

Sermon Notes Dec 5 2021

Invest in Life - Invest in God, invest in people, invest in life.

Cast your bread upon the water - Eccl 11:1

In brief don't watch for the wind, don't hold back your hand, don't wait around for a good time. But step in to invest in God and invest in people because Eternity becomes your perspective when you do these things.

The best way to save your life is to use it (invest it)- and even though it looks like you are wearing away doing so. This principle is analogous to what Jesus states "He who saves/keeps his life loses it, he who invests it in me will find it Mathew 16:25

This is the life of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25) - not one to be holy in the sense of holiness sought by Israel either in the palace (holding wealth) or in the monastery (hoarding spirituality or religious power). This is the life described by Jesus as the "grain that falls to the ground"" so it won't go wasted sitting around. (John 12:23-25)

Solomon, alleged author of Ecclesiastes, ponders life and finds life is "meaningless", "absurd" as Kierkegaard would also attest in his "Existentialism." The work later picked up by Nietzsche in some form into his Nihilism continues to assert that life in itself looks absurd and meaningless.

Solomon as he reasoned through his thoughts he somehow came to this point to saying although life seems or looks meaningless, one who invests his life actually finds meaning and it actually works. What changed for the preacher, what made this preacher turn from "Absurd" "Meaninglessness" of life into this perspective of active living and giving? The same preacher who earlier said in Ecclesiastes 1:15 "What is crooked cannot be mended and what is lacking cannot be counted" now says in 11:6 "Sow your seed in the morning and don't let your hands be idle - give a portion to 7 and even to 8th" - why would anybody do such a thing if life in fact is meaningless?

What was added to his meditation that turned the "life under the sun" into this type of life in Ecclesiastes 11:6 as He says "Sow your seed in the

morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well." Simply the idea of God and the idea of Eternity life "above the sun" and NOT just life "under the sun"

Like money that is tucked safely under your bed actually is being lost every day as it drops in value, inflation and other things eat it away (like moth and rust destroy or thieves break in and steal). - If you keep your money and "watch for the wind" (v4) to invest you may never invest and it may be gone. Either procrastination or over-thinking, over-calculating, overly cautious self-preserving life ends up wasted.

How do you invest in God? What does it mean to invest in him?
Is a busy life invested in God - not necessarily!

Right life comes with the right relationship - Take in your fellowship with God every day. Read his word - the living word himself - meditation on him, wait on him and grow in fellowship with him. Pray through the Psalms and write your own songs to God in prayer. Kneel before him and recite a Psalm to meditate on his power. Meditate on Jesus who himself is the embodiment of the "Word of God" A productive life begins with prioritizing time with the Lord.

Learn to observe the works of God through good and bad times. Continue just small steps, little blessings while your life looks like it has been put on pause! Be wise, be patient but also don't stop your step with the Lord. You can meditate on God about both your past and your suffering (current or past). This is a crucial part of life.

This is how you face life with God internally , soberly, yet joyfully : How can one redeem his past - aren't the acts already done? What can he do to undo or fix them? How can one make things better? As Viktor Frankl (Author of "Man's search for meaning") would insist that what is past is not lost, precisely because it has happened and what is done can never be undone: "Having been is also a kind of being, and perhaps the surest kind." Your past he claims is NOT irretrievably lost but irrevocably treasured, etched in God's book of life as He gives you names (plural) as you cross each venture in life. Even your unbeliever part of life is imprinted with God's meticulous and wonderful hand.

Finding meaning in suffering. This is another area to ponder as written in

Ecclesiastes 11:8 "But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many. Everything to come is meaningless. " In away the author is saying unless you can find meaning in the "days of darkness" you are back into the "life under the sun" - everything in fact is meaningless if you decide suffering meaningless.

Sorrow and Suffering are as good companions as Goodness and Glory. Meaning, therefore, is unconditional in the sense that it does not depend on favorable external conditions. Existence, for Frankl and in this context, means primarily suffering, which he insists is "an ineradicable part of life", from which it follows that life can only be meaningful if *suffering* itself is meaningful - as much as joy is meaningful. Do not forge that if suffering includes past failures, God is willing and able to give you back "years that the swarming locust have eaten" - even the ones sent by God to correct Israel. Read Joel 2:25 carefully Locust were God's army he sent to correct his people.

Consider past suffering + lost time together have also seen small preservations that you will notice only if you will pause. As Moses states in Deut 8:4 - "Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years." Watch people like Asaph worship God as he observed the unseen footprints of God in the difficult journey of Isreal. "Your footprints were not seen, (yet) you led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" Ps 77:19

Remember the "Book of Life" not only has your name but also the names given to you as you conquer each stage and part of your life. There is nothing lost, not even a grain is lost Isaiah 28:29 "This also comes from the Lord of hosts, *Who* is wonderful in counsel *and* excellent in guidance."

