

Sermon Series: Extraordinary Direction
Sermon Title: A Legacy of Integrity
Sermon Text: Proverbs 10:7-9, Job 2:3
Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry

Introduction:

“When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride!”

This is the secret to my life and my ability to have peace and comfort no matter what this world tries to throw at me! When I have questions, struggles, heartbreak, or any negative thing, I survey the wondrous cross on which my precious Savior bled and died and many of my questions are settled right then and there! Why? Because on the Cross I see my Savior’s love for me and as long as I know He loves me I can face anything! He died for me, I’ll live for Him. Today we’re going to talk about leaving a legacy of integrity! Keep your eyes on Jesus and hold on to that cross as a reminder of His love for you and you’ll be able to do just that! Let’s pray and ask our extraordinary God to give us His divine direction today!

Father God I cry out to You to speak to our hearts and minds today and teach us the importance of leaving a legacy of integrity with the lives we live. Let Your Holy Word convict our hearts and direct our hearts into Your will for our lives. I humbly ask You to use me as an empty vessel and as an instrument in Your hands to help people understand why the legacy they are creating each and every day has eternal importance! Be with those who are hurting, those who have lost loved ones, and with our world situation. Please help our leaders realize their desperate need to get divine direction from You. Thank You for hearing this prayer and I pray believing in the Sweet and precious Name of Jesus, Amen!!

The dictionary treats legacy as a legal term.

legacy-legacy |'legəsē|noun (pl. -cies) an amount of money or property left to someone in a will. a thing handed down by a predecessor/Anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.

However, most of us have come to understand legacy in much broader terms. Legacy is what you leave behind in memories, (good or bad), lessons, (good or bad) example, (good or bad) achievements, successes, or failures. You will leave a legacy even if you have no money or worldly possessions. It will be good or bad, positive or negative, helpful or hurtful. Now I know that some of you may be thinking right now about the popular song by a Christian band that I really like a lot, “Casting Crowns.” They have a song titled “Only Jesus.” The chorus says this...

“And I, I don't want to leave a legacy, I don't care if they remember me, only Jesus!
And I, I've only got one life to live, I'll let every second point to Him, only Jesus”

I really like that second line a lot and I understand the sentiment of the first line, but the next verse of the song says this...

“All the kingdoms built, all the trophies won, will crumble into dust when it's said and done
'Cause all that really mattered, Did I live the truth to the ones I love?
Was my life the proof that there is only One, Whose name will last forever?”

Folks that describes a legacy! “Did I live the truth to the ones I love? Was my life the proof that there is only One, Whose name will last forever?” So your legacy does matter: what you leave behind, what you hand down, what you leave as an example to the people who know you. Desiring to leave a good legacy doesn't have to be and shouldn't be about your glory or leaving a great name for yourself, but leaving a legacy that points people to Jesus. Is there a way to ensure that your legacy will point people to Jesus? I believe the answer to that comes to us in the definition of another word. Integrity! There are several definitions, but the first one listed by Oxford Dictionary is this...

integrity |in'tegritē|

noun

1 the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness: he is known to be a man of integrity.

That is a powerful meaning. There is another use of the word as it pertains to electronic data...

- internal consistency or lack of corruption in electronic data

When it comes to spirituality we could put it like this...

Integrity - Internal consistency or lack of corruption in ones walk with God!

Today's message has two parts, a Biblical description of contrasting legacies and a Biblical example of a legacy of integrity.

A Biblical Description of Contrasting Legacies

Proverbs 10:7-9

Prov 10:7 The memory of the righteous will be a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.

Prov 10:8 The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.

Prov 10:9 The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.

The contrasting legacy of the righteous vs. wicked

Prov 10:7 The memory of the righteous will be a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.

One is remembered fondly, one is not! There are numerous names in history that are not remembered in a good way and you wouldn't want to name your children after them. There are

others who are remembered in a positive light. And here's something to think about: People may remember your success and even how materially wealthy you were, but that doesn't mean they will remember you fondly! If you want people to remember you in a good way, the writer of Proverbs gives us the secret...

