

Investing My All
Mark 12:41-44
November 1, 2020

Today is November 1st; it is All Saints Day. We usually do not have a worship service on All Saints Day if it falls on weekday. We do, however, keep the first Sunday of November as the All Saints Sunday. It would be appropriate for us to talk about managing and investing our own lives in a godly way. Stewardship of our lives is directly affected by our understanding of our relationship with God. Our view of God will affect whether we step out in faith or not.

When you trust God and his leading, you will be confident in life and you will be able to step out in faith. When you trust God's provision, you can give your resources generously. When you trust God's love and mercy, you can share that love and mercy with others. Everything starts with your relationship with God.

Did you know that your influence in life, good or bad, reaches several generations, long after you are gone? Each life can bring an immeasurable impact in this world. When we invest our lives in a way to glorify God, God will honor that investment and will multiply it far beyond anything we can possibly imagine.

John Piper, a pastor and theologian, has a daily prayer expressing his deep desire to make an impact in this world knowing full well his own inadequacy. He prays, "Lord, let me make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who I am."¹ In other words, he was praying to God to bring God's impact and influence in this world through everything John Piper was doing. He just wanted to be an instrument of God for God's impact in the world.

I believe that should be the prayer of all of us.

Lois A. Cheney, a retired professor at Bowling Green State University wrote a book called, *God Is No Fool*. In this book, she tells a parable about a man who was touched by God. He was given a priceless gift from God. That gift was the capacity to love. The man was grateful and humble. He protected this gift like a jewel.

Once in a while, he showed this gift to others, and they would smile and touch it. But each time they touched it, they left a mark on it. This was not the

¹ Bruce Wilkinson, *Secrets of the Vine* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishing, 2001), p. 85.

way to treat such a precious thing. So, he built a box to protect it, and he decided to show it only to the people who would treat it with respect.

But still people tried to break into the box. So, the man built a bigger and stronger box, one that no one could break in. Now, he felt good that the gift was secured and totally protected.

Then once in a while, when he decided that someone had earned the right to see this gift, he would show it proudly. However, some of them looked at it but had no interest at all. Some even refused to look at it.

Much time went by. Hardly anyone came near him anymore. Then only once in a great while someone would pass by this aging man. He would pat the box and say, "I have the most beautiful thing in this box. Look and see. Please, look at it. It is beautiful." The passerby would look and would back away from the old man, shaking his head.

The old man died, and he went to God, and he said, "Lord, you gave me a precious gift many years ago, and I kept it very safe, and it is as lovely as the day you gave it to me." And he opened the box and held it out to God. God glanced in the box, and it was a lizard, an ugly, laughing lizard. God walked away from him.²

The gift, the capacity to love, was guarded and unexposed. Instead of remaining beautiful, it turned into an ugly lizard. Life is to be lived and offered fully, abundantly, without reservation. It is to be invested in love, hope, and faith. All parts of our lives should be invested in that way. Our time, skills, knowledge, energy, finances, and everything else are to be used for the glory of God.

In today's passage, we read about a woman who had given her all. It wasn't much in other people's eyes, but it was her everything.

Jesus sat down on the opposite side of the place where the offerings were taken and watched the crowd putting their offerings into the temple treasury. Many rich people put in large amounts but a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Jesus called his disciples and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on."

² Pages 33-34, Found on the Internet.

“She has put more into the treasury than all the others.” When we give to the Lord, we give in direct proportion to our faith. Next Sunday is our Stewardship Sunday. We will make our pledges this week and mail it to the church. Please do that by tomorrow. The pledge cards have been sent to you a couple of weeks ago. If you haven’t done it yet, please fill out and mail by tomorrow. We will dedicate them next Sunday.

We just read about a poor widow who had given everything she had. Jesus praised her saying that “She has given more than all others.”

John Maxwell is a wonderful speaker, preacher, pastor and author. He pastored churches in Indiana, Ohio, California and Florida. While he was serving in one of the churches, he had a parishioner named Helen Douglas. She was a poor woman who lived in a government housing project.

Even though she did not have much money, Helen was faithful to her church. When the time came to raise a great deal of money for a new building, the church held prayer meetings every morning at 6 a.m. Helen was always there, waiting for the doors to be opened. She prayed, wept, and even fasted, asking God to supply their needs.

Finally, when the day of the big offering came, she let the plate pass her by. God spoke to her heart, “Helen, why didn’t you give?”

She said, “Lord, I’m the poor lady. I don’t have anything to give.”

The Lord said to her, “Give all you’ve got!”

She dug in her purse and came up with a handful of changes. She put it in an envelope and wrote on it, “It is all I have.” After the service, she gave it to Pastor Maxwell.

He tried to give it back to her. She said, “No, this is my gift to God.” He took it home and opened it. It was \$3.30. That evening, the church was packed because in that service they would announce how much they had raised. They raised more than they needed.

After everyone settled down, Pastor Maxwell said, “I want to tell you about the largest gift given today.” He then shared the story of Helen Douglas. One of men stood up and said, “That is the greatest story of stewardship I have ever heard.

I want one of the coins from the envelope to remind me. I will give \$10 for one coin.” Then someone else did the same.

Suddenly, a spirit of giving came over the church. For the next 30 minutes, members wrote checks and brought them to the front. Some went back and wrote as many as three checks. The smallest gift of all became the largest gift in the history of that church.³

A young boy’s gift of five loaves of bread and two fish, the poor widows two small coins, and Helen Douglas’ \$3.30. All of them are expressions of love, demonstrated in a sacrificial action.

As you consider your pledges for the work of the Lord through this church, let your pledges be your expression of love for the Lord.

Stewardship is about managing our lives as well as managing our resources. May our lives and the way we use the resources God has given us, be acceptable to God!

³ Pastor Jerry Locke, *5 Sermons On Stewardship*, Lake Worth Baptist, Fort Worth, TX.