Consider also the aging process as a path of wearing away of the body as the soul gains its character, beauty and strength. It is unavoidable that (Ecclesiastes. 12: 2-5) "when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop" - meaning you are not able to stand without a walker. " when the grinders cease because they are few" - means your teeth no longer easily crushes and relishes the food you eat. "The windows grow dim" - meaning you cannot see very well your cataract covered eyes. "The songs grow faint;" - talking about your hearing loss. "People are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets" - many fears assail you away. "The almond tree blossoms" - meaning the white hair shows up. "the grasshopper

drags itself along" - you no longer hop out of bed turn and twist to get up! and "desire no longer is stirred" - sexual and other pleasures are no longer stirred..

Embrace both the aging process and the process of dying itself as the way to living. How can you reach eternal in this body, this body should die for the next to be gifted to you. Metamorphosis cannot happen if a butterfly wants to keep its worm / caterpillar body. Let this wearing out of your body show itself into the path of death leading into life. Prepare yourself for death - embrace death as the way to this Eternity promised by God. It is ultimate form of investing when you are willing to die as the new life grabs you away from this world - step by step..

This investment in life involves a grand step "investing in people". How can one invest in another person? Or in people in general. He cannot die for another person or redeem another person (Psalms 49). The investment in another person is actually for you it is not for them. They can always be fed by God who cares for the sparrow. God wants you to invest in others so you benefit for eternity and not hold back your grain to only loose it.

This is what it means to give a portion to 7 and to the 8 - go beyond your call of duty (7-the perfect number) to a call for the "extra mile" Matthew 5:41

This is a way of giving that expects no favors, no rewards, no approvals - but is willing to wait for the eternal reward. Compare Barnabas (Acts 4:37) - a levite whose property in Cyprus was sold to lay it in front of the apostle. Just a few verses later - People like Annanias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10) imitate only the outward part of Barnabas's faith miserably failing to see the eternal anticipation of such giving. A well-invested life is a good venture for you - not for others but for you - God can help others but he wants to use you. Barnabas steps on the side to continue such work when he supports Mark during the conflict with Paul the apostle. Acts 14:37

The book of Hebrews is a powerful work by an unknown author on two major topics "Jesus is Better" and "Don't drift away" - How do you keep from drifting away - by doing many of the 14 "let us" seen in Hebrews.

- 1) "Fear," - Hebrews 4:1.
- 2) "Be diligent," - Hebrews 4:11.
- 3) "Hold fast," - Hebrews 4:14.
- 4) "Draw near with confidence to the throne of grace," - Hebrews 4:16.
- 5) "leave elementary teaching," - Hebrews 6:1. (Lettuce Leaves).

- 6) "Draw near," – Hebrews 10:22.
- 7) "Hold unswervingly," – Hebrews 10:23.
- 8) "Stimulate one another," – Hebrews 10:24.
- 9 & 10) "Lay aside every encumbrance... and run with endurance," – Hebrews 12:1.
- 11) "Fix our eyes on Jesus" – Hebrews 12:2.
- 12) "Be Thankful," – Hebrews 12:28.
- 13) "Go out," – Hebrews 13:13.
- 14) "Offer up a sacrifice of praise," – Hebrews 13:15.

Psalms 73 is another place where we see the priestly Asaph restoring his vision of God's righteous judgement in "till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny" Asaph loses his footing until he enters potentially a fellowship of other saints in the "sanctuary" of God. So do not stop gathering together but find your vision and focus restored as you enter the "sanctuary of God" - which is really the fellowship of the saints.

Solomon captures this beautifully as he meditates how a person finds purpose and meaning in the companionships and friendships of life in Ecclesiastes 4:

- 9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
¹⁰ If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.
¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
¹² Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

When conflict and jealousy or confusion sets in in your mind regarding the fellowship - pause to consider the prodigal son - yeh the real prodigal son who is actually the older son. He lost his bearings and was worried about a "young goat" instead of seeing his father's unbelievable love and incredible generosity. The father had plenty to provide both the sons and is also able to give "all things" to his first son. As I get to be an older believer I feel more like the first son, I just need to watch and see that God says to me "You are

always with me AND all things I have are yours as well" Luke 15:31

Eternal life is NOT only profitable after death but it is profitable today, here and now - especially to your neighbor. The most important time in all history (existentially) is today. Today gives meaning to life - so redeem the time knowing the days are evil. (Eph 5:14-16). We ought to buy back time, we surrendered it in the Garden of Eden. We choose "Time" as part of the package of the "fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil". We chose this instead of eternal enjoyment of God's love, eternal fellowship with his Spirit, unceasing worship of God's son.

But now, We care about time, because we care about death and we have a limited time on earth (Bonhoeffer). God gives us opportunity through this struggle to buy back time, redeem it from the hands of the devil and give it back into the hand of God for our enjoyment - today and leading through into eternity.

You find life by embracing relationship with God, embracing your past, embracing suffering, ultimately embracing death- while at the same time reflecting on the peaceful and joyful portions of life - health, wealth, fellowship, brotherhood, forgiveness. This is the life of beautiful feet - how lovely on the mountains are these feet that carry good news. (Nahum 1:15)

Finally - send your grain over the oceans. Invest in God, Invest in Life and Invest in people.