

The Lord Is My Inheritance

(Joshua 18: 1-10; 19:49,50)

The bible is a fascinating book and part of the fascination is because of the material you find in it. The first book Genesis is the history of the nations forefathers, Exodus is about the God who brought deliverance and promised the people a land of their own. The third book, Leviticus is the laws on relating to this God. Numbers is a book about numbers, the record of the family trees and the nations population census records. Deuteronomy is the constitution of the new nation; and now this section of Joshua we are in is the ministry of lands department the survey of the land and the allocation of the title deeds for the clans and the tribes.

Joshua 1:3-21 is one of those sections of scripture we consider dry for devotion but if you were an Israelite you would have studied this section very closely to make sure you knew what your peoples land was and how big your territory was.

For today I want to draw out one lesson from this section, and it is the lesson of inheritance..

If you were to die today what would you want to leave behind for your children? I think different people would answer that differently,. But by and large, I think Kenyans are still at the point where they would and were - "Real Estate" - I would want to leave behind some land, or a house, or a farm. Why real estate? Because it would give my children some form of material security something tangible that will help them start of in life - real estate is a form of wealth that they can use to start off. * Can live of the land.

Secondly land will give them a sense of belonging, a place they can call home an attachment that will bring them back to their people.

Thirdly land gives them a sense of tribal identity especially if it is rural land among their people.

Fourthly land gives them a resting place. A place where they can be buried - not at a public cemetery, but among their forefathers.

If you had asked an Israelites about inheritance, their answer too would have been land. They were an agricultural people and land for them was a means of sustenance without land you were doomed to poverty or slavery, but with land

you would grow your own food. But more than sustained land was also a means of production and wealth.

But land also gave them the a sense of belonging and identity. From the location of your land, they could tell you what clan and tribe you came from and probably who your forefathers were; it gave them identity. *after many years of the desert without a home.

The interesting thing however, was that the land never belonged to the Israelites. They never owned it - it was a trust from the Lord to use, to till and to pass onto their children but they could not own it because God had said in Leviticus.

The land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants."

But God also told them "the land I give you is an inheritance for you and your children!" And so they cherished it and when they thought about inheritance, they thought about land.

But there was one tribe in Israel that was not given land - they owned no land, they had no inheritance to leave their children, and these were the levites - the tribe of Levi.

Josh 13:33. But to the tribe of Levi, Moses had given no inheritance; the Lord the God of Israel, is their inheritance as he promised them.

Why didn't they receive land? There are two reasons....

- (i) God had set them apart to serve him alone! No land, or their own pursuits but him alone.
- (ii) Secondly God promised that He would provide for them through the temple, not the land. Num. 18:20-21. The Lord said to Aaron "You will have no inheritance in the land. I am your inheritance among the Israelites. I give to the levites all the tithes in Israel and their inheritance in return for the work they are doing serving at the Tent of Meeting!"

So what would they pass onto their children as an inheritance after them? Where would their children's security and sense of belonging draw from?

It is here that we begin to see that material things are not the only things God considers as worthy inheritance. You see the inheritance that the levites would leave for their children were:-A relationship of dependence upon God

1. A responsibility of service in the temple
2. A promise from a faithful God to provide

These were a non - tangible inheritance but it was as good as the inheritance of land.

You see even for the Israelites that received land, their inheritance was not really the land, - for God owned that; and their security was not the land because when they rejected God, the land was taken away from them. Even though they got land, their real security and their real inheritance was a relationship of dependence upon God himself.

There is nothing wrong in passing on land or wealth to them, God gave his own people land; but it is not necessarily the best. Indeed wealth and material things have two hidden dangers in them.

(i) Turn to Deut 8:10-14 and 17-18 The very thing that is supposed to be a blessing can be such a danger that Agur prayed in Prov 30:7

Two things I ask of you, Lord. Do not refuse me before I die keep falsehood and lies far from me give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say who is the Lord? Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonour the name of my God.

(ii) The second danger is that we can easily put our trust and security in material things forgetting Jesus words in Mt. 6:19 "Do not store up treasure on earth where moths and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal" His warning was do not put your faith and security in material things (e.g. Rwanda).

Now may be the problem for most of us is not that we will have too much but that it will take all that we have many years of toil and labour to even gather a little for them. As someone has said "Education nowadays is so expensive that our children are eating their inheritance now".

Well take heart, there are other forms of inheritance that you can give your children that are worth much more than wealth and material things. Lets together look at five non-materials forms of inheritance that you can pass onto your children.

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

Here is one inheritance we can all pass onto our children - a good name. Do not let the love of money be at the expense of a good name. Live out your life in such a way that even though you have no wealth to pass onto them, they inherit a good name.

2. A spiritual inheritance:- Ex 20:5-6

"You shall not bow down before idols and worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations for those who love me and keep my commandments."

We all know that biologically our children inherit our feature! We also know that behaviourally they also inherit our habits - "like father - like son" we say. The children of alcoholics tend to be alcoholics in their own turn; the children of child abusers tend to repeat the sins of their fathers generation - children inherit our behavior.

What Exodus 20:5 also tells us is that we also pass on a spiritual heritage to our children. If my generation wilfully rejects God, then I have passed on a spiritual heritage to our children. If my generation wilfully rejects God, then I have passed on a heritage of rejection to the third and fourth generation. My choices now in spiritual matters have an impact on the spiritual heritage of children.

If I love God - then I have opened the door so that God will show love to them and woe them to a thousand generations and they will probably follow in my footsteps.

What sort of spiritual heritage are you passing onto your children now? Is it one of faithfulness to God, and of prayerful dependence on God?

3. Memories (Ps. 78 1-7)

III - Priscilla Adoyo.

Memories that build faith in our children and in our children's, children. Are you storing up such memories for your children.

III - Our family practice

4. Wisdom (Ecc 7:11-12)

"Wisdom, like an inheritance is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this, that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor".

Now the type of wisdom that the bible speaks about is not an acknowledgement of academic principles and truths, theorems and scientific facts - it is the truth applied and lived out in daily choices. What our children go to school to get unfortunately is not wisdom, it is an education. Wisdom, which is much harder to come any, is when they take the truth they know and apply it to life make good choices, build a good character and name for themselves, serve others.

They get an education at school where they learn about the human body and reproduction where they learn the sexual organs and what does what, how hormones are produced and what effect they have ... but they display wisdom when they make a wise moral choice and say no to peer pressure, and choose to remain pure till marriage.

Prov. 3:13 Blessed is the man who finds wisdom the man who gains understanding. For she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold she is more precious than rubies nothing you desire can compare with her. Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace.

What are you doing to pass on an inheritance of wisdom to your children. Paying for an expensive education is not it!

(1st Pet 1:3-5)

5. Eternal life - But the greatest inheritance you can ever give your children - an inheritance that is secure and eternal - is your faith in Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately you can not write it down on your will and leave it to them. Instead you must live it out before them and you must pray it into them. And once it is theirs then it is worth more than all the other forms of inheritance put together because with it comes wisdom and strength and faith and peace and also the things we hope money will deliver in life.

Conclusion:- Israel's real inheritance was not the land of the people, or the tithes of the priests; it was a relationship of dependence on God. The same is true for our children today - if at the end of my life my children can say "The Lord is my inheritance", then I know I have given them an inheritance that will see them through life and will not perish, spoil or fade. I may or may not have land to pass onto them; I may or may not have wealth to pass onto them but if I can pass onto them a living vibrant faith, then they have all they need. They have the most valuable thing in life!