



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Leaving Lasting Treasures

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1 Kings 2:1-4, 10

Matthew 6:19 *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

THELMA: This week, I did something I've never done before: Leigh and I closed down the apartment of our adopted grandma, Thelma Wilmoth. (Thounds like I'm lithping ☺). Thelma is 93 years old, and can't care for herself anymore. She is a wonderful lady. When she was little, Woodward Ave was a dirt road! Thelma lost her husband Herman in the 1970s, and her son 53 year old Bruce about 8 years ago, who didn't have any children. Many people would think the story of Thelma's life was a tragedy, but it is anything but! Because Thelma has left a wonderful legacy of faithfulness and joy in her wake as a Christ-follower for many years. She and her friend Helen got in their sedan and drove from Birmingham to Dexter for my first Sunday, not knowing where the church was! But God had it in for her, because at the gas station on Zeeb, who did she run into but my dad (the only other person who would have known her in all of Dexter)! And these 2 little old biddies followed him to the church, and a wide door of opportunity. But since Thelma can't take care of herself anymore, Leigh and I had to go through her things. And as I was packing up her kitchen things, I was reminded once more about what the real treasures in life are: prayer, presence, gifts, and service. And it made me ask myself: what lasting treasure are you leaving? All of us want to leave a legacy. We want the world to be better because we've been here. But since Jesus has come, He's shown us a new way to leave treasure that lasts.

You expect a 93 year old to leave a legacy. But this week, I realized something as never before, that I'll share with you later. Hear me on this: Jesus' command to lay up treasures in heaven isn't just for 93 year old women or 70 year old men. It's for 14 year old boys and 22 year old college students, and 40something guys who are trying to provide for their families. Just because you and I are trying to build up and provide for our families, doesn't mean we put off leaving lasting treasures and investing in the Kingdom of God.

The Power of the treasure is not in the old school definition of treasures, like pirates' gold, but in what we *say* and *do* and *invest* in the lives of people. No other treasure will last the same. God must have known this. The Bible records the parting words of many people near the end of their life, seeking to leave a legacy. Listen to what they have to say.

Moses in his last words, was 120 years old. Moses grew up Egyptian, went into the wilderness and met God in the burning bush. He led the Hebrew people out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and they wandered in the desert for 40 years. He was standing before the Promised Land. He was not going to enter in, and as the people of Israel were gathered before him, he gave them his final charge: “*See I lay before you today. Life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life by following the commandments of the Lord your God, now and forever.*” Deuteronomy 30:19. His words “Choose life” echoed through the years to that next generation, and they remained faithful.

Or you may remember **Joshua**. Joshua followed the generation after Moses. And he led the people across the Jordan River to claim the land. And now he is old. He stands before the people of Israel, with these words: “*Choose you this day whom you will serve... Choose either to serve the gods your fathers and mothers served in far and distant lands. Choose to serve the gods whom the nations around you serve, or choose to serve the Lord your God who delivered you from slavery in Egypt and who promises to give you life and has been your life and your hope. Choose you this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” (Joshua 24:15). And the people of Israel were so inspired that they respond to his words “*We will serve the Lord! We will serve the Lord!*” And a whole generation of people were inspired to continue to be faithful to God because of the witness of this man just before he died.

And finally the words of **David**. This was David the shepherd boy, who killed Goliath, wrote many Psalms, and eventually became King of Israel. David was 70, nearing his own death, and he is now reflecting and summarizing everything that is important to *him*. His son Solomon needs his father’s wisdom. Solomon was chosen to be king, over some older brothers. David says “*Be strong, Solomon, and courageous. Don’t be afraid. Obey the commandments of the Lord your God. Walk in his ways. Take charge of the commandments that he’s given to you and continue to follow them. And then, and only then, can you be assured that God will bless your kingdom.*” 1 Kings 2:1—4. People often treasure the final words of a loved one. They’re important.

I wonder what legacy you’ll leave. What your final words will be. But the truth is many times **we don’t have the opportunity to write our exit script**. In fact we *never* do. We never know exactly how we’re going to die and what that’s going to look like and sometimes we don’t even have the *chance* to say our final words. I’ve been with many families where someone died tragically of a heart attack or auto accident, and inevitably what I hear is “You know, there was so much I wanted to say, and I never had the chance to say them. There were so many words I wanted to pass on and I never got to say them – to my brother, to my mom or my dad or my son or my daughter or my friend. I wish I’d have had a little more time to say those things.

If there’s one thing I’ve learned from the people I’ve been with during those times, it’s this: **Don’t leave anything unsaid that’s important**. Instead, say it today. When you go home, pick up the phone and call that person. If there are things you would have liked to have patched up before the end, don’t wait. Don’t assume that the end is going to be 10 years from now or 20 years from now or a week from now. Say it today.

