

Driven By Eternity
Matthew 6:19-21

Australian Arthur Stace was born into a life of hopelessness at the turn of the century. His life was filled with petty crime and alcoholism between the First World War and the Great Depression. All this changed when he met Jesus on August 6, 1930, and soon afterward heard his pastor cry, "I wish I could shout eternity through all the streets of Sydney!" He felt driven to make this cry a reality. For the next 40 years, Arthur would rise early each morning, pray for an hour, and leave his home between 5:00 and 5:30 a.m. to go wherever he felt God lead him. For hours he would write one word, "eternity", approximately every hundred feet on the sidewalks of Sydney. For more than twenty years his work was a mystery. People wondered, who was writing this single word that caused countless thousands to pause and ponder its meaning, both immediate and long-range. This mystery man captured the impact and portion of this single word's power. It wasn't until 1956 that the puzzle was solved.

Two years after Arthur's death in 1967, Sydney poet Douglas Stewart immortalized him as the graffiti preacher with a one-word sermon that touched a nation. Arthur's message was engraved for generations by architect Ridley Smith, who put it in copperplate in Sydney Square. It was later viewed by over four billion souls worldwide as they watched the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Olympics on television, and again when it was emblazoned in fireworks on the Sydney Harbor Bridge on the eve of the new millennium.

Eternity arrests the attention of all mankind. No race, tribe, or gender can resist its draw. We were created with eternity in our hearts and sense the immanent unknown extension of our existence. Therefore, it's wise to delve deeper into what our Creator says concerning eternity. After all, His Word states, "*From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do.*" Isaiah 43:13

Making your life count not only today but throughout eternity. The Bible is clear about how to do this. If we are to be motivated by the eternal. Are we driven by eternity? The word driven means "to propel." It also means to "guide, control, or direct." Another definition is "to supply the motive force to." What is guiding and motivating our lives on this earth? Is it the eternal or is it the temporal? Is it based on divine wisdom? Or are we comparing ourselves with others?

"He has put eternity in their hearts." Ecclesiastes 3:11

It's so easy to get caught up in the stresses of our day-to-day and miss living for what matters most. It is critical for us to have a mindset focused on eternity. To build an eternal legacy and advance God's kingdom. To make the most of our most precious resource—our time on earth—so they can have the greatest impact for eternity. Our decisions today will reverberate beyond our final breath. You can't afford to miss this. We must always be motivated by the eternal.

The day will come when each of us will stand before God. The question is, will we be ready? The sobering fact is that when we stand before our Creator, it is too late for a do-over. We will all one day stand before the Judge of the universe, Jesus Christ. If we've made our lives count through godly wisdom, we will be rewarded eternally.

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you."
1Peter 1:24–25

"...I am He Who searches minds (the thoughts, feelings, and purposes) and the [inmost] hearts, and I will give to each of you [the reward for what you have done] as your work deserves." Revelation 2:23 AMP

When my life is reviewed, it will be clear if I lived more for my comfort, security, possessions, and reputation than for His glory. It will be clear if I have lived for my purpose or His purpose.

Everyone has a divine calling on their life. Each of us is an important part of the master plan of God's house. You won't be judged according to what you did, but rather according to what you were called to do!

“But I reckon my own life to be worth nothing to me; I only want to complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do.” Acts 20:24

Most believers want to know that what they are doing is what matters to God, that they are doing what God wants. For many, knowing and doing His will is enough, in the hopeful expectation that one day we will hear “Well done, good and faithful servant,” but Jesus also spoke explicitly about rewards, that He will reward believers for what they do. The thought that some may get less or more rewards than others or that our works are somehow linked to eternity can make us uncomfortable. What Jesus taught and promised was not salvation by works, but rewards for what a believer does after giving their life to Him.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

Our beliefs determine where we'll spend eternity. Our behavior determines how we'll spend eternity.

What Did Jesus Say That God Rewards?

1. We Must Lay Up Our Treasure.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

It is a command, not an option, for us to lay up treasure.

Shortly we will face our king. He has always loved us and has yearned for the day when you will be united with Him. Though we've never seen Him, He has seen us. He has seen our heart and discerned our fruit. He knows our heart, our motives, our thoughts, and our feelings as well as our works. Nothing has been hidden. His judgment is just. No one will be slighted or misrepresented.

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Hebrews 11:6

What are “treasures in heaven?”

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:23-24

“Because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.” Ephesians 6:8

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5:10

When we do what God rewards, we are actually following Christ's example.

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours. Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we [do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness] that cannot wither. Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary. But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it.” 1 Corinthians 9:24–27

“I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim).” Another version says it like this: “So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step” 1 Corinthians 9:26

2. We Must Lay Up Our Treasure For Ourselves.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

No one can do it for us. We must lay up treasures for ourselves.

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.’” Matthew 16:24-27

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” Matthew 24:45-47

“Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.” Mark 9:41

“Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.” Luke 6:22-23

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” Matthew 19:29

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:18-19

3. We Must Lay Up Our Treasure For Ourselves In Heaven – Not On Earth.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21

“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.” Matthew 16:27

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.” Luke 6:23

“And you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Luke 14:14

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.” Revelation 22:12

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” Luke 6:35

“And you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Luke 14:14

“Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’” Matthew 19:21

“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:8

Jesus is the perfect “rewarder” because He knows justice from a heavenly perspective, and He knows what it is like to live as a human.

Three useful tests for our service:

- Relationship – who I do it for

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

- Motive – why I do it

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” Matthew 6:1

- Love – how I do it

“If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:3

Are you laying up treasures in heaven?

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done.” Revelation 20:11-15

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant...” Matthew 25:21

There is a story of an elementary teacher. Her name was Mrs. Thompson. And as she stood in front of her 5th-grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. But that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy, and that he constantly needed a bath. And Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's, and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers. At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until the end. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise. Teddy's first-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners...he is a joy to be around." His second-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well-liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness, and life at home must be a struggle." His third-grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken." Teddy's fourth-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class." By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's present which was clumsily wrapped in heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my mom used to." After the children left, she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets." A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had in his whole life. Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer -- the letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, M.D. The story doesn't end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he'd met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the place at the wedding that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. And she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together. They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference." Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you.

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done." Revelation 22:12