

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## GOOD INVESTMENTS

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What we do with wealth can be many things, including good, comical, tragic and stupid. This beacon includes a wet passport, a reflection on Smaug and what Jesus wants us to do with our money.

“Do not store up treasures on earth, especially when they're liable to water damage...”

That isn't how the passage really goes, but it's how the story played out for me. I pride myself on caution, and when I visited Thailand, I wanted to be ahead of the game keeping my stuff safe. I had concealed zip pockets, didn't carry all my bank cards and wore nothing too showy when I was out and about.

I'd heard time and time again about keeping my passport safe, and knew loads of people who'd lost them in dumb ways when they went abroad, and I didn't want that to happen. The trouble is, where could I hide it in my room when I was out? There was little storage and most things could easily be found. I'd have to be smarter. The mattress didn't budge, so that wasn't an option. The drawers weren't locked so it couldn't go there. There was no fancy or removable ventilation shaft to hide it behind. So, I settled on a place, which to my knowledge, was genius: I wrapped it up in some thin bags and some other stuff to keep it safe, then I shoved it in a hard to reach area near the piping behind the toilet. Now, at first this was a great plan. You'd never look there and it was perfectly concealed. I could go about my daily business in peace that it was there and wouldn't be found. Weeks passed and I checked it was there every now and again. I got to the end of my stay and it was safe.

However, on the penultimate day, I fully pulled it out of its packet to take a look, you know, before I had to actually fly out. And it was a fat, wet chunk of paper. Most of it was okay-ish, but the critical page was smudged and words and numbers had floated around on it. In avoiding theft, I'd forgotten the more obvious danger: water damage. I stored it in such a way that it couldn't be used and it lost the source of its value – being able to get me home.

Now, the actual Bible passage in Matthew 6:19-21 reads: 19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust[g] consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither

moth nor rust[h] consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The danger with anything we 'store up' on earth is the fact that it can get lost or destroyed. We can see this in my own silly circumstance, but in more mundane examples as well. Weird and unexpected things can happen to the most prudent of us. At best, our wealth here on earth is relatively safe, but it is never guaranteed. You only have to look at the queues of people back in 2008 trying to withdraw their money from Northern Rock banks when they went under.

Treasures on earth rust away or get robbed. Treasure in heaven lasts forever. That's cool, but guess what this passage also assumes – we last forever too. Death and decay was never God's plan for human beings, and by faith in Jesus we will live forever too. If we believe this, it's a bit weird to store up treasure on earth.

Think about it. Imagine signing your life away for a job which pays you £150, 000 a year as long as you work hard and devote yourself to it - right now about 5 times the average household salary. That sounds tempting. Many would jump at the chance! If life exists only until the point when we die, then that would be a decent contract. We receive a lot from it in relation to our peers and we have every material need met with this kind of money.

However, the catch is that Jesus is offering us eternal life with him in a renewed earth with no more death, decay or evil. That skews the value of the wealth we store up on earth. Why spend our whole lives storing up cash for our limited time here, rather than for the eternity which comes afterwards? We would be making a bad investment. But what does it mean to store up treasure in heaven? Now, it's not like we physically ship our goods over there. It doesn't mean physical stuff. It's not like cloud based storage either. The treasure is ultimately a restored relationship with God and a whole renewed earth to inherit as the children of God. So, our responsibility is to live like children of God which means we inherit all this.

Now, back here on earth, that will likely take self-sacrifice. We might turn down a high paying job to serve God in a ministry he is calling us to. We might be called to a high paying job and led by God to give generously and freely to others. We make a million other decisions which may never lead to a material reward here on earth, but we know God will bless us for eternity. In fact, God is always good and will always take care of us as we trust him, now and forever.

But what do we do with our treasure on earth (if we have any)? We certainly don't want to sit on it like Smaug from the Hobbit, guarding it and refusing to ever use it. We also don't want to spend it all on a wild lifestyle like the prodigal son.

The Bible also doesn't give us a clear list of things to spend money on either. However, at the end, this passage gives us a guiding principle that helps us develop wisdom as we think about money:

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

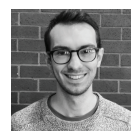
You'll spend your money on what you love. Is all your money spent on you? If so, then you probably love you. Our spending habits tell us what our hearts love.

How is God asking you to use your money and how can you bless others with it? Either way, don't be like me and store up earthly treasures like a passport behind a toilet, where it's never going to do any good for anyone and loses its value. I only got home in the end based on the embassy's generosity as they supplied me with a new one.



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