

Before the Bell

Morning Market Brief

March 15, 2019

FOR IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES, PLEASE SEE THE DISCLOSURE PAGES AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT

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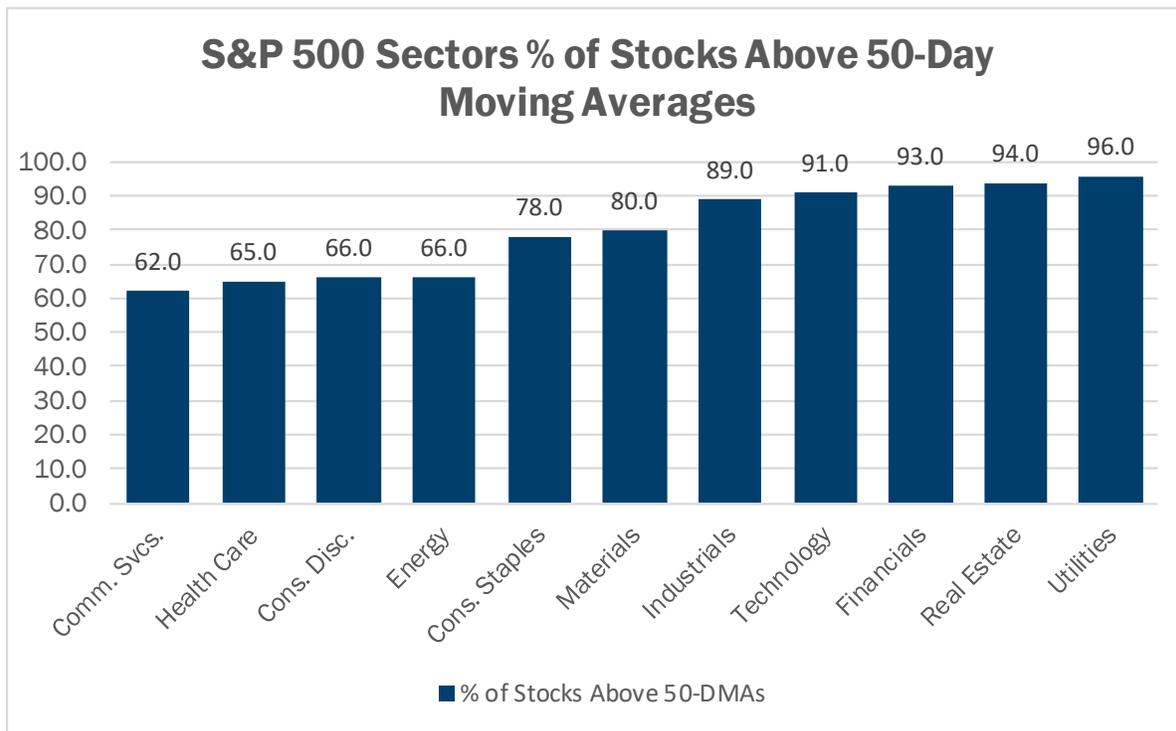
- **Quick Take:** U.S. futures are pointing to a higher open; Europe is trading in the green; Asia ended mostly higher overnight; West Texas Intermediate (WTI) oil trading at \$58.27; 10-year U.S. Treasury yield at 2.61%.
- **The S&P 500 Is Back Above 2800, Again:** U.S. equities finished flat yesterday, and the S&P 500 Index closed above the 2800 level for the second straight day. However, Thursday's session provided a bit of a breather for investors, as major stock averages rested following a three-day rally. Coming into trading today, the S&P 500 is on pace for another weekly gain and has only finished lower on a weekly basis twice this year.
- As we highlighted on Thursday, the broad-based U.S. stock barometer closed just beneath its March 4th high of 2816 on Wednesday, which it has touched no fewer than five times since hitting its all-time high in early October. This very specific trading level has proven tough for the Index to surpass.
- According to *FactSet*, a healthy pace of corporate buybacks and 'quadruple witching' today could have fueled some of this week's gains. The S&P 500 is up +2.4% thus far for the week on a total return basis.
- Since several option types all expire today, traders and short-term investors may have bought more stocks this week as they wait for option volatility to decline. As option expiration passes and a looming buyback blackout period begins before Q1'19 earnings season, stock prices could see less of a tailwind from both short-term and corporate buying activity. Looking out, the S&P 500 has moved in a roughly 75-point band this month, which in our view, is rather wide. Next week's FOMC meeting and a potentially pending resolution to trade frictions between the U.S. and China are likely the macro drivers to watch going forward. Below are a few additional points to consider as we all head into the weekend.
 - **The S&P 500 Index has held 2800 or better for two straight days and pushed above the technical threshold for the fifth time since October (please see the first *embedded FactSet chart* on page 2). We believe the Index will need to hold 2816 or better to make a more meaningful push higher from here.**
 - **U.S. stocks have recovered all of their December losses and are back to early October levels. Investors should make sure they are comfortable with what they own, as they have had adequate time to adjust without the penalties of December lows.**
 - **Flatter trading as of late has reduced overbought conditions across the S&P 500, but the number of stocks/sectors trading above their 50-day moving average remains elevated. Please see the second chart on page 2, sourced from *Bespoke Investment Group* data, for more detail.**
 - **Domestically, stock gains this year are strongest across the Russell 2000 Index, NASDAQ, Industrials, and Energy. However, small-cap stocks and Energy remain in a correction (i.e., down 10% or more from their 52-week highs).**
 - **Internationally, mainland equities in China are driving strength in Asia and emerging markets. The Shanghai Composite A-Share Index is up nearly +13.0% over the last four weeks and higher by +21.0%**

