

“Then Whose Shall These Things Be”
Dr. David Sheppard
First Baptist Church of St. Charles, MO
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William James said, “The best use of life is to invest it in something that will outlive life.” At its very longest, our life is very, very short. However, we can do something—a number of things, that will cause our life to have influence far beyond the short span that we spend here on this earth. Turn with me to the gospel of Luke, chapter 12, verse 13. The story is familiar, but perhaps you have missed the context and the context makes a big difference in understanding the text.

A man came to Jesus with a problem. Notice the problem and Jesus’ response. (Luke 12:13)

And one of the company said unto Him, “Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.” And Jesus said unto him, “Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?” And He said unto them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things of which he possesseth.” And then Jesus spake a parable unto them saying, “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself saying, ‘what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits.’ And he said, “This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater. And there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul thou has much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat drink and be merry.” But God said unto him . ‘Thou fool. This night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?’”

Underline that last phrase, “Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?” The NIV says it this way: “Then, who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”

In looking at the subject, “Then, whose shall those things be?” there are four areas we need to consider as we look at this scripture.

I. OUR SOUL WILL BE REQUIRED OF US

There is coming a day when our soul is going to be required of us. God came to this rich man who had been preoccupied all of his life with his normal activities and making a living and said to him, “Tonight your soul is going to be required of you.” Every one of us has a **divine appointment** with God. We ARE going to keep that appointment. God has a calendar. On that calendar, God has a date that God has established and you and I are going to step into eternity to meet Him. There is a divine appointment that you and I cannot escape. Every one of us will face this. Every one of us is going to keep that appointment. Every one of us will stand before God. It is determined and we will keep that appointment.

There is also a **definite judgment**. The book of Hebrews says: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this comes the judgment.” Just as sure as we are alive now, one of these days we are going to step into eternity through death and keep that divine appointment. Following that divine appointment, the Bible says that there is a definite judgment and we will all stand before God and give an account.

The Bible says that for those of us who have accepted Christ that we will not be judged regarding our salvation. We will not be judged based upon our relationship to Christ, because the Bible says that we become children of God, when we are saved from our sins, forgiven of our sins and cleansed from our sins. However, we will stand before God and give an account of what we have done as believers and how we have used the things that God has given to us in faithfulness to Him.

For those who have never trusted Christ as their Savior, the Bible says that when you stand before God in this definite judgment, that God will determine that you have rejected Christ, and that will already be decided when you get there. Right now you have the opportunity to accept or reject Jesus. When you are standing before God, it will be too late.

Then there is a determined **destination**. When we stand before God and we are judged, the Bible says there is one of two places where we are going to go and spend eternity. There is a place called Heaven. There is a place called Hell. There is nothing in between the two. There is nothing but those two places. There is a determined destination for every person. For those who have accepted Christ, their destination is Heaven. For those who have rejected Christ, their destination is Hell. At the moment death occurs, that destination is already determined. There will be no opportunity after that. So dear friends, you and I have a lifetime right now—however long God has given us. It may be ten years. It may be twenty years. It may be thirty years. It may be one hundred years. God has given us a specific span of time. In that span of time He has said to us, “You need to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior”. What we do with Jesus in this span of time He has given us will determine our destination for all of eternity. Every one of us will face eternity and the decision we have made. There is not one person who will miss that. We are going to die unless Jesus comes back and takes us out without death. But if He does not do that, then every one of us will die. Every one of us will stand before God. Every one of us is going to go to either Heaven or to Hell as our determined destination depending on what we have done with Jesus during our lives.

We may like to avoid thinking about this. You may say, “Preacher, I don’t want to talk about those things.” Today much of our preaching is about how we live here. However, how we live here is to prepare us for eternity. The short time we have to live here is nothing compared to the length of eternity which will never, ever end. Where we spend eternity is determined by what we do now.

So there is a divine appointment, a definite judgment and a determined destination.

