

## Will your life's investments have eternal value?

Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

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When I was a child, my mother often listened to John DeBrine on a radio program called "Songtime." Sometimes we would get recordings of the music that was played on that program to use as special music in our church. He had a saying that has stayed with me. "A person's checkbook determines where his priorities are." John often ended his program with these words: "Decision determines Destiny." I had great respect over the years for John's radio program and I miss his sense of humor and his dog Max. He taught the word of God and he lived what he preached. He believed in investing in eternity with the best of the fruit of his labor. He was a wonderful role model for me and I will always remember the truths that he taught on his daily program. Once he told a story of a telephone call that he received from a wealthy lady from Cape Cod. She informed him that she had bought a new piano for her parlor and she wanted to know if he would like to have her old one for the church. He told her "no". She was taken back a bit, but John went on to say this: "If you want to give something to the Lord, give the best that you have. Don't give something that you have no further use for and are looking for a way to dispose of it." The lady ended the conversation with a promise to have a new piano delivered to the church and she did. Today I want to talk about investments and I hope that it will generate interest in your hearts to consider the ways in which you are utilizing the things that God has entrusted you with in this life.

We need to understand that everything that we have has been given to us on loan from our heavenly Father. I would like you to look at Colossians 1:9-20. You will learn in these verses that Jesus is the exact image of God with the exception that God is invisible to the human eye. Jesus was born as a man and was both God and man and was sent to this world to bring salvation to the world. He walked among men, taught truth to the people and was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. He is God's first-born Son and is superior to all creation for everything was created by him in heaven and on earth both things that are seen and those that are not seen. This includes all forces and powers, and all rulers and authorities. All things were made by Jesus Christ and everything was made for him. He was before all else and by him everything is held together. He is the head of his body, which is the Church. He is the very beginning and the first to be raised from death so he would be above all others. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. In Acts 17:21, Paul spoke to the people of Athens about their ignorance of the true God that they hadn't been aware of. They were religious, but didn't know the God of the universe. They had an altar to the "unknown god" and Paul used that as a vehicle to preach Jesus Christ to the people. He explained that Jesus created the universe and everything in it. He doesn't need help from anyone. He gives life, breath and everything else to all people. He

used one man to make all nations who live on earth and he decided when and where every nation would be. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

In 1 Timothy 6:5-11 Paul instructed Timothy concerning false teachers who have wicked minds, have missed out on the truth and they know nothing. They cause jealousy, disagreements, unkind words, and evil suspicions. They believe that godliness is supposed to make a person rich. Paul pointed out that godliness does make believers rich by making them content with the food and clothing that they have. We don't bring anything into this world and we won't take anything with us when we leave.

Striving to be rich causes people to fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them. The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people desire wealth to a degree that they give up their faith and it causes them a lot of pain. Paul reminded Timothy that he belonged to God and should stay away from all these evil things. He should do his best to please God and to be like him. His character should be above reproach; he should be faithful, loving, dependable, and gentle. Be willing to fight a good fight for the faith and claim eternal life. Paul asked Timothy to promise to obey completely and fully all that he had been told until our Lord Jesus returns. He was to warn those who were wealthy in this world's goods not to be proud or to trust in wealth that can be easily lost. Have faith in God who is rich and blesses us with everything we need to enjoy life. Instruct them to do as many good deeds as they can and to help everyone. Remind them to be generous and share what they have. This will lay a solid foundation for the future so they will know what true life is like.

In the second book of Samuel, God was angry with Israel for their sins and David, their king, ignored wise counsel and counted the people who were Israelites. A disease broke out among the people and many died at the threshing place that belonged to Araunah the Jebusite. In 2 Samuel 24:24, the prophet Gad went to David and said to him, "Go to the threshing place that belongs to Araunah and build an altar there for the LORD." So David went. Araunah looked and saw David and his men coming towards him and he met David and bowed down low and asked, "Your majesty! Why have you come to see me?" David told him that he had come to buy his threshing place. He explained that he had to build the LORD an altar there in order for God to stop a disease that was killing the people. Araunah told David to take whatever he wanted and offer his sacrifice to the LORD. He even offered to give David oxen for the sacrifice. He told him to use the threshing boards and the wooden yokes for the fire. He said, "Take them-They are yours! I hope the LORD your God will be pleased with you." But David answered, "No! I have to pay you what they are worth. I cannot offer the LORD my God a sacrifice that costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing place and the oxen for 50 pieces of silver. Then he built an altar for the LORD and sacrificed animals on the altar. The LORD answered the prayers of the people and no one else died from the terrible disease.