Notations:

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year-to-date on a price alone basis. Stimulus efforts from Beijing officials, as well as hopes that a trade deal is on the horizon, are lifting sentiment in the Asia-Pacific region.

- Despite the Brexit drama this week, European equities are higher by +2.1% this month and performing in line with the U.S. this year.
- Following such a strong start this year, equity prices ‘historically’ finish the year with strong gains. If macro conditions unfold favorably, we believe history may be a reasonable assumption for this year.



- **Asia-Pacific:** Asian equities finished higher on Friday. Per *The South China Morning Post* (which is a state-driven media outlet for China), the U.S. and Beijing have made “concrete progress” on the text of their trade agreement. Chinese Vice Premier Liu and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer held a telephone conversation that is reported to have made some progress on this front. However, little new information was provided in the report, and President Trump indicated yesterday it could take up to three or four more weeks to know where a deal stands, according to *Reuters*.
- China’s Premier Li Keqiang reaffirmed policy support in China which could include further cuts to the reserve requirement ratio (RRR) as well as other changes to interest rate policies that are supportive for growth. Importantly, Li said China’s economy is facing additional downward pressures, but Beijing will not let growth slip below a reasonable range. According to *FactSet*, cuts in the VAT tax for manufacturers and other industries go in effect on April 1st while social security fees will be reduced on May 1st. Both measures could boost corporate profitability.
- The Bank of Japan (BOJ) left interest rate policy unchanged, as expected. The BOJ reiterated it would leave policy rates at extremely low levels for an extended time. Along with the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank, the BOJ is communicating to markets tightening policy is off the table for now.
- **Europe:** Markets across the region are trading in the green at midday. In this week’s trilogy of Brexit votes, members of parliament (MPs) on Thursday backed a Brexit delay until at least June 30th, provided UK Prime Minister Theresa May’s withdrawal plan can pass a vote on its third and final attempt. Attention will now turn back to Mrs. May’s withdrawal plan, which the House of Commons will need to vote on before the March 21st European Union (EU) Summit. If the prime minister’s plan fails to get enough support from MPs on a third attempt, Mrs. May could be forced to ask the EU for a longer extension. As we highlighted yesterday, the EU does not want to grant a Brexit extension to Britain only to rehash what’s already been provided in the existing exit treaty.
- Nevertheless, over recent days, EU members appear more amenable to allowing the UK further time to work through its Brexit mess. Importantly, Mrs. May has been told by senior EU officials that conditions for a long delay are either a second referendum or softer Brexit, according to *The London Times*. **At this point, the Brexit situation remains very fluid and uncertain, with a no-deal option still not entirely off the table, despite MPs voting to remove the option under any circumstance in Wednesday’s nonbinding vote. Interestingly, despite all the Brexit drama, European equities are performing well this week, and the British pound is slightly higher versus the U.S. dollar.**
- **Our take: Investors believe a no-deal Brexit is less likely at this point and the most probable path forward is for a long Brexit delay – which means status quo inclusion of the UK in the European Union continues. Importantly, economic and market disruptions would be minimal under this scenario, which we believe would be a plus for investors.**
- **U.S.:** Equity futures are pointing to a positive open this morning. According to the latest *Wall Street Journal* survey of economists, Q1 GDP could grow by just +1.3% q/q annualized, which is down from the +2.0% level the average economist forecast in February. Based on the Atlanta Fed’s GDPNOW model, Q1 growth in the U.S. could come in as anemic as +0.4% If such GDP levels materialize for Q1, it will mark the slowest pace of growth since Q4’15. Importantly, just over 84% of economists surveyed in *The WSJ* poll now believe the economy is at risk of growing more slowly than expected compared to growing more quickly. Just under half think the next recession will begin in 2020, which was little changed from the last survey.
- As highlighted in *Bloomberg* recently, the largest tailwind to the market over recent months has come from a Federal Reserve now on the sidelines. Falling expectations for economic growth, a deceleration in earnings growth this year, and trade war headlines – the market has soundly said: Who cares? With global central banks now more dovish, and principally the Fed hitting the breaks, risk assets are in the midst of a V-shaped recovery from their December lows. In our view, the Fed pivot has been one of the most significant reasons why stocks have performed so well in 2019.
- Better performance in stocks appears to be finally attracting more investor dollars. According to *EPFR Global*, U.S. equity funds took in \$25.4 billion in the week ending March 13th, its largest weekly haul of the year.

