

Homily
August 7, 2022
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time
27:51-39:40

On Father's Day I noted a particular insight into being a parent. It was revealed to me on a radio program. A young man spoke about how his father taught him something extremely important:

Children are an investment, not an expense.

We all have investments of some sort or another, besides our children. I'm sure that those of us who are 65 or older have invested in our retirement. Correct? Anybody here have a retirement plan? All right. That's an investment toward the future. And you hope for a good return so you can live at least comfortably into the future.

Many of us own our homes, right? And we invest in those homes. Why? Because they are an asset and some of us invest not only in upkeep, but in renovations. But then our lawn, right? You invest in the lawn and the shrubs because there's a return on the beauty. It's attractive.

We invest in our neighborhoods, don't we? We invest our time with them. We invest our care for them, especially the neighbors who need more because they're alone. And we invest in them because it's good for the community, part of the "common good."

Now I could go on and on with other examples of how we invest in our city, our state, our church. But we know what investments are, don't we? They're very important. We look for a return because there's a greater good in the return. And very often, the investment yields something that benefits others.

In our three readings today, there's an undercurrent of "investing." In the Book of Wisdom from which our First Reading comes, the author is writing in the century before Christ, probably in the city of Alexandria, which was a hotbed of Greek culture and thinking. It was a very important city for knowledge at that time. And those who were Jews were being influenced by that thinking. But some of the thinking was counter in its belief structure, to Judaism – the Mosaic Covenant.

And the author of Wisdom encourages the Jewish people to recall what God has done in the past, so that they may remain focused on what God has done in the Covenant on his part and what they are to do with it on their part. In other words: invest your thoughts and your time in our belief in the Lord so that the Covenant Promise will be yours.

“Faith is the realization of that for which is hoped, and evidence of things not seen.”

Faith and hope, my brothers and sisters. They too are a source for investing ourselves. Faith in the Lord Jesus. Yes. And hope that his promises will be fulfilled.

The author also unfolds one of the great persons of faith, Abraham. We know the story of Abraham. He picked up his roots and invested everything in what the Lord asked him to do. And that was to take his whole family and move from the Ur of the Chaldees to this land called, “Canaan.” He put it “all in.” And as we’ve heard over the last few weeks, there was this give-and-take of a relationship between the Lord and Abraham – not only at meal, but also in promise. The promise of descendants, the promise of the birth of a son, Isaac. And the investment Abraham put in was always, “Yes.”

Even when the Lord, as we heard, asked him to sacrifice his only son, he was willing to abide that because he trusted in the Lord. He had faith and he knew somehow that God would fulfill hope, even without Isaac. But the Lord stayed his hand because Abraham had invested so much in being faithful to the relationship he had with God, and God’s response each time.

There was quite a return. We’re part of that. We who are Christian. Just like our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, all descendants of Abraham.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart shall be.”

The Gospel is very clear in three different episodes.

What are you going to commit to – the world, or the Kingdom? And if you commit to the Kingdom, will you stay attentive and invest more time, more thought than just pleasure? To be a servant of other servants, to be a steward. And will you keep that in mind, even as you wait for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God?

Yes. Jesus asked his disciples and the apostles to invest in the Gospel message, to dedicate their belongings to that Gospel message, to give their time and their attention to it so that they’ll know and be ready when the Gospel message is fulfilled.

I’ve spent a good deal of time this week thinking about these readings and this particular concept of investment in faith and hope. But you know what I found? Sometimes, some weeks, I spend more time managing my money than I do in prayer. Does that surprise you? No. I hope not.

It's those weeks that I get caught up in all of that stuff -- and I don't have much. But you know when you've got a little, you manage it really closely. It helps you have enough. And I thought to myself, "Rick. What is your first and most important investment? What requires your attention? What has the greatest yield? What is moving towards eternal life?" Now, I'm not beating myself up about it because some weeks it's a little bit reversed. But I know how hard it is to maintain my investment in faith and hope and the love that flows from that for myself and for you.

So, I'm leaving you with a question. What's your investment in your relationship with the Lord? How much are you IN on that investment? Is it a large part of how you invest across the board? Or is it tiny? Could improve.

But you have to make the choice. You have to be intentional about it. You have to say, "No. THIS much. I will invest in my relationship with the Lord and in however I am living out the Covenant I have in Jesus Christ. That affects everything."

You know if you have a portfolio of investments -- what do you call the guy that helps you - your financial planner -- calls you from time to time and says, "We need to talk just to catch up and be sure that's where you want to be..."

Do we do that with the Lord? Do we take time to ponder the investment we have and the yield and the hope that gives us? Something to do this week with our time, with our prayer, our relationship with our God.