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Christian Education Sunday

God's Financial Advice: Invest in Children

Psalm 127:1-5 <A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.> Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. ² *It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.* ³ Behold, children *are* a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb *is* a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So *are* the children of one's youth. ⁵ Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

What is the priority in your life?

For so many people these days the priority is money, career, house, vacations, having fun while they are young and then down the road children. They want children but only after they have established themselves.

This is an attitude which even the disciples in our Gospel reading show, as though kids are just something that get in the way. But Christ in both our gospel reading and our sermon text shows us a different attitude that they one of the greatest blessing He gives to us.

Solomon draws a picture here of a man who labors to build a nice house. He makes sure that the walls of the city are well guarded so that he and his house are safe. He rises early and works late into the evening postponing supper, working hard and saving. But says Solomon it is all empty and useless.

Solomon can be a bit of downer. All work is empty and useless. All life is pointless. But his point here isn't to make us hate our lives and sit around waiting for death. His point is to keep us focused to remind us of those things that do have value.

If I labor hard for myself, build a big house and save lots of money, what do I have? A pile of gold and not much else

If I labor for the Lord that is better. All that is done for the Lord whether its cleaning gutters or baking bread or typing at a keyboard, all that is done to the Lord is good for the Lord has blessed it. But best of all is that which is done to the Lord for the children.

Remember that the labor of our hands is a curse that was put on man when Adam sinned. Work is a curse but Children are a blessing. Children are the blessing which the Lord gives to us in a cursed and difficult world. It is as though Solomon is saying, the one good thing in this evil world is Children.

The man who has many children is like a great hunter with a quiver full of arrows. That family will speak with their enemies in the gate. Notice they will speak with their enemy. The whole family is there supporting one another. Coming from a large family I can tell you how great it is to have many brothers and sisters you can count on to have your back. That is the picture here in this last verse of the Psalm. The family is not ashamed because when one of them is in trouble, they are all there together, standing up for one another.

Better to be poor with a large family than rich with and alone.

Pour your time and money into wealth and it can easily be gone tomorrow, pour your time and money into your children, and especially into bringing them up in the fear of the Lord and it will never be wasted. The labor we do in the work of the things of this world is here today and gone tomorrow, but the work we do for children to the Lord is never wasted. It is never in vain. It will produce fruit.

The work which we do as parents, as Sunday school teachers, as Christian day school teachers is not in vain. The work we do in whatever other way we help to bring the little children to Christ is not in vain. If we helping with our own kids or others' kids or both it is not in vain.

This promise we have from the Lord that this work is not in vain. The Lord will bless that work and those children. That work can be frustrating, and aggravating. It can seem like the kids aren't learning and won't ever learn. But the Lord promises he will be with you and work through his word and it will not be in vain

Isaiah 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

In Isaiah the Lord promises that all teaching of his Word will not be in vain. In our Gospel reading Christ promises that especially the teaching of His word to Children will not be in vain. He will bless it.

Matthew 19:14 But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

This is work which the Lord will bless. Often it may not seem like it, when they are young or even when they are grown. Perhaps they grow up and forsake the Lord and you think what was the point. But that word is still there in their memory and the hearts. The Lord might still use it to bring them back. Here we have the parable of the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 and searches out that one lost sheep. We have also the parable of the Prodigal Son who after living a long time in sin remembers the love and

grace of His father and returns in repentance. These parables remind us of the hope that what is done in the Lord for our children is never in vain.^a

This is called a song of ascent. That most likely means it was sung on the way up to Jerusalem.

The Israelites would leave home and field and journey to Jerusalem. They would leave their home sometimes for as long as a week.

Perhaps they would think on the way, "What is going to happen to my farm? Perhaps I should stay and till the ground and work the field? Perhaps I should stay and guard it?"

Then they would sing this Psalm. It would remind them that it is useless to stay and till the ground or guard the wall without the Lord's blessings. Therefore it is better to go first to the temple and receive the Lord's blessing. It is better to put church first. This psalm would remind them that the greatest blessing is children, therefore first we will take our children to the Lord. Therefore they sang and gladly brought their children up to the Lord for him to bless.

This task of bringing our children to the Lord is one of constant repentance. It is not an easy thing to rear children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It is not easy for the teachers, the pastor, or the parents.

We have to provide for them but we also have to be there for them. We have to balance work and time at home. The Lord made the day and night equal. Sometimes the day is a bit longer and sometimes the night but roughly they are equal twelve hours each. But you don't need twelve hours of sleep, eight at the most. That leaves at least 5 hours of darkness. I wonder if that isn't God's way of telling us, "Enough work for the day, go spend time with your family." Each has to work out this balance on his own.

Paul reminds us in Ephesians and Colossians, we need to discipline our children and teach them the consequence of sin, but not to be too hard on them lest we discourage them and provoke them to wrath. Again this is a difficult balance, a knife edge balancing act. As parents we can sometimes live in constant fear of getting it wrong.

This is where we need Christ most of all. The cross of Christ which teaches us to forgive and to be forgiven. The power of baptism and God's word that can heal even the deepest hurt. The power of the Holy Spirit leading us to daily confess our sins and rely on God's forgiveness for the past and God's power for the future.

There are some parents who do such a terrible job as parents, do such tremendously evil things to their children that the children feel they can never forgive their parents. Sometimes it is the children who do such terrible things to the parents, so that the parents feel like they can never forgive. Sometimes it really isn't that bad what the parents or children do but still words are spoken and anger and

resentment are left sitting between parents and children, stinking like a rotten egg. At the cross of Christ we can come and sit and learn forgiveness. His cross can teach us to forgive even the most horrendous sins. His cross can heal the pain and hurt of even the most abused child.

Christ has given to all of this greatest of all earthly blessings, even if you don't have children yourself. Still maybe you have nieces and nephews, or maybe you are teacher or a Sunday School teacher, or maybe in some other way you help and have children in your life.

The Lord has given to some of us as individuals but to all of us as a congregation this great blessing. Let us pray that he may give us also the patience, love, dedication, wisdom and forgiveness that we might faithfully bring these little ones to live in His grace.

As a congregation together let us renew in our hearts our commitment to invest our time and prayers and money in our Children. The Lord will bless these efforts.

Amen