WORLD CAPITAL MARKETS (all data as of approximately 8:00 AM ET)

| Americas | % chg. | % YTD | Value | Europe (Intra-day) | % chg. | %YTD | Value | Asia/Pacific (Last Night) | % chg. | %YTD |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|----------------------------|--------|--------|----------|------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| S&P 500 | -0.09% | 12.55% | 2,808.5 | DJSTOXX 50 (Europe) | 1.25% | 13.15% | 3,383.8 | Nikkei 225 (Japan) | 0.77% | 7.26% |
| Dow Jones | 0.03% | 10.87% | 25,709.9 | FTSE 100 (U.K.) | 0.62% | 8.61% | 7,230.1 | HK Hang Seng (H. Kong) | 0.56% | 12.66% |
| NASDAQ | -0.16% | 15.29% | 7,630.9 | DAX Index (Germany) | 0.99% | 10.83% | 11,702.1 | Korea Kospi 100 | 0.95% | 6.62% |
| Russell 2000 | -0.40% | 15.20% | 1,549.6 | CAC 40 (France) | 0.96% | 14.23% | 5,401.2 | Singapore STI | 0.07% | 4.69% |
| Brazil Bovespa | -0.30% | 12.19% | 98,604.7 | FTSE MIB (Italy) | 0.88% | 14.93% | 21,060.2 | Shanghai Comp. (China) | 1.04% | 21.17% |
| S&P/TSX Comp. (Canada) | -0.39% | 12.97% | 16,087.6 | IBEX 35 (Spain) | 1.11% | 9.65% | 9,312.2 | Bombay Sensex (India) | 0.71% | 5.60% |
| Mexico IPC | -0.37% | 0.57% | 41,777.8 | Russia TI | 0.08% | 5.15% | 4,402.5 | S&P/ASX 200 (Australia) | -0.07% | 11.20% |

| Global | % chg. | % YTD | Value | Developed International | % chg. | %YTD | Value | Emerging International | % chg. | %YTD |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------------------------|--------|-------|---------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| MSCI All-Country World Idx | 0.00% | 11.49% | 505.6 | MSCI EAFE | 0.29% | 9.68% | 1,874.7 | MSCI Emerging Mkts | -0.22% | 8.79% |

Note: International market returns shown on a local currency basis. **Equity Index data is total return, inclusive of dividends.**

| S&P 500 Sectors | % chg. | % YTD | Value | Equity Income Indices | % chg. | % YTD | Value | Commodities | % chg. | % YTD |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|----------------------------------|--------|--------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Consumer Discretionary | -0.31% | 11.51% | 868.5 | JPM Alerian MLP Index | 0.00% | 12.67% | 25.1 | Futures & Spot (Intra-day) | % chg. | % YTD |
| Consumer Staples | -0.28% | 8.73% | 564.3 | FTSE NAREIT Comp. | 0.24% | 15.11% | 19,103.5 | CRB Raw Industrials | -0.27% | 2.05% |
| Energy | 0.06% | 15.41% | 485.2 | DJ US Select Dividend | -0.24% | 10.73% | 2,060.0 | NYMEX WTI Crude (p/bbl.) | -0.58% | 28.32% |
| Financials | -0.41% | 11.69% | 439.7 | DJ Global Select Dividend | 0.42% | 8.72% | 224.8 | ICE Brent Crude (p/bbl.) | -0.74% | 24.03% |
| Real Estate | 0.04% | 15.54% | 221.0 | S&P Div. Aristocrats | -0.16% | 10.33% | 2,644.7 | NYMEX Nat Gas (mmBtu) | -1.09% | -3.95% |
| Health Care | -0.25% | 6.33% | 1,060.2 | | | | Spot Gold (troy oz.) | 0.51% | 1.59% | |
| Industrials | -0.35% | 15.95% | 625.9 | Bond Indices | % chg. | % YTD | Value | Spot Silver (troy oz.) | 1.11% | -0.88% |
| Materials | -0.79% | 9.99% | 346.6 | Barclays US Agg. Bond | -0.12% | 1.54% | 2,078.1 | LME Copper (per ton) | -1.32% | 7.85% |
| Technology | 0.20% | 16.78% | 1,266.2 | Barclays HY Bond | 0.08% | 6.52% | 2,033.8 | LME Aluminum (per ton) | -0.20% | 0.78% |
| Communication Services | -0.39% | 14.59% | 158.5 | | | | CBOT Corn (cents p/bushel) | 0.00% | -3.33% | |
| Utilities | -0.13% | 10.33% | 294.0 | | | | CBOT Wheat (cents p/bushel) | -0.33% | -11.61% | |

