

Lifelines

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Topic: *Why do you love the Lord?*

Class Is ... As Class Does!

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Dolly Parton entered into Heaven and the presence of Jesus, on August 25th, 2026. I am sure that she is receiving a warm welcome, as Dolly, the Queen of country music bows before the King of Kings and LORD of Lords. She most certainly has experienced the smile of Jesus and His heartfelt words: "Welcome to Heaven, Dolly! It's so good to see you here, where you belong!"

As people remember her, and grieve her departure, it becomes apparent that she was an incredible person, a one in a million, who for her 80 years of life, lived life in humility and service of doing good and being helpful to others. She was born as Dolly Rebecca Parton on January 19, 1946 in Locust Ridge, Tennessee. Her family was large, so she had 11 other siblings, all growing up with limited income in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. She learned music from her mother who taught her to sing traditional folk and church music. When she was 13 she made her first appearance as a guest on The Porter Wagner Show. In 1964 she moved to Nashville. As a prolific songwriter, she wrote over three thousand songs, and was smart enough to own them and keep the copyright and royalty rights to them.

Yet when you listen to those who knew her well, and people who had friendships with her, she was a loving, caring person, who never let success go to her head. She was a giving person, willing to help others succeed and to give others opportunities to sing her songs, and to honor them enough to not steal their thunder when they were successful. She was real, and unpretentious as a person and performer. Pat Boone noted that she was the "purest person" he had ever met, not in the sense of a prude, but rather in the sense that she had no pretense, no hidden agendas. She was who she was, and lived her life doing what she felt was best.

One of my favorite songs by Dolly is "The Coat of Many Colors, that My Momma Made for Me." That seemed to well-depict her life as a child, and the love of her parents trying to feed and clothe twelve children.

Perhaps one of her most lasting legacies is the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. She dedicated it to her father, who never learned to read or write. She wanted everyone to have the opportunity to read, and saw reading as the door to all other learning opportunities. According to its website, there are currently 3,197,250 children enrolled in the program in multiple countries, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has gifted 332,411,218 books to children for them to read. Dolly stated that the library was her way of helping others in difficult living scenarios. She was planting seeds into the children and their families, seeds of life and hope.

As Dolly stated on their website: "When I was growing up in the hills of East Tennessee, I knew my dreams would come true. I know there are children in your community with their own dreams. They dream of becoming a doctor or an inventor or a minister. Who knows, maybe there is a little girl whose dream is to be a writer and singer. The seeds of these dreams are often found in books and the seeds you help plant in your community today can grow across the world."

Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 10:8: "Freely you have received; freely give." Again in Luke 6:36 Jesus taught: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." God was good and merciful in

caring for Dolly and her family, and she wanted others to experience the goodness and mercy of God as well. She didn't just give money; instead she gave books, and learning opportunities, and planted seeds which could unlock potential in others.

In Luke 6:38 (NIV) we find another great verse which Dolly lived-out through her life: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Dolly Parton has left behind a legacy, which will keep planting seeds that will change the lives of others. Regarding being a success in life, she once said: "If your legacy is that you dream more, learn more, and influence others to become more, then you are a success!"

She didn't just say it ... she has done it. Class is, as Class does. Dolly embodied class! May her tribe increase, to the glory of God! Amen!

Award-winning columnist Dr. Ed Jordan is pastor of Gwynn's Island Baptist Church, Gwynn, VA. He can be reached at szent.edward@gmail.com. Dr. Jordan's new book: "Doing Love! It can change your life!" can be purchased on Barnes&Noble.com or Amazon.com.