

# OPEN HEAVEN

Part 10 • September 1, 2024 • Pastor Jason Smotherman

## **ACTS 2:44-45**

*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

A recent proverb of heaven made me laugh. The fact that there's a highway to hell and only a stairway to heaven says a lot about anticipated traffic numbers.

Heaven has a different economy than earth.

On earth the economy is based upon a consumer mentality. Its Mine.

**God's economy is based upon stewardship and generosity. Its His.**

Ours may be the first generation in civilized times that has not raised its young on proverbs. From the beginnings of recorded history in Egypt and Sumeria, concise sayings which describe the benefit of good conduct or the harm of bad have been used to teach children how to behave.

From the islands of the seas, to China, from the Bedouin of the Arabian peninsula to the Eskimos of Alaska, proverbs have been a standard way of summarizing life's experiences. In our own country both the biblical proverbs of Solomon and the Anglo-Saxon wisdom collected in Poor Richard's Almanac by Benjamin Franklin have helped generations of parents coach their offspring in the art of successful living.

Because proverbs are based on experience, they work best in situations where change is nonexistent or gradual. Our Culture used to change in years, now it changes in days. Settled, rural societies where the pattern of life has remained much the same for centuries find proverbs a congenial way to package and pass on their wisdom. Tribal life, with its uniformly accepted values and its stable social relationships, usually employs a rich stock of proverbs.

Our generation—for the most part—has abandoned the use of proverbs, although one still finds them on locker room walls. There loud signs exhort athletes to do their best with slogans like "When the going gets tough, the tough get going," or "What matters is not the win nor loss but how you play the game."

Proverbs have seemed too preachy for many of our young people. They have sought to discover their own values rather than to conserve the values of the past. Change has been such a constant companion in their lives that they have discarded yesterday's wisdom in a frantic effort to cope with a future that seems so different from the past. But perhaps the old saying is proving true, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Some funny Proverbs.....

*When you are dead, you don't know that you are dead. All of the pain is felt by others. The same thing happens when you are stupid.*

*Oscar Wilde - The husband who thinks his wife can't take a joke, should remember that she took him.*

*Steve Martin - A day without sunshine is like, you know, night.*

Proverbs seem to be coming back into vogue. From bumper stickers to wall posters, from embroidered hangings to desk mottoes, we see wisdom placarding its advice.

Once again we may begin to raise our youngsters with warnings to caution like, "Look before you leap," or to decisiveness like, "She who hesitates is lost."

What about this proverb:

*Poverty and disgrace will come to him who disdains correction, But he who regards a rebuke will be honored.*

Stephen's Church understood the timeless value of generosity.

When you give, it will return.

An open hand not only gives freely but receives freely.

Check out this proverb out of Ecclesiastes.

### **ECCLESIASTES 11: 1-8**

*<sup>1</sup> Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days. <sup>2</sup> Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, For you do not know what evil will be on the earth. <sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth; And if a tree falls to the south or the north, In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie. <sup>4</sup> He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap. <sup>5</sup> As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything. <sup>6</sup> In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good. <sup>7</sup> Truly the light is sweet, And it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun; <sup>8</sup> But if a man lives many years And rejoices in them all, Yet let him remember the days of darkness, For they will be many. All that is coming is vanity.*

Four things this particular proverb teaches about Heaven. Heavens economy is built upon generosity, not stinginess.

## **TAKE THE RISK**

In both generosity and in investment.

**In generosity:** Cast your bread upon the waters. Release your substance upon the waters of life and you will find it after many days.

**In Investment:** Cast your bread upon the waters. Don't devour all you have today, release God's blessing for your tomorrows.

## **EXPECT THE RETURN**

Give a serving to seven and also eight.

**In generosity:** Understand the different kinds of generosity. Tithing to the church. Offerings to the church. Giving to those around you. Giving to those who are strangers. Using your time, talent, and resources to bless not only consume.

**In investment:** Diversify. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Mutual funds are your friends. Its what the parable of the talents teach us. Faithfulness is multiplication.

## **DIVIDE THE RISK**

### **ECCLESIASTES 11: 3-4**

*<sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth; And if a tree falls to the south or the north, In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie. <sup>4</sup> He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap. <sup>5</sup> As you do not know what is the way of the wind...*

Some commentaries say these are some dark humor proverbs. Mocking those who say that they can't engage the economy of heaven. Excuses will always abound that will make you broke, but so will the timeless proven foundation of the word of God.

### **PROVERBS 3:9-10**

*Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

### **LUKE 6:30**

*Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.*

### **MALACHI 3:10**

*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need*

The best day to start is today.

In the face of the unknown, cast your bread upon the waters. Start today. Following the giving instructions in scripture and watch God bless you.

## **HEDGE AGAINST DISASTER**

### **ECCLESIASTES 11:7-8**

*<sup>7</sup> Truly the light is sweet, And it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun; <sup>8</sup> But if a man lives many years And rejoices in them all, Yet let him remember the days of darkness,*

The tension between knowing that your days are finite and so is your youth is a lesson we all learn to late in life. We often learn after the kids are out of the house. We say will run a marathon until we learn that our hip hurts getting out the bed. Many dreams have never come to fruition because we don't understand the principle of this proverb.

Today is a good day for an adventure and an investment.