| Foreign Exchange (Intra-day) | % chg. | % YTD | Value | | % chg. | % YTD | Value | | % chg. | % YTD |
|------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Euro (€/\$) | 0.1% | -1.3% | 1.13 | Japanese Yen (\$/¥) | 0.04% | -1.76% | 111.66 | Canadian Dollar (\$/C\$) | 0.0% | 2.3% |
| British Pound (£/\$) | 0.0% | 3.8% | 1.32 | Australian Dollar (A\$/S) | 0.18% | 0.40% | 0.71 | Swiss Franc (\$/CHF) | -0.1% | -2.2% |

Data/Price Source: Bloomberg; Equity Index data is total return, inclusive of dividends where applicable.

Ameriprise Global Asset Allocation Committee

Global Equity Region - Tactical View

| Region | MSCI All-Country | | GAAC Tactical Overlay | GAAC Recommended Weight | Region | MSCI All-Country | | GAAC Tactical Overlay | GAAC Recommended Weight |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| | World Index Weight | GAAC Tactical View | | | | World Index Weight | GAAC Tactical View | | |
| 1) United States | 54.1% | Overweight | +3.1% | 57.2% | 5) Latin America | 1.4% | Equalweight | - | 1.4% |
| 2) Canada | 3.0% | Equalweight | - | 3.0% | 6) Asia-Pacific ex Japan | 12.5% | Equalweight | - | 12.5% |
| 3) United Kingdom | 5.4% | Underweight | -1.0% | 4.4% | 7) Japan | 7.6% | Equalweight | - | 7.6% |
| 4) Europe ex U.K. | 14.9% | Underweight | -1.0% | 13.9% | 8) Middle East / Africa | 1.1% | Underweight | -1.1% | - |

Index weighting represents relative weightings based on the regional market capitalization balance of the MSCI All-Country World Index; may not add due to rounding. The GAAC Tactical Overlay, as well as Recommended Tactical Weights, is derived from the Ameriprise Global Asset Allocation Committee (GAAC). Views are expressed relative to the Index and are provided to represent investment conviction in each region. Tactical Allocations are designed to augment Index returns over a 6-12 month time horizon. Index weights as of 12/20/18. Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Ameriprise Global Asset Allocation Committee

U.S. Equity Sector - Tactical View

| Sector | S&P 500 | | GAAC Tactical Overlay | GAAC Recommended Weight | Sector | S&P 500 | | GAAC Tactical Overlay | GAAC Recommended Weight |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| | Index Weight | GAAC Tactical View | | | | Index Weight | GAAC Tactical View | | |
| 1) Communication Services | 10.2% | Underweight | -2.0% | 8.2% | 6) Health Care | 15.5% | Overweight | +2.0% | 17.5% |
| 2) Consumer Discretionary | 9.8% | Equalweight | - | 9.8% | 7) Industrials | 9.2% | Equalweight | - | 9.2% |
| 3) Consumer Staples | 7.5% | Underweight | -2.0% | 5.5% | 8) Information Technology | 20.2% | Equalweight | - | 20.2% |
| 4) Energy | 5.3% | Overweight | +2.0% | 7.3% | 9) Materials | 2.6% | Equalweight | - | 2.6% |
| 5) Financials | 13.3% | Equalweight | - | 13.3% | 10) Real Estate | 3.0% | Overweight | +1.0% | 4.0% |
| | | | | | 11) Utilities | 3.4% | Underweight | -1.0% | 2.4% |

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ECONOMIC NEWS OUT TODAY:

Economic Releases for Friday, March 15, 2019. All times Eastern. Consensus estimates via Bloomberg.

