

Investing in God's Economy

*"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal"
Matthew 6:20*

Recently it's been said that we're experiencing an "economic downturn." Whatever that really means, it's easier to understand the symptoms hitting close to home: lost jobs, home foreclosures, mounting debt and so on. Similarly, Wall Street's woes are reflected in anyone who opens their personal investment statement recently. Many once-comfortable nest eggs are looking more and more like Humpty Dumpty fallen off the wall. It was easy to watch with pleasure our assets grow, but it's no fun watching them fly out the window.

This is a painful reminder that human systems such as our economy aren't fail-safe. In fact recent stock market activity seems eerily similar to a roller-coaster ride, up one day and down the next, even making lots of people nauseous. Yet the economy that struggles today may very well rebound tomorrow and when it does, great financial gains come to those who used the opportunity to invest wisely.

Still, wealth can only do so much. It can bring power, comfort, and status, but never happiness or satisfaction. This explains why the multi-billionaire, Nelson Rockefeller, when reportedly asked how much money is enough answered, "Just a little bit more." Though riches can't satisfy, they nonetheless entice many hearts, even exacting an eternal toll if treasured more than God. But for the heart that treasures God above all, the most excellent way is reserved.

In His Plan we're given the opportunity to invest in something permanent and satisfying beyond measure, His Kingdom. Furthermore, unlike human endeavors that can fail, our spiritual investments remain secure because the very character of God backs them.

Investing for eternity starts when we accept God's gift of redemption. We're born spiritually bankrupt, so none of our works contribute an iota. We can only receive the gift of salvation through Christ's death on the cross on our behalf. But once saved by grace through faith we've been redeemed and made spiritually alive (Romans 8:9-15). Subsequently God credits us for our righteous acts (Romans 4:22-24, James 2:21-23), performed as new creations in a fallen world. It's not our human might or power that equips us but God's; consequently we're able to devote our time, talents and abilities for His glory. And though these assets are invested now on earth, their full maturation comes later in Heaven with our ultimate sanctification.

However, our efforts must count as gold, silver and precious stones, not wood, hay and stubble. Meaning that we walk in the manner acceptable to Him, that is, by faith. For without faith it's impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). So we labor, devoting our resources now, trusting His promises, and choosing the path of Hebrews 11 that leads to the great Hall of Faith. Here we find Abraham, who embarked to the land of his future inheritance not knowing where he was going; yet claiming the promises of God (Hebrews 11:8-10). And Moses, who regarded the reproach of Christ more worthy than all the riches of Egypt and thus pursued eternal riches instead (Hebrews 11:23-27).

There were others whose life and story seem insignificant in human history because their names aren't found in any books written by man. Yet their names are written in Heaven, and in reality, the world wasn't worthy of them (Hebrews 11:38). Hearers of "well done good and faithful servant," they forsook this world to receive treasures from eternal God. So their testimony lives on to encourage us today that we in turn will persevere to reap everlasting dividends.

But investing for eternity in a fallen world includes trials. We may be reproached, unappreciated, misunderstood and scorned. Or worse--tortured, imprisoned, scourged or even killed like those who wouldn't accept release because they sought a better, everlasting deliverance (Hebrews 11:35-36). They stood firm, in faith declaring like Job, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him (Job 13:15).

We too have His Word as our refuge and soul's anchor (Hebrews 6:19). He guarantees that sacrifices for His Kingdom will be multiplied back to us (Matthew 19:29). At His judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10), we'll see the return for our works of faith and place all earthly trials for His Name in proper perspective as unworthy of comparison with the eternal glory at hand (Romans 8:18). Finally knowing the end product of our endurance, we'll probably wish that we had suffered more in our lifetime.

Losses incurred in our languishing human economy aren't pleasant, but as shareholders in God's economy hope overshadows our groaning. Moreover, His Plan affords great spiritual gains that can only come through losses. The loss of Christ's life gained for us salvation (2 Corinthians 5:21); the loss sin's power gains for us newness of life (Romans 6:4); and the loss of this world will gain for us an inheritance in His Kingdom forever (John 12:25).

Therefore, no matter how severe the economic downturn, everlasting benefits come to those whose eyes on Jesus are kept upturned.

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