Leaving a Godly Legacy – Part One

Joke: Two old friends bumped into one another on the street one day. One of them looked forlorn, almost on the verge of tears. His friend asked him, "What has the world done to you, my old friend?" The sad fellow said, "Let me tell you. Three weeks ago, my uncle died and left me forty thousand dollars." "That's a lot of money." "And, two weeks ago, a cousin I never even knew died, and left me eighty-five thousand dollars." "Sounds like you’ve been blessed...." "You don’t understand!" he interrupted. "Last week my great-aunt passed away. I inherited almost a quarter of a million." Now the friend was really confused. "Then, why do you look so sad?" "This week... nothing!"

1. Introduction
   a. This month I am preaching on the power of a legacy.
   b. A legacy is something you leave behind for someone else, like an inheritance. The character in the joke I just told was getting used to receiving them on a weekly basis.
   c. The difficult truth is that we are fortunate to receive a legacy once or twice in a lifetime.
   d. Why this subject?
      i. It all started with our trip to Houston last week. My father-in-law is getting up there in years and his health is uncertain. The whole family was together for the first time in 3 years. It was quite a scene.
      ii. My father in law spent some time talking alone with me, telling me what he thought of me (it was good stuff), and I realized that in a very real way, he was giving me a blessing. He was passing a piece of his legacy on to me. I treasured our conversation.
      iii. It made me think, what am I passing on to others? What influence will I have had when my life is through? Will I have made a difference?
      iv. These are hard questions that we all need to ask ourselves from time to time.

2. So what is a legacy? Have you ever received a legacy from someone? And why is having one to pass on so important?
   a. A legacy can be money or property left to someone by a will; bequest or financial inheritance.
   b. In fact, a legacy can be anything handed down from an ancestor.
   c. Legacy is also defined as something from the past; something handed down or that remains from a previous generation.
   d. I want to talk about your personal legacy; the something of who you are that will be left behind after your life is over.
      i. What will remain of your faith, your character, your personhood when this life is over?
      e. Our parent’s generation tried to leave something for the next generation in the form of wealth.
      We must do better.
      i. If all we live for is to accumulate more possessions than the previous generation, then we will be the poorest generation of all.
      ii. 1 John 2:15-17  *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh*
and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

iii. Living forever…that’s is a legacy. Living for God lead us to our legacy that lasts.
1. Living for this world…it is passing away.
2. Loving this world…is futile.
3. All we work for will someday be gone.
4. That is why Jesus put it in perspective when He said, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?” Matthew 8:36.

3. As your pastor, I have a responsibility, an important duty, a spiritual obligation to see that you leave a legacy, a Godly legacy, a legacy that lasts!
   a. If I fail to lead you to this end, if I fail to help you accomplish this, then I fail as a pastor and spiritual leader.
   b. Everything else I do, teach, preach, visit, it all must focus upon one thing. Enabling, equipping, empowering each one of you to leave a Godly legacy.
   c. You see, you exist on this earth to leave something that will last.
      i. And since only two things last forever, (the word of God and the souls of men), then you have an awesome responsibility to leave a legacy that is eternal.
      ii. If you can’t point to someone in the recent past who came to Jesus as a result of your influence, then I hope you’re deep in prayer asking the Lord what’s wrong with your life because your most important legacy as a Christian is a legacy of souls in heaven.

iii. It begs the question of “Who will follow you to heaven?”
   1. Over the next few weeks I will have folks from our church sharing how the influence and legacy of another person is living on in their life.

