

Congregational Church of the Messiah

Sunday, October 26, 2008

A Wise Investment

Isaiah 55:11-18 and Matthew 6:19-21

Dr. David L. Gray

When you invest it means

you give control over something of value that belongs to you
to some thing or someone else.

When you invest, you expect to get a favorable return. Your purpose in investing may be to make a profit, to provide security; or to establish scholarships, grants, or training programs for other people to carry on work that you deeply believe in.

To make a wise investment means to give away your control of something valuable to some other party expecting that institution or person to do something with your investment that you would approve of. We look for the safe place in which to entrust our investment of money or property.

We put our worldly investments in what we expect to be safe places or in a place with a high risk potential but a high return. However, there is no totally safe place on earth. Even if you bury gold in the ground, there is no guarantee what its value will be when you dig it up. The value of gold might drop or go up; or thieves might remove the gold.

Instead of laying up treasures on earth for ourselves, Jesus tells us to lay up treasures in heaven. (Matthew 6:19-20)

Only God can guarantee life's greatest treasure—your soul. When we listen to the Spirit within us—the soul God has given each of us—we are led into right relationship with God and the world. We may invest our resources and ourselves in all sorts of fine, valuable work and good deeds; but if we are still at odds with God, our work will have limited value and temporary results. Most of what we do is temporary. Nevertheless, we can be a continuation of the love, which is invested in us from our birth.

God invested Himself in the creation of a world of incredible beauty, power and balance. God sent Jesus to show humans how to relate to Him and to one another so they and all God's creation would not be destroyed by the human greed, drive for power, and control.

God's love creates, surrounds, and encourages us to be filled with God's own inner joy, peace and creativity. God invested Himself in us. His investment strategy was well thought through, intentional and a wise investment choice. We have a record of how this happened: The Bible begins with the Spirit of God moving over the deep, and the word of God speaking: "Let there be light and there was light in the darkness..." (Genesis 1:2-3)

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Through thousands of years, God saw His initial investment in creation change and evolve following what we named “The Laws of Nature.” Then God invested in a special creation breathing His own divine Spirit into it, and mankind became a living soul.

Through the generations, God saw the amazing natural creation of humans, made in His own likeness in spirit, at times walking with Him and in harmony; and at other times turning away from their Creator, fighting among themselves and intentionally destroying some of what God created.

God sent His Word down to some of the humans trying to change the direction of the destructive part of human nature. We called them “Prophets,” but more often than not, people did not listen and did not follow the Word of God proclaimed by the Prophets. God saw He needed a new investment strategy so He sent His Son to show mankind how to have right relationships with each other and all of God’s Creation.

Jesus came, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:17) Jesus applied a new Spirit to transactions. Jesus showed us that the strict legalism of laws is to be understood and applied with a spirit of love rather than intent of punishment. Instead of “guilt or honor,” men and women are to relate to one another with love and forgiveness.

Loving your neighbor as yourself is to be the new way of dealing with each other. We are to invest ourselves in

harmony, instead of conflict,
understanding, instead of antagonism,
respect, instead of fear.

Jesus came and invested Himself in His disciples, in those who came to Him and listened to Him, learned, and believed. Those believers went home and practiced the two great commandments:

To love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength;
To love your neighbor as yourself. (from Luke 10:27)

That is not just a cliché. God’s wise investment choice to invest Himself in the spirit He placed in human beings in a unique way is not equaled by any of God’s other creations.

We can question whether God made a wise investment choice in placing such power in human beings who were not fully committed to following ways of peace and respect. We can wonder how in the world God expected any of us to be able to live like Jesus when none of us is Jesus. However, our all wise, all knowing God sent His Son to show us how to live. God was willing to risk investing Himself in Christ in order to show humans the Way to live fully and have life everlastingly.

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Jesus invested Himself in His disciples but told them to stay in the city until they received “power from on high.” Only when the disciples had received that inner spiritual power from on high were they to go forth into all the world spreading His word of forgiveness and acceptance.

“Truly I say to you,” Jesus said, “he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go the Father...” (John 14:12)

“...These are my words...repentance and forgiveness...You are my witnesses of these things. And behold I am sending forth the promise of My Father, but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49)

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Every day we choose how to invest our time, energy and treasure. Let us remember how important even one choice can be.

“One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.

One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.

One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room.

One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey,
One hope will raise our spirits,

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One touch can show you care.
One voice can speak with wisdom,

One heart can know what's true.
One life can make the difference....”

Author Unknown¹

God chose to invest part of Himself in you. God expects you to invest the life He has given you transforming the world around you in some unique way that only you can do. Everyone has his or her part to fulfill bringing God's love to everyday living.

When you choose to invest yourself in God first, that means committing all your heart and mind and soul and strength to God. God has promised you will not lose yourself but you actually will find true fulfillment; you will receive a return that is very high—literally beyond this world—and that promise is guaranteed by God's everlasting love. With that assurance comes inner joy and peace now and forever.

Today is a great day to continue investing the love God has given you in what you dream, say, and do.

Amen.

¹ Canfield, Jack, Victor Hansen, Hanoch McCarty, and Meladee McCarty. *A 4th Course of Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 1997, page 274.