

What Will You Leave Your Children?

Lesson Text: Luke 15:11-13

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Luke 15:11-32 is known to Bible readers as the story of the Prodigal Son. Three of its verses will serve as our lesson text today. **Luke 15:11-13** - A certain man had two sons.
- 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.
- 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living
1. By way of summarizes the remaining 19 verses of the story.
 - a. Verses **14-16** tells of a great famine and his employment feeding pigs.
 - b. Verses **17-19** convey the soul searching process of this young man.
 - c. Verses **20-24** record the trip home and the joyous reunion with his loving father.
 - d. The story is not completed until verses **25-32** record the negative reaction to his younger brother being honored by saying to his father in verse **30**, **But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.**
 2. While this narrative is indeed profitable text for study in and of itself, I have read only the opening verses wherein our subject is introduced—What Will You leave Your Children?
 3. In the context of our lesson text it will be profitable for us to know that:
 - a. According to Jewish law given in Deuteronomy 21:17, one-third of a father's estate went to the younger son, while the remaining two-thirds went to the older son.
 - b. Further background study reveals that the sons could demand and receive their portions while the father was still leaving.
 - c. The desire to be free of parental restraints no doubt led many a son in ancient times to take their portion and leave home just as the prodigal son did.
- B. Listening friends, it is my desire in this study to reach and teach the minds of parents.
1. A deep sadness steals over us as we think of departing from our children, leaving them here in life while we **"go the way of all the earth."**
 2. Most of us will precede our children in death, and it will not be long at the most.
 3. Thus, the question that titles this study: "What will you leave your children?"
 - a. This is an all important question as the twilight shadows of old age come followed by the waters of the river of death over which we all must soon pass.
 - b. What will you leave your children?
 4. Let us be quite frank in the discussion of these matters.

WILL YOU LEAVE YOUR CHILDREN THE FOLLOWING?

A. Will you leave your children a GOOD NAME?

1. In the long ago Solomon said in **Proverbs 22:1** - "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold."
2. In another of his Old Testament writings he said in **Ecclesiastes 7:1** - A good name is better than precious ointment . . .
3. A bad name will be a heavy burden to bear.
 - a. **ILLUSTRATION:** A father would not pay his bills, so no one would extend credit to the son. He was frustrated. Judged because of his dad.
 - b. **ILLUSTRATION:** Neighbor could not obtain credit. Asked us to co-sign a note for him. Banker strongly advised against it. We didn't.
 - c. **ILLUSTRATION:** Man known for writing bad checks.
 - d. Biblically speaking, because of his bad name for persecuting Christians and the Lord's church, Saul of Tarsus encountered difficulty in being accepted by Christians after his conversion.
4. On the other hand, a good name will open door of opportunity and give encouragement to good deeds.
5. It was a frightening thought in Old Testament days that, according to **Exodus 34:7** God would visit . . . The iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.
6. A good name, once lost, is difficult to get back.
7. **ILLUSTRATION:** A father told his son: "Change you ways or change your name."

B. Will you leave your children THE MEMORY OF A CHRISTIAN HOME?

1. When the prodigal son sat brokenhearted in the swinefold (pig pen), he had been stripped of nearly everything.
 - a. Please observe:
 1. His good clothes were gone.
 2. His choice of good things to eat was gone.
 3. His good places to stay were gone.
 4. His money was gone.
 5. His fair-weathered friends were gone.
 6. His personal respect was gone.
 - b. The only thing that this lost and lonely soul still had was his memory—the precious memory of a good home.
 1. In essence he said, "In my father's house there is plenty and to spare, and
 2. Friends, he was remembering home.
 - a. He was remembering a kind and living father who had provided for
 - b. He was remembering happy meal times blessed with a bounty of food.
 - c. He was remembering people who loved and cared for him.
 - d. He was remembering better days and better times than his present
 - e. He was remembering warmth, security, and decency.
 - c. It was his memory that caused the prodigal son to return home.

2. Friends, there is not influence on earth more potent than a good Christian home.
 - a. There is no greater heritage that we can leave our children than the blessed memory of such.
 - b. In the long, long years after our bodies have returned to the dust from which they came, we can still speak to our children through the memory of a Christian Home.
 - c. Take time today to have bible reading and prayer in your home.
 - d. Give of yourself to the training of your children in honorable work and wholesome recreation.
 - e. Such a memory will become a stronger influence for good in the lives of our children after we are gone than while we live.