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Period</u> | <u>Release</u> | <u>Consensus Est.</u> | Actual | <u>Prior</u> | <u>Revised to</u> |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 8:30 AM | MAR | Empire Manufacturing Index | 10.0 | +3.7 | +8.8 | |
| 9:15 AM | FEB | Industrial Production (MoM) | +0.4% | | -0.6% | |
| 9:15 AM | FEB | Capacity Utilization | 78.5% | | 78.2% | |
| 9:15 AM | FEB | Manufacturing Output (MoM) | +0.1% | | -0.9% | |
| 10:00 AM | Mar P | U. of M. Consumer Sentiment | 95.6 | | 93.8 | |

FIXED INCOME NEWS & VIEWS: *Brian M. Erickson, CFA, Fixed Income Research & Strategy*

Fixed Income News & Views will return on Monday. For fixed income commentary, please see today's *Morning Research Notes*.

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Market Risk: Equity markets in general could sustain significant volatility due to several factors. As we have seen recently, both economic and geopolitical issues could have a material impact on this model portfolio and the equity market as a whole.

Quantitative Strategy Risk: Stock selection and portfolio maintenance strategies based on quantitative analytics carry a unique set of risks. Quantitative strategies rely on comprehensive, accurate and thorough historical data. The Ameriprise Investment Research Group utilizes current and historical data provided by third-party data vendors. Material errors in database construction and maintenance could have an adverse effect on quantitative research and the resulting stock selection strategies.

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Ratings are provided by Moody's Investors Services and Standard & Poor's.

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DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Agency - Agency bonds are issued by Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSE), but are NOT direct obligations of the U.S. government. Common GSE's are the Federal Home Loan

Mortgage Corp. (Freddie Mac) Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB).

Beta: A measure of the risk arising from exposure to general market movements as opposed to company-specific factors. Betas in this report, unless otherwise noted, use the S&P 500 as the market benchmark and result from calculations over historic periods. A beta below 1.0, for example, can suggest the equity has tended to move with lower volatility than the broader market or, due to company-specific factors, has had higher volatility but generally low correlations with the overall market.

Corporate Bonds - Are debt instruments issued by a private corporation. Non-Investment grade securities, commonly known as "high-yield" or "junk" bonds, are historically subject to greater risk of default, including the loss of principal and interest, than higher-rated bonds, which may result in greater price volatility than experienced with a higher-rated issue.

Mortgage Backed Securities - Bonds are subject to prepayment risk. Yield and average lives shown consider prepayment assumptions that may not be met. Changes in payments may significantly affect yield and average life. Please contact your financial advisor for information on CMOs and how they react to different market conditions.

Municipal Bonds - Interest income may be subject to state and/or local income taxes and/or the alternative minimum tax (AMT). Municipal securities subject to AMT assume a "nontaxable" status for yield calculations. Certain municipal bond income may be subject to federal income tax and are identified as "taxable". Gains on sales/redemptions of municipal bonds may be taxed as capital gains. If the bonds are insured, the insurance pertains to the timely payment of principal (at maturity) and interest by the insurer of the underlying securities and not to the price of the bond, which will fluctuate prior to maturity. The guarantees are backed by the claims-paying ability of the listed insurance company.

Treasury Securities - There is no guarantee as to the market value of these securities if they are sold prior to maturity or redemption.

Price/Book: A financial ratio used to compare a company's market share price, as of a certain date, to its book value per share. Book value relates to the accounting value of assets and liabilities in a company's balance sheet. It is generally not a direct reflection of future earnings prospects or hard to value intangibles, such as brand, that could help generate those earnings.

Price/Earnings: An equity valuation multiple calculated by dividing the market share price, as of a certain date, by earnings per share. Trailing P/E uses the share price divided by the past four-quarters' earnings per share. Forward P/E uses the share price as of a certain date divided by the consensus estimate of the future four-quarters' EPS.

Price/Sales: An equity valuation multiple calculated by dividing the market share price, as of a certain date, by the company's sales per share over the most recent year.

INDEX DEFINITIONS

An index is a statistical composite that is not managed. It is not possible to invest directly in an index.

Definitions of individual indices mentioned in this report are available on our website at ameriprise.com/legal/disclosures in the **Additional Ameriprise research disclosures** section, or through your Ameriprise financial advisor.

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