

The Legacy of Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] Well, what I have to bring this morning is a bit different to what's on the notice sheet.! So I'm sorry if you've really geared yourself up for that particular message.

It does touch on legacy, but it's a legacy of Jesus Christ, and this is what I want to bring to you today. So here's quite a well-known verse, or section of the verse, in 1 Timothy 6, verse 6. We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

Therefore, therefore, says the Bible, be content. If we have food and clothing, let us be content. That's what the next verse says. But interestingly, therefore, says the world, live life to the full. Eat, drink, and be merry.

[1 : 14] Or make a bucket list. Katie was reminding me about this yesterday. You know what a bucket list is? A few things to do before you die.

It's not such a modern thing, actually. In 1940, when John Goddard was 15, he made a list of everything he wanted to achieve. There were 127 goals in all, which included visit every country in the world.

This was 1940. Explore the Great Barrier Reef. Watch a cremation ceremony in Bali. Milk a poisonous snake.

And visit the moon. Some goals were bundled together. Number 113, for example, reads, There is a tick beside this one, marking it as done, as there is beside 109 of these original goals.

And in the years since, he has set himself hundreds more, writing them down as a form of commitment. You may not have such a list. But you may feel a bit of a lack.

[2 : 36] You haven't done a world tour. Or like my last line manager, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. Although it's getting so popular, isn't it?

Apparently there are queues, waiting queues on Everest these days. So many people trying to get to the top at once. That's so boring. Go ditch the beacon.

This is a totally understandable way to think about life. If you have no sense of where you've come from and where you're going when you die.

Best to fill your life with as much experience as possible. So how does Jesus Christ score on this approach to life?

He certainly fulfills the words we read earlier. He brought nothing into the world. He had no position. No advantages.

[3 : 40] No prospects. He never owned a home. He certainly took nothing out of the world. Even his last garments were stripped from him.

He needed a friend to provide him a grave. So he's the exemplar of that verse, isn't he?

We brought nothing into the world. We take nothing out of it. And what of his life? Well, we know very little of his first 30 years, but his next and last three, very well recorded, aren't they?

He never saw the Great Wall of China. He didn't visit the Taj Mahal. Or the Grand Canyon. Or Las Vegas.

But he made blind people see. He never ate in a five-star restaurant. Or went on a world cruise.

[4 : 46] But he fed 5,000 men from a meal of five small buns and two fish. He never used Twitter or social media.

Nor did he speak at the United Nations. But people marveled at his words and said, no man spoke like this man. He also raised dead people to life and released people from the power and guilt of their sins.

What a life. What a full life. What an intense life. One might say a driven life.

He said himself, I must work while it is light. All this in just three years.

And we could be mightily humbled, couldn't we, to think back to what we have done since 2010. But as rich and astonishing as the life of Jesus was, it can't and mustn't be understood only on the basis of these personal life experiences of Jesus Christ.

[6 : 02] even as I might put it rather crudely, a bucket list of experiences that he had. These are Jesus' own words as he viewed his life.

Firstly, even the Son of Man, speaking of himself, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 10, 45. And again, I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep.

And the Son of Man must suffer many things and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

And from this we learn that the focus of his life was not to please himself, but to serve others. that his life purpose only has meaning when connected to his death, a death which is on behalf of and in the place of others.

[7 : 25] As he put it, a ransom. His life and death are vindicated by God in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

And this is where the full, rich life of Jesus Christ begins to look so different from the modern conception of a successful life.

It's about others and it requires a very special death and a resurrection which will bring extraordinary and permanent blessing to others.

This is the legacy of Jesus Christ. which you might put in this way. Jesus' life and his death and his resurrection provides a legacy.

An inheritance. Something which is passed on to others. this is why his story is actually impersonally addressed to each of us in this room today.

[8 : 42] On the very last night of his life on earth and in full awareness of the death he was to die the next day, Jesus spoke to his disciples about that legacy that he was going to leave them.

They'd been with him for two to three years and have been eyewitnesses of this extraordinary life but Jesus' words recorded in the Gospel of John chapters 13 to 17 not just for them but for everyone who is able to hear or read these same words.

This is our privilege today. And we should hear these words with the intimacy and directness and urgency with which Jesus spoke them.