II. OUR FAMILY WILL REMAIN

The second thing we must consider is what happens when you and I face that experience called “death” and we step into eternity? Our family will remain. We do not know which of family will go first, but some of our family will remain.

Just how will they remain? The Bible tells us and experience tells us that they will remain either divided or united. Notice the context of this scripture. It is easy to miss. There was a **division in the family over an inheritance.**

Have you ever known a family or has your family ever been divided at the time of a death because of an inheritance? If you were a pastor, you would know that there are many times when a family is divided at death and at the funeral because of an inheritance. They are divided over who will get the money. When you and I die, our family will be left behind and they will either be united or divided based upon the plan you leave in place.

Look at the Old Testament story of Abraham. When Abraham died there was a division between his son, Ishmael, who was born first, but out of the will of God and his son, Isaac, the second born but who was born in the will of God. For more than 3000 years that division in Abraham’s family was continued and continues today. All you have to do is open the newspaper and see the results of that division that continues today.

Look at the story of Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons. During his lifetime those 12 sons were divided. Some of them even sold their brother Joseph into slavery. In the end, God brought Jacob back in unity with those sons. The sons were united so that when Jacob died, he placed a blessing upon each of his sons. He died as an old man content because God had brought his family back together in a spirit of unity.

When you and I pass off the scene, we will leave behind a family. That family will be united or divided and some of that is determined by what we do now.

The family we leave behind is going to be **destined by our legacy.** Patrick Henry, the great patriot left a Will behind and it is reported that it stated, “I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one more thing that I wish I could give them and that is faith in Jesus Christ. If they had that, and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich. And if I had not given them that, and had given them all the world, they would be poor indeed.”

When you leave this world you are going to leave a legacy to your family. That legacy will either be a legacy of a faith in Christ or one lived without Christ. Do you know what the greatest comfort is you could give to your family when you pass off the scene? The greatest comfort is the knowledge that you have accepted Christ—that when death came into your life you stepped into the doorway of heaven to be in the presence of God for all eternity and that if they are believers they are going to meet you in eternity.

The greatest legacy you can give to your children is to know that you have accepted Jesus and to leave them that legacy of teaching them the importance of accepting Jesus. You remember the story in the Bible about the rich man. The Bible says that he died and that when he woke up he found himself in Hell. He cried out to be delivered. The answer came back from Heaven, “it is

too late. It is too late. You had your opportunity. You missed the chance. Your destination is already determined.” What did the rich man do then? He said “I have five brothers left on earth. Somebody go back and tell them not to come to this horrible place called Hell. Somebody go back and tell them to be saved. Somebody tell them about Jesus.” He wished that he could have the chance to go back and tell his brothers, but for him it was too late. You and I will leave a lasting legacy. Our family will be destined by the legacy we leave to them.

Many of our families will be **dependent upon our faithfulness**. The statistics are simply this—men, most of our wives will outlive us. We have a responsibility that we be found faithful in making sure that our wives are taken care of. If our children are minors, we have a responsibility to make sure they will be taken care of. For most families, the ones left behind will be dependent upon our faithfulness in providing for them.

III. OUR TESTIMONY WILL CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS

Our testimony will continue to influence other people. What kind of testimony do you want to have a hundred years from now? What kind of testimony do you want to have a thousand years from now, because, you can have a testimony. The story is told by Moody Adams of this old fellow that died in a little town who was just known as the town character, the town drunk. He was immoral, he cursed, he did everything wicked that you can think of. When he died they called on the preacher to preach his funeral. Everybody wondered, “what in the world is the preacher going to say about this man?” His brother came to the preacher and said, “Now, preacher,” he said, “I’ve got a hundred dollars here that I will give you if somehow you can work into the message about my brother that he was a saint.” The preacher said, “Well, I don’t think I’ll have any trouble doing that. That’ll be okay.” He gave him the hundred dollars. It came time for the funeral. Everybody there was wondering what the preacher would say. The preacher got up and he said, “Now you all know Joe lying here in the casket. Now old Joe, he was the town drunk. He was an immoral man. He blasphemed. He did every wicked thing that you can think of, but compared to his brother, he was a saint.”

