. To see the results of investing takes time. A lot of time. Years and years before you see any real fruit. And any compound interest calculator will show you that investing a little bit early in life will always beat investing a bunch later in life. It's the time value of money.

What Jesus is really tugging at here is that our hearts and mind should be singularly focused on heaven. That's where we want the grand payout. Jesus doesn't say "Don't worry about what you're going to get" - he says just the opposite. Our whole life as heavenly people is that be working and investing and looking to eternity. We're not looking to retirement, we're looking to New Heavens and New Earth where the rewards for having invested in the Kingdom are huge.

Don't settle for investing the things of this world that will rust and fade and die. Invest in the heavenly Kingdom where your reward will be great.

Pray