It was spoken nearly 2,000 years ago but they're given to us again this morning freshly minted with no loss of their original significance and power.

And it's with that introduction that I've waited until this moment until we actually open our Bibles and we read this morning not the four chapters but just chapter 14 of John.

[9 : 52] John chapter 14 on page 108. 2. We weren't there in that room but it's very important for us to read these words as if we were in the room.

As Jesus was close to us and he's saying these words to us he's looking us in the eye and it's being made very plain to us that what he's saying here he is saying to us.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not let trust in God trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms if it were not so I would have told you.

I'm going there to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

You know the way to the place where I'm going. Thomas said to him Lord we don't know where you're going so how can we know the way? Jesus answered I am the way and the truth and the life.

[11 : 36] No one comes to the father except through me. If you really knew me you would know my father as well. From now on you do know him and have seen him.

Philip said Lord show us the father that will be enough for us. Jesus answered don't you know me Philip?

Even after I've been among you such a long time anyone who has seen me has seen the father.

How can you say show us the father? Don't you believe that I am in the father and that the father is in me?

The words I say to you are not just my own rather it is the father living in me who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the father and the father is in me or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I'm going to the father and I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the son may bring glory to the father.

[12:47] You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it. If you love me you will obey what I command and I will ask the father and he will give you another counsellor to be with you forever the spirit of truth.

The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him but you know him for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you before long the world will not see me anymore but you will see me because I live you also will live on that day you will realise that I am in my father and you are in me and I am in you whoever has my commands and obeys them he is the one who loves me he who loves me will be loved by my father and I too will love him and show myself to him then Judas not Judas Iscariot said but Lord why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world Jesus replied if anyone loves me he will obey my teaching my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him he who does not love me will not obey my teaching these words you hear are not my own they belong to the father who sent me all this

I have spoken while still with you but the counsellor of the Holy Spirit whom the father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you peace I leave with you my peace I give you I do not give to you as the world gives do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid leave the reading at that point here here we read in plain words the legacy of Jesus Christ for all who will be his followers and I just want to pick out from these verses eight wonderful matters of this legacy the will of Jesus Christ for his people and the first is this that Jesus

Christ has willed that all those who know and love him should have a place near him forever it's a very homely chapter actually how often the idea of family and home is mentioned in these words from Jesus and this is home this is not to be thought of as crystal fountains and golden floors and hilton marble and so forth in my father's house and many rooms if it were not so I would have told you I'm going there to repair a place for you take you to be with me that you also may be where I am great sense of the Lord making complete provision homely provision for us close to himself forever individually and as he looks around that room of his disciples of that time yes the stumbling faltering unseeing ones like

Philip and Judas and Thomas looking around this room today the Lord Jesus is making these promises to each one of his followers I'm really going to prepare a place for you every one of us the Lord Jesus is wanting us he really wants us to be with him forever it's his choice he loves our company verses six and seven the privilege of knowing God as a father I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me our natural position is not to know [17:40] God as father our natural position is a place of fear place of guilt but as Jesus welcomes us and says I am the way he invites us to know God as our father with all that wraps up in the meaning of it intimate familial relationship the privilege of seeing God working in us and through us verse 12 anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing he will do even greater things than these because I am going to the father spoke earlier of the mighty works of

Jesus Christ and here is an astonishing verse that Jesus invites all those who are his followers to have hope that he will do even greater things than they have already seen as eyewitnesses it's a wonderful thing to see God working in us and through us it is actually a definition of what it means to be a Christian is to have the power of God at work in our lives achieving miraculous changes turning our lives about and to have the opportunity and privilege of also seeing God work through us in the day to day of life in the providential circumstances where we are able to see him at work and there are some times and I hope we all know this to a degree there are some times when you just know that awesome sense that

God has been with you he's been in that very situation given you the thoughts or the words to say which have been appropriate to the situation this is the legacy of Jesus Christ for his people this is our calling the confidence that prayer will be answered verses 13 and 14 I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the son may bring glory to the father you may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it mysteries here but undoubtedly an encouragement undoubtedly an encouragement that we should come to him with petition we should bring life situations before him and that we should have confidence that heaven is not locked up that his ear is open and that he is very

pleased to hear and answer our prayers as we come and bring them in Jesus name and for the glory of God the promise of his presence with us and in us verse 18 I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you very touching isn't it very touching to understand the measure of his relationship with these men that he looks to them and recognizes that his departure is an orphaning process and that's how they would see it and feel it but he says I'm not leaving you as orphans I'm not leaving you alone he promises!

