

"Send your grain across the seas, and in time you will get a reward. Divide your merchandize amo seven ventures, maybe wight, since you do not know what disasters may accor on the earth". Ecc 11:1,

"TAKE SHARES IN Several ventures" Moffet

Diversification of holdings by an individual or <sup>a Company</sup> is frequently advised and commeded. I don't know how long this has been good advice in the business world . . except to say that there is record of it having been written some 200 years before Christ,. The author of Ecclesiates was a sage Jewish schola who used the pen name "The Preacher". His main philosophy is akin to that of Omar Khayam, and bea some similarity to Friedrich Nietzsche. Life, he said, is an eternal cycle in which progress is impossible. As for human existence, it is a battle against boredidm. The more you get, the less you a satisfied.

While there is much sub-christian thought in t book of Ecclesites, I am grateful for the editoris board of devout men who allowed this mood to be re flected in our Bible. Toward the end of his brie book the author gives some practical advice concea ing business \_Don't putall your egge in one basket Divide your mechandize among severn ventures, ma, be eight. since you do not know what disasters may

occur on the earth. ,

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In one of his well known parables Jesus commends the person who invested his original capital wisely. He pictures the owner and provider of the money as indignant because one of his employers played it safe and buried one talent to keep it secure.

Today marks the beginning of our church's financial emphasis in the interest of next year's ministries. And even tho I like to think that a recurring theme in our worship relates to total stewardship, this is the one time I have the obligation, and the opportunity, to speak about the stewardship of money as it relates to faith and practice. This morning I want to share with you some tips on the stock market. They probably will prove disappointing to you if you came hoping against hope that the preacher might have some clairvoant insight as to the future of stocks and bonds. My tips are actually on another kind of stock market - the stock market of our human situation. Nevertheless they should interest every thoughtful person. Because I think these tips are derived from the OWNER of the entire enterprise.

If you believe that we are here to invest what we have of ability, time, money, love for the sake of enduring satisfactions, you will want to take share



in several ventures. If you believe that Jesus (3) knew the true values of life you will take seriously what he said concerning long term investment:

Don't pile up treasures on earth, where moth and rust can spoil them and thieves break in and steal. But keep your treasures in heaven where there is neither moth nor rust to spoil it and nobody can break in and steal it. For wherever you treasure is you can be certain that your heart will be there too".

James Moffat translates Ecclesiastes advise as "Take shares in several ventures".

What ventures? ?

1. Invest in an old church dedicated to the continuous renewal of human beings through the proclamation of the gospel and its application.

To this church and church school come individual and families who find here resources of courage and faith to shape their lives and to help God's Spirit to shape the larger life of His children. When I picture to myself the effect of the worship, the witness, the creative fellowship, the learning experience, the practical service which finds initiative and stimulation and direction here I recall a story of Robert Louis Stevenson's boyhood. One night at dusk, he stood with his nose pressed against the windowpane, watching with fascination as the old fashioned lamp-lighter ~~went~~ went from light to light in the street.

"Look, Look", the boy cried, "Look, there's a man out there punching holes in the darkness" (9)

This is what you can do thru the church, the church striving to pass on the light and truth of Christ. When you help to make it possible to reach out to otherz with the message of Christ's love; when you help to let people know of the new beginning possible in Christ; when you help to provide the way of means of deepening someone comprehension of the meaning of the Christian life; when you help to provide the financial support for the United Methodist church hospitals, colleges, missions both in America and around the world - when you do all that - you are <sup>//</sup> "puching holes in the darkness" In due time, if we each faithful punch what holes we can there will be enogh light for a new day.

Take shares in an old church dedicated to the renewal of human life.

2. And take your share in this venture . . . The Christian education of children, youth, and adults. This is a venture that is enormously important and satisfying. And most of us would acknowledge its importance. And yet we might wonder . . . what when we consider the difficulty in recruiting leaders. We might wonder, too, when we realize that if our

financial stewardship was what it should be that we could place the kind of personnel we need to do the kind of competent training and leadership that could make a venture like this be the liveliest and most exciting of our church's ministry.

Before we know it the children in our church school are going to be the executives, the teachers, the engineers, the scientists. What we do with them now is of great import.

Several years ago, you<sup>5</sup> invested many dollars in an educational unit. I now call upon you to provide your church with the money and with the human resources that can enable your church to fill the rooms with excited children seeking, with parents, and with adults . . . not only on Sunday for an hour . . . but in creative experiences of Christian learning at other times as well.

Takes shares in several ventures

That is exactly what you do when you commit yourself to support the budget for next year. It really means that you will have a part in insuring the survival of yourself and your loved ones in a more Christian world. There is always the world to win. Always there are those opposed to Christ, A pervasive secularism, the enemies of love and joy. But we are



church people because we know something that God wants everybody to know: That God loves us, that in Christ he understands us; and that in Christ we are saved from the worst to the best

You are a missionary, a missionary is a person with a mission. And you can learn to be an effective missionary. You probably won't offer yourself for overseas service, nor for national service, not even for service in Iowa . . . but you can give. Your money is you . . . it is not just paper and ~~money~~ <sup>metals</sup>, but it is your energy and talent in portable form. Send it out into the world and literally becomes a doctor healing, a teacher teaching, a child eating, a life made new.

How many shares are you going to take? You'll have to decide -- you and your partner, God. It's as easy as ABC . . . always budget carefully. . . Not always budget cautiously. Carefully . . . that means with care for what matters most. If faith and God do not matter that much to you, take seriously the word of Jesus "where you put your money, your heart will follow". Some find that the scriptural rule of a tithe stands the test of experience. In some cases to insist on a tithe would be unchristian.

Give proportionately. . . and regularly.

<sup>2</sup>  
No one can tell you or will tell you what you should give . . . how large your shares should be. 7

However a few suggestions might be in line.

Do you smoke? These ventures which we've been talking about deserve at least as much as you spend on tobacco. Do you drink? These ventures deserve at least as much as you spend on alcoholic beverages. How much commercial entertainment do you buy? These ventures deserve at least as much as you spend on buying entertainment. How much does your income tax say you contributed to the church? These ventures deserve at least that much.

Well before you decide I want you to take very seriously our Lord's counsel. "Where you treasure is there will be your heart also". You're not really take fired up about God, ~~I/cx/y~~ you can't get too excited about the church? Well try giving God your money. . and according to Jesus your heart will follow.