What kind of testimony are you going to have down the road? A hundred years from now, when the preacher preaches your funeral, what kind of a testimony are you going to have? The scripture says of Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, “he being dead, yet speaketh.” His testimony was good. The Bible says of Enoch, that before he was translated, before God took him into heaven, that he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Is this your testimony?

Or is your testimony one of evil? The Bible says that an evil testimony will live on for generations. In fact, in the ten commandments, God says that he will visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children, unto the third and the fourth generations. Many think that what they are doing now does not affect anyone but them. Oh yes it does, especially if you are a parent. If you are living a life in opposition to God, that negative influence can be carried on for generations to come.

IV. OUR POSSESSIONS CAN HAVE A LASTING USEFULNESS

When you die, how much are you going to leave behind? ALL of it. Every bit of it. It

does not matter if it is five cents or fifty million dollars. The question is not how much will you leave behind, because you are going to leave all of it behind. The question is what will happen to what you leave behind? Will it have a lasting influence for good or will it be a negative influence

I Timothy 5:8 says, “If any provide not for his own, and especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.” Mark that verse and study it carefully. The word “provide” here means “to look out ahead and to see into the future, and to make provisions for that.” This is a spiritual matter. The scripture says **we must provide for our own**. We need to look into the future and say, “okay, when that point comes, how have I provided for my family? How have I taken care of my family?”

Men, I want to encourage you to think about that in relationship to your wife and to your children. Will your wife and children be provided for financially when you are gone? Go over your plan and make sure they will have all they need. Go over it with your wife so she will feel secure and know what is available.

Our resources can have a lasting influence on our family. But there is a second area to consider. **How can we benefit others through giving to ministries?**

US News and World Report ran an article entitled “*Generation X Turns out to be Generous.*” Many young adults are becoming quite wealthy in the tech world, in the biotech world and with stocks and investments. It told of a 34 year old woman who had just given \$300,000 to her alma mater. She gave back to a charity that had helped her along in her life. The scripture says that, “to whom much is given, much is required.” All of us have benefitted from this ministry or another ministry and all of us should give something back to that ministry through our Will or Trust. Decide how much you want to leave your kids and then decide how much to leave this church or some other ministry.

On August 13, 1995, the *New York Times* reported about a little lady by the name of Oceolla McCarty, 87 years of age, who lived in Mississippi. She had never been able to complete school. She had never married. She took care of her mother who was sick. She spent her whole life doing laundry and pressing clothes for other people to dress up in and go places she could never go. She did not make a great deal of money, but she saved everything she could save. Over a period of time she had saved \$150,000. She said to herself, “I don’t need that money. I’m happy with what God is doing in my life. And so, how can I use this money for good?” She gave it to a school, the University of Southern Mississippi in her hometown of Hattisburg, with the intention that the money would go to fund a scholarship. She said, “I don’t want any building named after me. The only thing I want to do is I want to be at a graduation where some young person has been able to go through college and graduate because of this money.”

The director of fund raising for the University said, “I’ve been in the business twenty-four years now in private fund raising and this is the first time I’ve experienced anything like this. From an individual who was simply not affluent, did not have the resources, and yet gave substantially. In fact, she gave almost everything she had.” That donation from this lady caught the attention of that community, and spread so that it simply was referred to as “The Gift.” It sparked the interest of other people in the community and some businessmen got together and

matched her gift to the school. What she did will benefit others from now on.

There is a third place your resources can go. If you do not make the right preparation, your resources can go to enrich the U.S. Treasury. Just think about it. If you have a choice (and you do) of leaving your resources to your family and ministries or the government, which is your choice?

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, said this. “Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.”

“Then whose shall these things be?” When you step into eternity, where will those things go? When you step into eternity, “then whose shall those things be?” Jesus said we are to be wise stewards so that even after we die, we leave behind a legacy of faithfulness and obedience that will continue perhaps for generations and on into eternity.