4. Types of Legacies
   a. People leave behind all sorts of legacies…legacies of faith, fruitfulness, family, and friendship – memories that we like to remember. We will learn about some of these in the weeks ahead.
   b. Others leave legacies of folly, foolishness, or falsehood– these are legacies we would just as soon forget!
   c. Your life will result in a legacy, and you have a choice whether it will be a positive one or a negative one.
      i. Your legacy will be a failure if you have lived for yourself or for the things that don’t last.
      ii. Just before the National Championship game in 2002; Jim Tressel gave a speech to encourage his players and raise them to another level. In that speech he asked the players a very powerful question: “What do you want to be remembered for? Life is a lot more important than a football game. Life is a lot more challenging than a football game. Life is a lot more rewarding than a football game. So let me ask you a question: What do you want to be remembered for? What is it that you want to leave behind when you pass from this life to the next?”
iii. While he was trying to motivate them for a big game, he was also using the big game to illustrate what is the most important thing in life.

1. Jim Tressel is a Christian. Some of us who went to the Ohio Evangelism Conference last year got a chance to hear him speak.
2. He wants to leave behind a legacy of young men who have devoted their lives to Christ.
3. He sows into people’s lives faith and an ethic that changes lives.

**d. Have you ever wondered what people will say about you 10 years after you die?**

i. Will they even remember you or what you did or what impact you had upon their life?

ii. Do you know who the MVP in the NFL 3 years ago? How about the NBA?

1. How short our memories are! Why don’t we remember? Because they didn’t change the world, did they?
2. They had their 15 minutes of fame and faded into the fog of history.

iii. But if I ask you who Mother Theresa was, what would you say? Or Lottie Moon?

1. Why do we remember them?
2. Why do they stand out head and shoulders above the crowd of people who have passed on into history?
3. Because they made a difference.
4. They chose to leave a godly legacy and backed it that choice with conviction and action.

iv. There are people in this church who are investing in leaving a legacy.

1. I think about Grace Dull and Suzie Toppins and how they give their Sunday mornings to the children in our Children’s Church – sacrificing the satisfaction of spending time with you and I and the enjoyment of worship. They live for something bigger – for children to know their Savior.
2. When I think about leaving a legacy, I think about folks in this church who go out of their way to pick up people to give them a ride to church. Someday there will be a child who will look back and think about that person who cared enough to bring them to a place where they could grow their faith.
3. When I think about leaving a legacy, I think about people whose names you may have never known but who left bequests so that our church could accommodate folks who need Christ.
4. Many of you here work at leaving a legacy…you aren’t doing it so you’ll be remembered, but you are doing it out of love for Christ. But in so doing, you are leaving a legacy that is rich in eternity!

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**5. The Inner Drive to Leave Something Behind**

a. Back in 2000, the Epcot Center had a new feature as you first walk in. There were giant slabs of black granite all over – tons and tons of granite – and a big sign that says “Leave Your Legacy”. (Have any of you seen it?) For a certain fee they will take your picture and photo chemically
transfer it onto these granite rocks, so that for all of time your picture will be on this granite stone. And hundreds if not thousands of people have put their little, tiny picture on these big granite stones.

b. Why do we do that?
   i. Because, down deep inside, everybody wants to leave a legacy, and everybody wants to feel like their life counts, that their life matters, that they’ve left our mark while they pass through this life.
   ii. Well I have good news for you. Your life can count, and you can leave your mark on this earth when you pass through it.
   iii. Many of us feel that someday our memory will be just an etched grave marker with dates and our names or a few photos in our grandkids album.
   iv. God promises a lasting legacy for those who entrust their lives to Him and commit their way to Him.

6. Scriptures:
   a. “A good life gets passed on to the grandchildren” Proverbs 13:22a (MSG)
   b. “A righteous man will be remembered forever.” Psalms 112:6b (NIV)
      i. Forever is a long time! In God’s calendar, it knows no end.
   c. “A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children” Proverbs 13:22 (NIV)
      i. 

7. This morning I am going to give an overview of the first legacy left behind. It comes from the book of Genesis, chapter 3.
   a. I want to call it Adam’s Legacy.
   b. It is the main reason our lives lack lasting meaning and purpose.
   c. You might recall, Adam was created to have a relationship with God, to walk with God in the garden of Eden and to tend the plants there. He had pretty much a perfect life. He had only one commandment… “don’t eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”
      i. Genesis 3:1-7 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?” 2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' " 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.
      ii. The bible tells us that Eve was deceived, but that Adam disobeyed. Adam made a choice to follow what Eve had done. He saw she didn’t die immediately, so he ate as well. He
willfully made choice to disobey God’s command. But the consequence was delayed and long lasting!