Prov 3:3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

Prov 3:4 Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

Let Love and faithfulness never leave you! Only those who are motivated by a standard of morals and honesty are going to live a life of love and faithfulness. In a word: Integrity! Those who live a life of integrity will leave a memory that blesses others. People will remember the lessons taught and the love given. Solomon wrote that...

Prov 10:7 The memory of the righteous will be a blessing,

He goes on to say...

Prov 22:1 A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

In stark contrast, those who have no moral standards have no desire to be faithful in love. Without moral uprightness a person is bound to become driven by their own selfish desires. A person who is motivated by self will live a life that people would soon forget. Solomon said...

Prov 11:7 When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.

Prov 24:19 Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of the wicked,

Prov 24:20 for the evil man has no future hope, and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.

So the question is: Will your legacy be one of integrity, "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness?" Will you have lived your life with "love and faithfulness" based on your commitment to truthfulness, and strong moral principle? And there is also...

The Contrasting Legacy of the wise vs. the foolish

Prov 10:8 The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.

Why would the wisdom writer choose to contrast one who accepts God's commands and a chattering fool? What's the connection? A wise man acknowledges the precepts and principles of God. He is humbled by the fact that his or her own understanding is quite limited compared to God's wisdom. A chattering fool thinks he or she has all the answers. They think they know

everything. They don't think they need God. They don't need anyone telling them what to do. We talked about that some last week. Solomon says this...

Prov 18:2 A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

The wise man is many times silent. Maybe he or she remembers the old saying...

"Better to be silent and thought a fool, rather than open one's mouth and remove all doubt!"

Now this doesn't mean there's never a time to speak up! There's a big difference between a chattering fool who simply likes hearing themselves talk and a person who stands up and speaks the truth! There are times to speak up and not be silent, times when to be silent is to be complacent or complicit with the evil that is going on around you! It's one thing to speak out of arrogance but quite another to speak the wisdom of God into a situation! Don't be silent when God wants you to speak up. Just remember to combine these three things, God's conviction, genuine love and great humility! A man or woman of integrity has come to understand the awesome power and wisdom of following God's principles and seeking to live in His righteousness! The Psalmist says...

Psa 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Psa 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psa 19:9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

Psa 19:10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

Psa 19:11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

What will be your legacy? A chattering fool who thought themselves to be wise or a person who humbly depended on the wisdom of God, His law, His statutes, His precepts, His commands, and His ordinances!

The contrasting legacy of one who walks securely vs. one who takes crooked paths

Prov 10:9 The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.

What does it mean that the person of integrity walks securely? I believe it means that this person has nothing to hide. He has been a person of integrity. He does not have to walk around worrying that something might be uncovered. The Psalmist states this...

Psa 7:8 let the LORD judge the peoples. Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High.

Psa 7:9 O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure.

Psa 7:10 My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.

So a person who walks with integrity walks securely but our writer states that the one who takes crooked paths will be found out. When a person is not a person of integrity, this will be discovered eventually. A person who is not led by Godly principles will, by his or her very nature, make mistakes that will lead others to discover their deception. Moses spoke to two of the tribes of Israel who made some serious promises to Moses and to God. Moses let them know that God was going to hold them accountable to keep their promises with integrity and told them if they did not...

Num 32:23 ... and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.

Solomon puts it this way...

Prov 11:5 The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.

Prov 11:6 The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.

In other words, a person who does not walk in integrity will be ruled by their own greed and selfishness. Remember, last week I told you when we allow self to become a god, it's a terrible thing. Self is not a good god! Self will take you down paths that lead to self-destruction. On the other hand, a person who walks in integrity, humbly understands their need for God. They learn to depend on God's leadership in their lives, in the good times and the bad times! It makes a temporal and eternal difference and we're about to see...

A Biblical Example of a Legacy of Integrity

Job 2:3

Our second Scripture text gives us an amazing example of a legacy of integrity!

Job 2:3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

So you're going to need a little background. Here's how the story began.

Job 1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

Job 1:2 He had seven sons and three daughters,

Job 1:3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

Job 1:6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

Job 1:9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.