His presence with us and in us loneliness is a big problem in our world we're not immune from that are we?

[22 : 07] The Lord Jesus Christ promises to be near us and to be close to all his people I will never leave you or forsake you he says the awareness of God's love towards us verse 21 whoever has my commands and obeys them he is the one who loves me he who loves me will be loved by my father and I too will love him and show myself to him I too will love him and show myself to him I think this is a reality I think this isn't just about some words that we put through some filter in our minds there is such a thing as the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of his people there is that knowledge that God is our father whereby there springs within us that cry of Abba father that awareness this is the legacy and the promise of

Jesus for his people I will love you and show myself to you we do need that don't we we do need that that's his promise for us the reminder of Jesus words in verse 26 the counselor the Holy Spirit whom the father will send in my name will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you it's a great thing to be reminded in a timely way of some of the promises of Jesus Christ come unto me all you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest some of us need to hear that today I am the good shepherd I lay down my life for the sheep wonderful thing that we should be under the hands and the promises of Jesus Christ and so he reminds us of his words and he gives us also the gift of God's peace verse 27 peace I leave you my peace I give you I do not give you as the world gives niggardly half-heartedly intermittently no it's a solid peace it's a strong peace it's a deep peace I think we pray this prayer a great deal don't we because we live in a troubled world and we have troubled hearts and we are so grateful for the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ here and he says in the midst of your troubles and difficulties I'm going to leave you peace I find no time limit on that not like those vouchers that you pick up and you see it expires by the 31st of August there's no time limit on the peace of Jesus Christ given to his people in any situation in every circumstance at all ages he offers us his peace the peace of God that passes understanding guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus that may well be a another prayer you need to make today if you're harboring trouble in your heart and unsettled frustrated worried vexated

I'll come to Jesus that's part of his legacy is to grant us peace he says do not let your hearts be troubled do not be afraid but I've got so much to be afraid about I've got so much to be troubled about if I want to analyse my life and go back and sit down and look at any aspect of my life there are so many reasons for me to be troubled and afraid but Jesus says I want to address that point particularly for all of you all of you I want to give you my peace which actually totally addresses the trouble and the fear of your life because as he looked at those disciples at that last evening he saw us in his mind's eye he saw us living in this world this time and the troubles and the fears that we go through ourselves and he grants to us that peace this is just a sample of the legacy of Jesus Christ to every Christian how wonderful that in his last evening on upon earth he spends almost the entire time talking to his disciples and all those who would come after him about the things that they would inherit as a result of his life and death and resurrection how would you spend your last time on earth what matters would you think about well here we see the gracious open heart of Jesus Christ this is a sample of the legacy of Jesus Christ to every Christian so I make these points of application Christian this is for you this is all for you this is intended for you and we would be doing despite to the will of Jesus Christ as it were reading these words and to stuff it away in a drawer or even to tear it up if we were not to take to heart these wonderful promises and provisions and to say this is for me this is for me to enjoy for me to experience for me to encourage myself with this is the will of Jesus Christ sealed in his own blood these are not mere words something very mighty happened upon the cross when Jesus shed his blood for us something very demonstrable happened when the father raised him from the dead and said indeed

[29 : 04] Jesus Christ has finished the work that he came to do he did defeat death he did conquer the devil he did forgive sin he did deal with all the effects of sin a very mighty work was done upon

the cross of Jesus Christ and as a result of that this is a legacy which has got a very solid foundation you can go and cash this this is utterly reliable it's not just a piece of paper with some words written on it no this is the will of Jesus Christ sealed in his own blood he says it is finished it is finished he's not needing to make provision by any future work at all we live in the good of the things that Jesus Christ did 2000 years ago and this is what he wants for you this is what he wants for you