C. Will you leave your children A PERSONAL EXAMPLE?

1. While it is important to tell your children that this is right or that is wrong, it is far more important to set a worthy example before them.
2. The shortest, yet the most far-reaching biography ever written is used to describe our Lord in **Acts 10:38** - "He went about doing good."
3. Some merely just go about.
4. **ILLUSTRATION:** Example of Pop helping others.

D. Will You leave your children A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?

1. The perfect education is described by the physician Luke in **Luke 2:52** when he described Jesus: **And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.** Herein we see that Jesus grew in four ways:
 - a. He grew in "**wisdom**" - That is, He grew in KNOWLEDGE.
 - b. He grew in "**Stature**" - That is, He grew PHYSICALLY.
 - c. He grew "**in favor with God**" - That is, He grew SPIRITUALLY.
 - d. He grew "**in Favor . . . with men.**" That is, He grew SOCIALLY.
2. Someone has said that "the soul of education is the education of the soul."
 - a. This is the 3-D (dimension) in education—a child's relationship with God.
 - b. By contrast, the educational philosophy of humanism not only takes God out of education, but it results in taking God out of the child as well.
3. Christian education will include training for an honorable occupation according to their talents and inclinations. That is, "How to Live and How to Make a Living." (Freed-Hardeman University's motto)
 - a. In this way we can best leave our children prepared to live an abundant and useful life that will be a glory to God and a blessing to man.
 - b. No one can take such an education away from them.
 - c. They can neither sell nor mortgage it in a time of stress.
 - d. Once obtained, a Christian education will be theirs for life . . . and eternity.
 - e. A Christian Education will help prepare them for both life and eternity.

E. Will you leave your children AN APPRECIATION OF THE BEAUTIFUL?

1. God has surrounded man with the good and beautiful in nature, in music, in literature, in art, and above all, in the holiness of a righteous life.

2. We want to leave our children the ability to see the good and beautiful in all of God's creation and be lifted up by them.
 - a. **ILLUSTRATION:** A favorite view of the mountains in east Tennessee.
 - c. **ILLUSTRATION:** The rose pink hue of the Swiss Alps just after sunrise.
 - d. The sounds of nature in the forest.
 - e. The soothing effect of the waves breaking on the shoreline.
 - f. Thrilling sunrises and magnificent sunsets.
 - g. The sound of the human voice in beautiful singing.
 - h. That which has become classical in art and music over time.
3. Too many live frustrated, empty, meaningless lives, while all around them is the inspiring goodness of a beautiful world on every side.
4. Children who can see the good and beautiful in life will be enriched beyond expression.

F. **Will you leave your children A GENUINE FAITH IN GOD?**

1. In an age of humanism, atheism, skepticism, doubt, and cynicism, it is comforting to know that when we leave this life, we can leave our children with a faith in God.
 - a. **Romans 10:17** - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
 - b. 2. By taking our children to worship, by setting the proper example, and inspiring them to "do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (**Micah 6:8**) , we are leaving a heritage that cannot be measured in dollars and cents.
3. We may not leave much of this world's goods in terms of money or land. This doesn't really matter.
 - a. If our children have these important things we have been noting, making sufficient money will not be a problem for them.
 - b. On the other hand, if they do not have the important things we have been talking about, they can neither wisely use, nor long retain, any money that might be left them.
 - c. That brings us to another major topic of consideration—What about our Estate?

WHAT ABOUT YOUR ESTATE?

- A. **Luke 12:16-21** - The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.
- 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'
- 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.'
- 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."
- 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'
- 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God"
2. It is the question God asked in verse 20 that I direct your attention to - ". . . Whose will those things be which you have provided?"

- a. Most of us in our lifetime will build up an estate.
- b. Now that word “estate” sounds at first like a great mass of money, houses, land, and a portfolio of various holdings, but what ever we have and leave at our demise, regardless of amount, is our estate.
- c. All our property interest which may consist of real estate (cash, insurance, bonds, jewelry, shares of stock, automobiles, land, etc.) will probably amount to more that you may realize. It may be \$5,00,000, \$5,000 or \$5.00
- d. We do not know how long we are going to live.
 - 1. Some of us will live to be over eighty.
 - 2. Some of us will depart this life earlier than eighty.
- 3. **1 Timothy 6:7** - For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
- 4. Therefore, the question what disposition shall be made of our property, becomes paramount.
- 4. A number of Bible passages teach that we are stewards (Matthew 25:14-16, 21, 30; Revelation 22:12; 1 Corinthians 4:2).
 - a. A steward literally means God’s:
 - 1. Administrator.
 - 2. Supervisor
 - 3. Manager
 - b. We are in charge of God’s bounty on this earth, and after a while, we must give an account o fthat which God has given us, just like those men we read about in the Bible.
 - c. Because we are God’s stewards and because we desire to be good stewards, may we suggest that you make a will.
- 5. **EACH PERSON SHOULD MAKE A WILL.**
 - a. A statement from the pen of noted economist Roger Babson is appropriate to our study: “Too many people die without leaving wills. The result—financial tangles, family squabbles, lawsuits and a disposition of the property entirely contrary to the wishes of the deceased. Some day each of us will die, making a will can neither hasten nore retard death, but a properly drawn will, executed by a competent lawyer may save post mortem disputes and prevent thedistribution of an estate contrary to the wishes of the testator . . . Everyone, man or woman, who has real estate, bank accounts, securities, or a car, should not wait until he is on his death bed either to frame this important document.
 - b. Six valid reasons for making a will.
 - 1. A will is the only instrument that speaks with authority after you are gone. It is the only way you can say *how*, to *whom*, and for *what* purposes your property shall pass upon your death.
 - 2. A will insures that our estate will be distributed according to our wishes.
 - a. If you fail to make a will, be it known that the State will exercise its own will over your estate.
 - b. In that sense everyone has a will:

1. The one you make.
 2. Or, the one the state makes for you.
 - c. If you fail to make a will, thus allowing the state to exercise its will over your estate, it will do so without regard to your wishes.
 3. A will prevents misunderstandings among our heirs.
 4. A will permits us to say who will have charge of the handling of our estate.
 5. It will reduce the expenses of probating the estate and may reduce the estate tax.
 - a. Your family probably needs your assets more than the state does.
 - b. Your family will probably make better use of your estate than the will.
 - c. At the very time you actually need a will, it is too late to make one.
 6. Making a will just makes for good biblical stewardship.
4. **WHEN YOU MAKE A WILL, MAKE A CHRISTIAN WILL.**
- a. The Lord made everything. The Lord owns everything. 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us that even we are not our own.
 - b. We, as His stewards, owe to God the privilege of making proper distribution of our estate after death, as well as proper handling of it while we live.
 - c. Friends, since we are responsible to God and must give an accounting of everything that comes into our hands, it follows that the obligation extends somewhat beyond the grave because it is within our power to make proper arrangements ahead of time.
 - d. A Christian should make his will thoroughly and prayerfully so that those whom he loves are properly protected.
 - e. By making a Christian will I mean this.
 1. Your will is legal way to be sure that you leave anything to Christians causes/works, etc.
 2. By way of suggestion, bequests could include:
 - a. A congregation (especially your home congregation)
 - b. Mission work (stateside or abroad)
 - c. Christian works (Christian education, Christian child care, school of preaching, etc.)
 - d. Radio or television work that promotes the gospel of Christ.
 - f. Write the will of God into your will!
5. **MAKE YOUR WILL NOW!**
- a. A will is a serious responsibility and you need to attend to it now.
 - b. The eternal destiny of thousands and the actual welfare of your family may depend upon it.
 6. How does one begin to make a will?
 - a. Consider what bequest you wish to make in your will.
 - b. Set up an appointment with a competent attorney. Preferably, one that specializes in estate planning.
 - c. Ask your estate attorney about:
 1. Proper signing of your will. What needs signing and what should not be signed.

2. Proper witnessing of the signing of your will. He/she will have staff here to witness the signing should you not have others you want to designate.
3. Proper storage of your will. Where to and where not to store your will.
4. Check your will periodically, perhaps every year or so.
 - a. The normal changes of life may suggest a needed change in your will.
 - b. The caution here is not to scratch out or write in other things. I have
 - c. Perhaps a simple codicil could be prepared by your attorney.
Signatures and a witness will again become necessary.
 - d. Work with your attorney to make sure that at the time of your
 - e. I have also read that the best will is the simplest one.
 - f. Your attorney can guide you properly in all aspects of making and drawing up a will.

CONCLUSION:

- A Jesus said in **Luke 12:15** – Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.
- B. I have asked, "What will you leave your children?"
1. Will you leave them **A GOOD NAME?**
 2. Will you leave them **THE MEMORY OF A CHRISTIAN HOME?**
 3. Will you leave them **A PERSONAL EXAMPLE?**
 4. Will you leave them **A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?**
 5. Will you leave them **AN APPRECIATION OF THE BEAUTIFUL?**
 6. Will you leave them **A GENUINE FAITH IN GOD?**
- B. I asked, "What about your estate?"
1. Each person should make a will.
 2. When you make a will, make a Christian will.
 3. Make your will now!
- C. Let's talk about another type of will—God's will for you. **2 Peter 3:9** - . . . Not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
- D. The Plan of Salvation

