

Long-Term Investing

Isaiah 65:17-25 & Luke 21: (1-4), 5-19

November 17, 2013

When you hear “long-term investing” you might think of brokerage firms like T Rowe Price, Merrill Lynch, Smith-Barney, TD Ameritrade, Fidelity, or Charles Schwab.

Any of these companies could hook you up with an investment counselor who would help you invest in your future, which is a good and wise thing. But they cannot give sound advice on investing in God’s future.



That is what we are doing here.



Whether you put money or your envelope in the traditional offering plate (basket) or you have made the commitment to give online, you are investing in God’s future, partnering with God to help finance ministry and mission here at East Union. You might

invest time and effort, too, and that is no less important. What we give makes a difference.

One day Jesus was in the Temple and he noticed people making their contributions to the treasury.

First, he saw some people who were clearly wealthy. Then he noticed a woman who was just as clearly poor. She put in two small copper coins.



Jesus had just denounced the Scribes and the Pharisees, wealthy leaders in the community. Beware of them, Jesus said, for they like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. They devour widow's houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers.

Here at the treasury, those words still ring. Jesus draws a distinction between, on the one hand, the Scribes and the Pharisees, and the other, the poor widow. He is showing his disciples contrasting models of behavior, the one ambitious and greedy, the other humble and generous to the point of sacrifice.

The scribes and Pharisees have given a poor example. Enough of them are corrupt that they are known for swindling the poor out of their houses and selling them off for profit – that is “devouring widow's houses.”

In sharp contrast stands the poor widow whose lavish generosity consisted of giving two lepta – coins of the very least value and the sum of her possessions. The presence of the rich putting in what they imagined to be “large gifts” would have even



further diminished what she gave -- had it not been for Jesus. Jesus did not romanticize the small gift or strike out against the large. He judged all the gifts not by sentiment but by a standard that was the same for all: How much does one have remaining after the offering is made? Thus measured, the widow's gift was by far the greatest, because she gave all

she had. The offering of everything to God, our whole self...our whole life – that is the unexcelled gift.

Remember, Jesus disciples had already revealed their appetite for greatness when they got into an argument amongst themselves as to which one was the greatest. That was the time when Jesus took a little child to his side, and said to them, “whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me...” Jesus seems to point to the humble act of this poor widow at the Temple treasury and say, “So you are interested in greatness? Then here is your example; it is the widow’s greatness which rightly belongs in the new heaven and the new earth God is creating! She understood the concept of long-term investing in God’s future.

I invite you to entertain for a moment the Prophet Isaiah’s long-term investing Poem – by entertain, I mean “imagine,” the prophet paints a picture...see that picture with your mind’s eye – and then let it



seep into your bones and into your heart and into your vision. That is the first step in becoming a long-term investor in God’s purposes. God speaks: “New heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem.” When this vision becomes

your vision...when you make it a priority of your investment, you say to yourself,

**“New heaven,
new earth,
new Pittsburgh,
new neighborhood,
new church,
new me!”**

It will be a world of rejoicing when God's newness comes. And do you know why?

Heaven and earth will rejoice because, in that new world fashioned by God, there will no more be the sound of weeping, no more folks living on the streets to moan, no more broken people to



whimper, no more terrorized citizens to cry out.

Heaven and earth will rejoice because, in that new world fashioned by God, there will be no more infant mortality, no more babies who live but a few days, and no more old people who will die too young or live too feebly or continue as a shell while the life is gone.

Heaven and earth will rejoice because, in that new world fashioned by God there will be no more foreclosure on people's homes. Those who



build will stay around to inhabit, those who plant will survive to harvest and enjoy their produce. No more people being taxed off their property, no more losing their vulnerable homes to the right of eminent domain, no more brutal seizure through war, no more of the big ones eating the little ones. When the newness comes, every person will live securely under a vine and fig tree, safe, unafraid, at peace, no more destructive threat nor competitive anxiety.

Heaven and earth will rejoice because, in that new world fashioned by God, there will be no more labor in vain, no more birthing into anguish, no more nurturing children in anxiety and dread and fear, because God will bless and make the force of life everywhere palpably

available. Persons and families will live in well-being, without jeopardy or grief.

Heaven and earth will rejoice because, in that new world fashioned by God, God will be attentive. God will be like a mother who hears and answers in the night, knowing before we call who is needed and what is



needed. And we shall never be left alone again.

Heaven and earth will rejoice because, in that new world fashioned by God, predators and enemies will become friends and protectors. Not only will wolves join sheep in feasting

together, and lions befriend oxen, but the rich will not take advantage of the poor, and those who insist on exploitation, along those who refuse to share of their abundance, will have nothing to eat but dirt! There won't be pain and destruction anymore, because the LORD will not allow it.

Do you have the right binoculars and the patience and the hope to focus on this new world fashioned by God? Will you imagine and participate in God's



future? Do you have the faith to invest in it...invest your time, your talents and your working capital?

Many of you can see with the eyes of a long-term investor. There are those around you who have set the example.

Long-Term Investors

Jack Baker – just announced he celebrated 25 years of retirement. Jack planted and tends 100s of Black Walnut trees, below our church ballfield, trees which started as walnuts that Jack collected by hand in Deer Lakes Park, and planted in rows several years ago. Those trees are now taller than Jack. Some day the Trustees of East Union Church, maybe 30 or 40 or 50 years from today, will choose to harvest that valuable timber and sell it for great profit, financing some future building project.

Ron and Bonnie Braun – spent the day on Friday, driving to Cabwaylingo Chapel, West Virginia, where they delivered clothes, hats and mittens, stuffed animals and most importantly 66 Christmas gifts for the children of that small, rural community. They invested their time in order to support our church-wide effort to serve the cause of God's far-reaching kingdom. Many of us purchased the presents and donated the clothes and gathered the winter garb in order to bear testimony to our friends in Appalachia that God loves them and that we care.

Esther Michael – a widow in our congregation, who called me to her house this week so that she could give me her annual contribution. Most of you haven't seen Esther this year because she is 92 and it is a real chore for her to get to church. But she reads the Compass, our church newsletter and our weekly Sunday bulletin. She knows what is going on at her church and she cares. She has been invested in what God is doing through East Union for a long time...and she continues to invest. She doesn't know most of you. She likely won't become more active again.

But she's doing her part. Esther is on a fixed income, as you can imagine. But she continues to contribute to your spiritual well-being. She has invested in God's business here.

We take for granted all the time what a blessing East Union Church is to us. We are able to worship and meet and serve and sing and recreate here on this 26-acre campus, because there have been many long-term investors that have come before us. Some have their names inscribed in the history books or on some plaque, like Nora Toepfer or Ray Geiser, Nannie Grubbs or Richard Kennedy. There are other names you would recognize: Snitzer, Magill, Hoburg. And there are many others you probably wouldn't recognize – and still more that are not even recorded – faithful members and determined investors, who gave significant time, significant personal energy and talent, significant money – so that God's purposes at East Union Church might thrive, so that this place and this community might exhibit the newness God imagines... that heaven and earth might rejoice.

That's it. Amen.