In Deuteronomy 15:21, God commanded the people of Israel not to offer an animal as a sacrifice that had any blemish. If the animal was lame or blind or anything else was wrong with it, the animal was not to be offered to the LORD as an offering. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God was without blemish, sinless, and was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the people. God gave his best, his only begotten Son that we could have eternal life. He wanted the people to give their best to Him.

In Malachi 1:6-8 there are some interesting Scriptures. It starts out with these words: "I, the LORD All-Powerful, have something to say to you priests. Children respect their fathers and servants respect their masters. I am your father and your master, so why don't you respect me? You priests have insulted me and now you ask how did you insult me?"

The LORD rebuked them for bringing worthless food to his altar and showing disrespect for his altar. They asked themselves, "What is so great about the LORD's altar?" The LORD asked them if they would offer blind, crippled, or sick animals to the governor. The governor would not be pleased to receive a sick or maimed animal as a gift and he would not be inclined to help those who brought such a present to him. He reminded them that it was wrong to offer animals that were blind, crippled, or sick on his altar also. He told them that he is the LORD God All-Powerful and it was inappropriate to offer these animals, some of which were stolen, to the LORD on his altar. They said "There is nothing special about the LORD's altar and these sacrifices are worthless."

The LORD refused their offerings and He would punish them for their lack of reverence to him. He is the great King, the LORD All Powerful and He is to be worshiped by nations everywhere.

God looks at the intent and desires of the heart. Look at Mark 12:41. A mite was the smallest of the bronze coins. Jesus sat in the temple near the offering box and watched people put in their gifts. Many rich people were giving a lot of money. Finally a poor widow came up and put in two mites that were worth only a few pennies. Jesus gathered his followers around him and told them that the poor widow had put in more than all the others because everyone else gave of their abundance; she gave all that she had and had nothing left to live on. In 2 Corinthians 9 it says "A few seeds make a small harvest, but a lot of seeds make a big harvest." In verse 7, it says that each person must make up their own mind what they will give to the Lord's work. Don't give out of a sense of duty or grudgingly; for God loves a cheerful giver. God is able to make all grace abound toward you that your needs will be supplied and you will always have more than enough to do all kinds of good thing for others. The Scriptures say "God freely gives his gifts to the poor and always does right." God gives seed to farmers and provides everyone with food. He will increase what you have so that you can give even more to those in need. You will be blessed in every way and you will be able to keep on being generous. Then more people will thank God when we deliver your gift. Paul was speaking about the wonderful blessing

that God's people received from brothers and sisters in Christ who were willing to share with fellow believers that were struggling. God would receive honor and praise by these people responding to the request Paul had made that those who were able should help those who were in need.

Luke 6:38 is a recipe for a bountiful life. It says "Give and it shall be given back to you. It will be packed down, shaken together and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated."

I enjoy reading recipe books, especially those that have personal stories included. The successful cooks will emphasize using fresh ingredients, avoid substituting key ingredients with inferior quality items, and follow the instructions exactly as written in order to produce a product that you can be proud of. If it is worth your time and effort to put the ingredients together, then don't take shortcuts that will affect the final product.

God has given each one of us a life, a purpose and the ability to accomplish great things for his kingdom. If we give our best to him and serve others, we will have treasure stored up in heaven. Matthew 6:33 instructs us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. Invest time, money and talent into the things that have eternal value and you will be richly blessed.

In 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul mentions that God was kind and allowed him to become an expert builder. He laid the foundation and others built upon it. He warns that God is the only foundation that is secure and we must be careful that we build upon that foundation. Whatever we build will be tested by fire on the day of Judgement. On that day we will prove whether the materials that we used were gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. The things that we focused on and invested into in this life will be brought to light on that day. I pray that the Holy Spirit will lead and direct us that we might have gained many souls for the kingdom of God when we stand before our Maker to give account of our lives. The Scriptures say "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life and he that winneth souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30.