1. The bible tells us that the consequence of Adam’s sin has been passed down to every human being since then.
   a. Because Adam is our ancestor, sin and death has been passed to all of us.
   b. Just as we receive the tendency for the color of our eyes, the color of our hair, our height, our build, and other physical attributes from our ancestors, so we receive the tendency for sin from our ancestor Adam.
   c. We are “born to be wild” - unruly, disobedient, prideful, and sinful – doing our own thing.

2. You see, once sin entered into the world, it was like a virus that spread. I read recently about an entire national forest in Oregon that has been infected by a fungus (The Daily News [8/5/00] from PreachingToday.com). This fungus started as a single microscopic spore, but it’s been weaving its way through this forest for about 2,400 years, killing tress as it grows. Today this fungus has infected 2,200 acres of this national forest. Essentially the fungus is a gigantic mushroom you can’t see from the ground, but it’s killed hundreds of thousands of tress, all from a single spore. That’s similar to how Adam’s sin opened the door for sin and death to spread like a fungus through the entire human race.

3. This is the “legacy of Adam” that curses all humanity.

4. It is the problem of evil that resides in the hearts of every one of us.

iii. We also “died” in Adam – that is our relationship with God was broken by Adam’s sin.

1. 1 Cor 15:21 21-22 “For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”

2. Every descendent of Adam was destined to sin and to gravitate toward evil and ultimately to die apart from God.

3. But in Christ, we can change our legacy,
   a. we can change our inheritance,
   b. we can change the direction of our lives!
   c. We do so by an act of our faith to receive the gift that God has given in Jesus Christ. He took our Sin and Adam’s legacy upon Himself and took the punishment it deserved! By placing our faith in Him, we receive the forgiveness and the brand new life He promises!

d. -E. V. Hill, Pastor of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in South Central Los Angeles, while speaking to men at a Promise Keepers event he asked: "How many members of your family are into drugs?" "In my family, we have five drug addicts, but we used to have twelve. God is cleaning them up, one by one." And then he asks: "How many prostitutes are in your family? At one time we had two. Now we have one."

   i. This is the legacy of Christ. It is the legacy of hope. It is the legacy of life. It is the legacy of eternal life.
e. You may not be a prostitute or a drug user, but if your life is without Jesus Christ in the center of it, your life is just as meaningless and miserable as if you were.
   i. You don’t have to remain that way any longer.
   ii. God sent His Son Jesus to take away your sins and to free you from the legacy of Adam.
   iii. John 3:14-16 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
   iv. It says if you will place your trust in Christ, believing in him, that you will be saved.
   v. Saved from the legacy of Adam, saved from eternal death, saved from a life of insignificance.

f. You have a choice of which legacy you will live and leave for others.
   i. If you choose to reject the free gift Jesus Christ offers you, you are choosing to remain in the legacy of Adam.
   ii. If you choose to remain in the self-led, self-rulled life you are now living, you are choosing the legacy of Adam.
      1. It is a legacy of death, despair, pain, and hopelessness.
      2. It is a legacy that lives without the presence of God.
   iii. God is giving you a choice today which legacy you can choose.
   iv. Will you choose life? Place your faith in Jesus Christ today. Ask Him to forgive you for your self-run, self-rulled life and He will change your life from the inside out. He will perform a heart transplant on you…giving you a brand new life, a brand new hope, a legacy not only that you will cherish but that you will be able to be a part of making a difference for eternity.

g. Everyone leaves a legacy of one kind or another.

h. You see the question is more than just, “How do you want to be remembered?” but “How do you want to be remembered by God?”
   i. Family and friends will all remember us in one way or another; even our enemies will remember something.
   ii. But how will God remember us when our lives are over?