

Wise and Risky Generosity – *Matt 6:19-24, Eccles 11:1-6*

“Cast your bread upon the waters”

Introduction – Simply as humans, but far more as members of the kingdom of God, we have been given much (James 1:17, 1 Cor 4:7), far more than we could ever imagine (Eph 1:3) and that is where we must start when we consider what we are to do with our time, talents, and treasures. What is this life for? Why did He give you all this stuff? What am I to do with it? While it is true that we are to be faithful stewards of the “talents” we have been given, what if I told you that the biblical wisdom teaches a way of risky, reckless, overspending to the glory of God?

Wise Investing (Matt 6:19-21) – So let’s begin here. We are supposed to lay up treasure. Jesus is not opposed to investments. He is opposed to bad investments. There are worldly investments that do not look risky but are about to be lost forever (Luke 12:16-21). Then there are investments that look risky but in fact will be greatly blessed by God in His time and in His ways (Eccles 11:1-6 – we’ll get there in a minute). So we have to know if we are investing in worldly or heavenly treasure. But everywhere you put your money, it’s still on earth. Jesus teaches that it starts with a heart attitude towards everything that the Lord has entrusted to you (which assumes you have started with the above introduction) as a steward of His resources. As citizens of His heavenly kingdom, all of our investing here is to be for the sake of His kingdom, His name, and His glory.

Risky Generosity (Eccles 11:1-6) – Ecclesiastes is a book, a poem, of inscrutable wisdom. In it, Solomon lays out the idea that all of life “under the sun” cannot be understood, manipulated, or managed – it is like “grasping at the wind.” At the same time, there is a way to see all this “vanity” and find deep joy in it (5:18-19), and we are commended to do so (8:15, 9:7-10). Solomon teaches that we can enjoy our portion, our vanities, if and only if God gives us the gift of enjoyment. And God gives this gift to those He loves so that we can believe promises like Rom 8:28 no matter what this “empty” life brings.

With that background, Eccles 11:1-6 is about taking risks. Life “under the sun” is uncontrollable but faith grants a wisdom that says, “therefore, be bold and generous.” “*Cast your bread upon the waters*” (v1) is not a rational form of stewardship, and that is his point. “*Give a serving to seven, and also to eight*” (v2); we might say, “be liberal with your generosity to the fullest extent and to as many as you can, and then give some more.” Why? Because, “*For you will find it after many days*” (v1), and “*For you don’t know what evil will be on the earth*” (v2). God makes promises about generosity to the poor (Prov 19:17). And Jesus commends the same (Luke 6:30, 38), as does Paul to the church (2 Cor 9:6-9). Today, for just a few examples, I see those committed to their children’s education, to building community within the church, to outreach in their neighborhoods, as doing what Solomon is talking about here.

There is a conservatism that lacks faith, an over scrupulous caution that paralyzes and can lead to miserliness, trusting in one’s things to protect you from the unknown future. Clouds and trees follow their own laws and times (actually, God’s directives – vv3-4). You really can’t plan on when, if, or how many children God will give, or how healthy they will be, or much else about them, any more than you can control the wind – because God does not reveal those plans to us (v5). But those who know God is good will sow their seed in the morning, in the evening again, because who knows what God is going to do with it (v6). He is faithful and abundantly generous. However, the ability to control the outcome of our generosity and the return for our charity is never ours – that rests each and every time in the hand of God. This tempts us time and again to wait too long before we take the risk. Our circumstances never seem secure enough to really be lavish in our giving. But Jesus praised the widow who gave all she had (Luke 21:2). If you look to the wind, or the trees, or the stock market, you will not give yourself away. If you look to Jesus, you will follow Him in giving everything (Luke 9:23-25). Jim Elliot, who gave his life to bring the gospel to a tribal people in Ecuador, said, “*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*”

To summarize: Lavish generosity is a mark of the kingdom of God, a people whose lives are filled with great joy and grace, giving themselves away because they have no idea what tomorrow may bring, but who know the faithfulness of the God who holds tomorrow in His hands.

Eyes of Generous Wisdom (Matt 16:22-24) – Back in Matthew, Jesus is not changing the subject. Our English idioms are hard to translate (climbing the walls, got cabin fever, stir crazy) as are Hebrew idioms. If your eye is good (healthy, single) meant that you were generous (see Prov 11:25). If your eye is bad meant you were miserly (see Prov 28:22). Your life is full of light when you are full of generosity and open-handedness with your earthly goods. If you are generous, your whole life is blessed (v22). If you are stingy, how great is that darkness (v23). You can only serve one master (v24). Money (mammon,

worldly treasures) is a harsh master; when it becomes your god, it never satisfies, even if one gets a lot of it. God does not mind his people having money; He does mind money having His people.

The Pure and Risky Generosity of Jesus – Solomon’s wisdom is fulfilled in the greater Son of David. Jesus Christ was the man who alone lived this life of pure generosity. He was the one who trusted this Father perfectly for the outcome. Did Jesus know exactly *how* everything was going to work out? Did He wrestle with His Father that night in the garden, imploring, questioning the wisdom of “casting His bread upon the waters...” – the Bread of life? Did He not have to trust the Father with the outcome? Of course He did and so we have the basis for our faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. And so we also see Jesus’ disciples living the same kind of self-denying, God-glorifying, and life-satisfying acts of risky generosity. As Jesus has given His life as bread for the world, so we should become living sacrifices, broken and distributed as bread to a hungry world around us.

“In the morning, sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand” (v6). With almost an “*I dare you*” mentality, God instructs us to be generous everywhere and in everything. Full of grace, we bring our tithes and offerings. Turning to those in need, we give up our time, talents, and treasures to help. The rich things of this life were not given to us just *for* us, but to share with others (1 Tim 6:17-19).

Dave Hatcher – July 21, 2019

Notes for Little Saints

“Give a serving to seven, and also to _____” – Ecclesiastes 11:2

What this means is that you should give a full amount and then even more – give to a lot of people – and give more than you think you can. This can be money, or your time, or your friendship, or your abilities to help with chores and tasks. Give more and more and more.

What did Jesus promise would happen when we gave like this?

Write out Luke 6:38 –

Who are we like when we give like this?

Write out Ephesians 1:3 –