

You can't take it with you. But there was a guy who tried. He told everyone, "When I die, I want you to take all my money, stuff it in a box, and put it in the casket with me. I plan to use it after I die." His wife promised she would obey his wishes. The man died, and his wife brought a box to the mortician. He said to her, "Your husband had a lot of money, ma'am. You're certainly not going to bury it all with him." She said, "I promised I would. So I put all his money into my account, wrote him a check and put it in this box. If he can cash it, he can have it."

You leave things behind when you die. Some of them you give away to specific people or institutions in person or through your will. You make a gift because you know who will appreciate it the way you did. You also hand down some things that are not so tangible: such as your values and even your authority.

This is what happens at the Ascension of Jesus. He hands on to his disciples what was most important to him: the Holy Spirit. He raised his hands, the same gesture ministers still use when we call down the Holy Spirit upon bread and wine, upon all the people in the final blessing, or in giving the sacrament of confirmation. Before he left, Jesus handed down the Holy Spirit.

Earlier in his life, at the transfiguration, Jesus appeared to his friends in glory with Moses on one side and Elijah on the other. At the end of his life, he imitates both those prophets. Just before Moses died, he laid his hands upon Joshua and filled him with the spirit of wisdom. With that spirit, Joshua led the people into the Promised Land. Elijah, at the end of his earthly life, gave the prophet Elisha a double portion of his spirit, so that the younger prophet could perform the marvelous deeds of his mentor. So at the end of Luke's gospel, just like Moses and Elijah, Jesus hands on his Spirit to his followers. He says, "I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Jesus ended his life by promising to send the Spirit. He couldn't take it with him; but he didn't want to take the Spirit with him. He wanted to share this treasure with those he loved.

You may think the end of your life is near or very far away, but you don't know, and it's good to plan for it accordingly. God has entrusted you with many gifts, and you can hand those down to another generation. By making out a will you can lovingly hand on the things that mean the most to the people who mean the most. When you do that, you are also handing on your values of charity and foresight. Some of your family may be more interested in your valuables than your values; and you may think you don't have very much, but the most precious gift you give is who you are and what you believe.

At the end of his life Jesus carefully gave away what was important to him, and we, thousands of years later, still benefit from that gift. When you give what you have, you enrich the lives of others for generations to come.