I suppose there might be some people who when they receive news of a legacy would say well I'm not really interested in that I really don't want grandma's dressing table I really want those don't want those sort of worthless shares in some society or other I'm not interested in those set of books but Jesus Christ says to us as he gives us his legacy he says this is what you need and this is what I want you to have he who understands us so utterly says in these words and not others these are the very things that you need and these are the very things I'm going to give you this is what he offers you it's Jesus deliberate and thoughtful gift to his people forgive us our father that we have such a poor watered down limited shriveled version of what belongs to every

Christian I also want to speak this morning to the not yet Christian you may very well know that you're not a follower of Jesus Christ but the fact that you're here today gives me cause to think that you might want to become such a person or at least are willing to find out more so perhaps you are not yet a Christian you might have thought that the Christian life was about keeping rules about personal morality about religious habits but Jesus words here suggest something fundamentally different and the only safe way to think about what it means to be a Christian is to hear what Jesus has to say not the traditions not second hand opinions and folklore that you might have subconsciously absorbed these words are wonderful

I think even somebody with sort of no background of understanding about Jesus Christ and the Bible and so forth to read these words to recognize what his death wish is for his people what he's offering to his people these are wonderful these are very attractive these are very encouraging words I'm not going to leave you as orphans no no no I'm going to be close to you you haven't got an uncertain future no no no you can have a place with me in heaven forever there are lots of difficulties in your life but you can pray about these things and God will hear answer your prayers he loves to do that well that's a wonderful thing isn't it how many people have to go through life in the utter desperate loneliness of not wearing knowing where to look what are you relying upon the NHS your local doctor a counsellor your MP you know in your heart of hearts that's a very poor place to rest your confidence but we come to the maker of heaven and earth and to his son Jesus Christ who encourages us to come with all our need before him and he knows exactly what we need because he knows the end of our lives from the beginning of it and he will grant us that which we need and all of us I'm quite sure who are Christians for a measure of time could put up our hands at this point and say yes I know that looking back upon my life God has given to me what I have certainly what

[34 : 37] I needed well isn't that a wonderful thing we sit here today and we think these are the things that are important in my life but Jesus Christ knows better he knows the things that are really important and as we pray to him in a faltering kind of way and bring our needs before him the best prayer to pray is please dear Lord Jesus give me what I need and the power to live life the power to live life in a good way the power and the privilege of even seeing God at work in us and working through us now it's a very common common common place for Christian people to say and there are plenty of people in this room today who will be saying well God could never use me I can see other people he could use

I can read the book that Chris was talking about I can see how he can use other people how he can speak through their lives he couldn't use me I think!

that's a lie! of the! It's certainly completely opposite to the legacy of Jesus Christ here where he says to all of those disciples in the room I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing he will do even greater things than these put whatever caveats you like upon it but it seems to me that this tells us that God is wanting to work in and through every one of us there are tasks that he wants us to do there are places he wants us to go there are conversations that he wants us to have in his strength in his power well not yet Christian this is amazing isn't it if you thought

Christianity was just about turning up to! church on a Sunday morning and going through the ritual and saying your prayers every so often and so on this breathes another air doesn't it it talks about

what it is to be a follower of Jesus in a very different sort of light this is life this is power this is reality the only the only safe way to think about what it means to be a Christian therefore is to hear what Jesus has to say not the tradition second hand opinions of folklore that you may have subconsciously absorbed it's wonderful it is wonderful so I invite you to find out more I invite you to follow Jesus by reading more of his words from the four gospels in the Bible and respond positively to the invitations he gives and the promises he makes because

Jesus is not hard to find and he does not hold back when people earnestly seek him he does not play hard to get he doesn't play games with anybody who is really wanting to know him in fact he gives us encouragement to take the next step the next step for you today might be doing just what I've just suggested to read more of the words of Jesus and as you read to ask that he would reveal himself to you so that you might understand more and respond to the more and coming to that point where you recognize your need and you're able to say well Jesus Christ I know that I'm not in a right relationship with God I want to ask that on the basis of your death upon the cross for sinners like me that you would receive me that

[39 : 07] I might become your follower and you would put your Holy Spirit within me well what encouragements the word of God gives us today what blessings what hopes let us not fall short of the encouragements and the invitations that Jesus Christ makes to his people love to you to love love to you