Job 1:10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

Job 1:11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Job 1:12 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Now let me just recap for you what happened next. Invaders attacked Job's workers and stole all of his cattle and donkeys. Only one worker survived to bring Job the news. A lightning storm killed all his sheep and all but one of his shepherds, who brought Job the news. Three other raiding parties took all his camels and killed all but one of his servants. Then a ferocious wind storm collapsed the house where his kids were having a party and all of them were killed. Only one servant survived to tell the story. And what was Job's response?

Job 1:20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship

Job 1:21 and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

Job 1:22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Absolutely amazing! It's hard for me to imagine the devastation and how Job could even breathe after such a string of tragedies! But Job does not turn his back on God as Satan had suggested he would. He fell to the ground in worship! Satan was not happy about this. This is where our text comes in...

Job 2:3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

Job 2:4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life.

Job 2:5 But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Job 2:6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

Job 2:7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

Job 2:8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

If all of the other tragedies Job had faced were not enough, Job gets a horrible disease and suffers personal and devastating pain! And then to add insult to injury, this happens...

Job 2:9 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Job 2:10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

I can't imagine the heartbreak Job was feeling. He's not only lost his material wealth, his children, his health, and now his wife.

Someone might be tempted to say right here "God won't put more on you than you can bear!" I know I'm gonna put some of you in an awkward situation right now because you may have used that to try to encourage someone! If someone had told Job that he might have said, "This went beyond what I could handle a long time ago." Let me explain where this sentiment comes from. It is a misappropriate use of 1 Corinthians 10:13 which says...

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but notice, He is also the One who will provide a way out so that you can endure it! You will routinely face more than you can handle and if you try to handle things without God's help you're going to be in trouble! Paul said...

Philippians 4:13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Without Him we're in trouble! Job has some well meaning friends who try to help him with some comfort and end up misinterpreting some scripture themselves. It's not long before they decide they're going to explain to Job why he's going through this terrible trial. And as I read the book of Job, I was appalled at the arrogance of Job's three friends. Eliphaz tells Job it's his sin that has caused all the problems and God was punishing him. Bildad said it must be something your children did and he's punishing you for that. Zophar wants Job to meet with God and believes Job will then see the error of his ways. Bildad starts quoting Scriptures about how God punishes the evil-doer. With friends like this, who needs enemies, right? It's really easy to pass judgment when you're not the one suffering loss or tragedy! These guys had no way of knowing what was going on in the spiritual realm. Neither Job nor his friends were privy to the information that we have as we read the story. We know that Satan is responsible.

To be sure, God is sovereign and allowed it, but it was not God's hand doing these things. Sometimes bad things happen because we live in a fallen world. I also realize that sometimes we suffer the consequences of bad choices we've made! But many times we simply suffer because we live in this fallen world. Since the fall of humankind, this world is not at all what God

had intended and in Job's case his problems were not due to some hideous personal sin. Oh, Job knew he wasn't perfect and admitted that, but he wasn't going to plead guilty to something he had not done like his so-called friends wanted him to do, and he wasn't going to curse God like his wife had suggested. Job didn't understand what was going on but he still had his integrity and he wasn't going to give that up for anyone! Job didn't know it yet, but his extraordinary God was going to use everything, including the bad things, for good and to give divine direction and hope to untold numbers of people in future generations. Job was going to leave an enduring legacy of integrity that would encourage the hurting and downtrodden for ages to come.

Although Job's friends were convinced his suffering was due to his own personal failures, Job is an example to all of us that, while we are all sinners, even those who are seeking to live lives of righteousness suffer. You see we all suffer things in this world that are due to the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden! That's what I call big picture sin and we all are impacted by it! And, as I said, when we suffer, it's natural to ask questions. In fact many of the greatest leaders in the Bible asked honest questions. The church should be the safest place to ask your questions and voice your doubts, because God's love is here, and we've all had our questions. Job sure did...

Job's Honesty!

Job didn't hide the way he felt. He was hurting and he questioned why God was allowing these things to happen to him. He was honest with God and felt like God had denied him justice. Listen...