That way, even if your loved ones don’t have a chance to say goodbye to you, **they already know all the things you would have said, because you said them over and over and over again**. They don’t need one last time to say “I love you” because they KNOW that you love them because they *saw* it, and *heard* it, and *felt* it. They don’t need to hear one more time the most important things you wanted to say, that they’re to

follow the Lord their God or for you to pass on your faith to them, because you've been passing on your faith to them for years and years like a broken record. You've already left your lasting treasure. Don't bury your treasure! Don't wait till the end. You may not have the opportunity to write that script. – do it now! **So here's the first way to leave a lasting treasure: say what's important today and regularly.** Words are important. But words aren't all.

The Bible not only gives us David's final words, but it gives us his final acts. 1 Chronicles 29 tells us of David's Final Acts. Basically, he made a planned gift. David wanted to build a temple for God. Up until David's time, Israel's place of worship was a tent, or a tabernacle. The people would gather together and they would worship and meet God. But by now the people had become stationary and David longed to build a great temple, where generations of people would come and they would worship God, and they would see God. David wanted to **build up the faith of future generations.** And that's what happened. Solomon built the Great Temple in Jerusalem. It stood for over 400 years, and the people would come there to worship. It was named among the great wonders of the ancient world. Just before David's death, knowing *he* could not build the temple, he brought together the leaders of Israel and the people of Jerusalem and David brought from his storehouse *all of his treasures*, and David laid them before the leaders. And he said, "I give all of these things that I have. My possessions, my gold and my silver, I give to the Lord God to build a temple, a place in *his* name.

The effect of David's gift was to inspire generosity in others and to enable the building of the temple. The people saw this man who was close to death, at that point when you begin to determine what's really important, with a passion for God. And the leaders said if this is what's really important to him, maybe it should be important to us too. And the people came, and they gave their offerings generously. Finally the leaders had to tell them to stop, they brought so much. In that moment, David captured the essence of what it means to be stewards of what we have. We are not kings of our stuff. We're not queens of our stuff. We're stewards. It's not our stuff. We just take care of it for a time. David, who, at the end of his life, recognized he couldn't take it with him, said this to the people of Israel. "*Who am I? And who are we that we should presume to be giving something to God? All we're doing is giving back what we've been given from your generous hand.*" 1 Chronicles 29:14.

I'm almost sure that David saved something behind for his grandchildren and others, but in the words of those of you who are financial planners, David made a charitable gift. **He bequeathed something to the work of God that would touch generations to follow him.** What would Israel have done without a Temple? So here's my second question for you: What will be *your* final acts? What will you do *now* to build a legacy? **Lasting treasure comes from doing what's important today.** *You* can impact people's lives for Jesus Christ. David was an ordinary man with a genuine faith. He had mistakes and failures as well as success. Hundreds of years after David's death, the Apostle Paul describes David in Acts 13:22 "*David fulfilled God's purposes for his generation.*" Whatever generation you're from, what better could be said of us? Do you see? Whatever else we've heard, the lasting treasures of this life are *God's* purposes.

Jesus is saying don't invest your life and leave what you think is a treasure that someone else can bury and leave. Invest in something that will be long lasting and eternally living! The only things that includes are the Word of God and people. Live so you give witness to the treasures of a transformed life! Quit falling for the other stuff that eats up our time, and energy, and relationships to the point we have nothing left to give it with

anyway! It simply won't last. So don't spend so much time on it. Your true legacy isn't going to be a building or road or subdivision with your name on it. It's going to be an investment in the lives of people. That's the only way to create the legacy you leave behind. Jesus says "*store up for yourselves treasures in heaven*". **The third way to leave a lasting treasure is to invest in the lives of people.**

That treasure compels me. So much so, I think it's worth giving my life for it. That treasure is Jesus. He gave himself away for us! He died that we may have life eternal. And as a result, we, too, are his treasure, transformed. It's not just for 93 year old ladies.

Just last week, I lost a friend of mine: Shane Brue. He went to the Beeson Program at Asbury with me, and had been pastoring in Texas. He was so funny, and always in the thick of things happening. He and Jill arrived at the program with a 4 year old and 1 years old twins, and 3 weeks after moving to Kentucky had another baby! Shane was brilliant, but was also great at making fun of himself when he didn't get something. He was a runner. And he lived his life well. But he died of cancer, and left his wife Jill and 5 children behind. But he lived his life for Jesus. But unlike Thelma, who is 93, Shane was just 40. But like Thelma, Shane lived his life investing in the Kingdom. So while it's hard, and going to be hard, there is this wake of people Shane shared Jesus with who have already promised Jill that they will be there to help, as well as other people who will be a part of God's Kingdom because of Shane's down-to-earth witness. Shane left lasting treasure in a way that points people to life in Jesus.

Now for *my* final words this morning. How do you leave treasure that will last? Realize every moment you can build your treasure in heaven. The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being. *Say* what's important today and regularly. *Do* what's important today. Invest in the lives of *people*. God's eternal treasure of life with Him is better than any treasure on earth. Won't you join me in this great adventure God has given us to discover? Amen.