Job 27:2 "As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul,

Job 27:3 as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils,

Job 27:4 my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit.

Job then issues this statement to his so-called friends...I love it!

Job 27:5 I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity.

Job 27:6 I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.

Job knew that God had the power to prevent what was happening to him and didn't understand why God was allowing these terrible things to happen to him, but he refused to let go of his desire to live in righteousness and faith in God! What a legacy! So Job is honest with God and asks some really tough questions. Now you've got to know this, when you ask God questions, you may or may not like the answers, and sometimes God answers with questions of His own to get us to think and to help us see. While God wasn't angry with Job, He did ask some hard questions for Job to consider.

God Speaks

He asked Job three big questions...

1. Job 38:2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"
2. Job 40:2 "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"
3. Job 40:8 "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?"

It's human nature to want to know why. It's human nature to want to know answers. It's human nature when we don't know the answer to try and provide one of our own. The problem with this is we don't have the knowledge God has or the perspective God has! Sometimes we may end up putting the blame on God for something He didn't do or we may misunderstand His purposes! And many times, we don't see how God is using all things to work together for our good. I love the way God put it in Isaiah 55...

Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

Isaiah 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

I realize it's not an easy thing to put things in God's hands and simply trust Him especially when there's tragedy or sickness or financial or relational difficulties in your life. But we have to decide whether or not we're going to worry, fret, and spend all of our time trying to figure things out or whether or not we're going to trust the sovereignty, the wisdom and the gracious love God has for us in the midst of trying times. Jay preached a sermon years ago I'll never forget, "Bitter or Better!" You have to decide what your response will be. Job made his decision...

Job's Response

Job 42:1 Then Job replied to the LORD:

Job 42:2 "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

Job 42:3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

Job 42:4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'

Job 42:5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

Job 42:6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

John Fischer, one of the pioneers in Contemporary Christian Music and a writer said this...

"Sometimes God answers us with questions-questions that leave us humbled, awed, speechless, weak, and believing-believing not because we've found the answer, but because we've seen God. It doesn't matter that we have more questions now than when we started. It

matters that we see God, for in the seeing, we discover that the truest answer to all our questions is to worship Him.”

Job was faced with a choice: blame God or trust Him. Become angry with Him or let His love comfort and strengthen. In the midst of terrible pain and loss. Job made his choice. Now I want to share with you a very personal story. These words are engraved on my Grandfather’s headstone...

“An honest man’s the noblest work of God”

Let me help you understand why this was chosen. Towards the end of the great depression, my granddad went to work for the Illinois Central Railroad in the brake shops at McComb, MS. He was with a group of workers leaving work and crossing multiple train tracks and somehow he was hit with a push car and pinned underneath. His back was broken in several places. He was transported from McComb, MS to New Orleans to a hospital and put in a full nickel body cast. He made a full recovery and went back to work for the railroad. They paid his medical bills and gave him around 800.00 which he took and bought a home and some property. He built his mom and dad a home on the place. He later met and married my Grandmother. They had four children, two girls and two boys. Patricia died due to a tragic accident when she was only 9 years old. Later on, two of their other children would have some serious health scares. My grandmother struggled with health issues much of her life and after 53 years of marriage she passed away. Through all of those things, my Grandpa remained faithful to his Lord. He was faithful to the little country Church he attended! People sought out his advice because they knew him to be a Godly man. He left a legacy of integrity that pointed others to Jesus! Even with the trials and tribulations he faced in life, he continued to hold on to his faith and that influenced people who knew him, but especially his children. That influence was powerful in my Dad’s life and that legacy of Godly influence had a part in how my Dad handled things with me when I was a rebellious, lost and troubled young man. In fact the Godly way in which my Dad and my Mom handled things ended up leading me to Jesus! My Grandfather could have turned his back on God after all of the tragedies he had faced in life, but he refused to give up on his faith and I attribute my 45 years of ministry to his legacy of integrity!

My grandfather would have agreed with what Job told one of his so-called friends, and I hope that you and I will embrace this statement so we too can leave a legacy of integrity. Job said...

Job 19:25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

Job 19:26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;

Job 19:27 I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!