

This week's been a pretty busy week for me. It's been a lot of ups and downs. It's been a lot of traveling. So, Wednesday and Thursday, I was at a seminar in Los Angeles. We were talking about organizing. We read a book about Fred Ross and watched the movie about him, and we spent two days discussing different ways that we can organize and we can see things. And in the book, The author quotes him as saying, "I was a terrible parent. I was a terrible husband. I was a terrible son, but it was worth it for the work." He says it at the beginning of the book. And, as you can guess, everybody in the room got upset. We started to have an argument about is it really worth it? Do the sacrifices that we make, are they really worth it?

I don't know if you know who Fred Ross is, but he was very instrumental in developing unions and organizations in the Great Depression and threw up the Grapes of Wrath. John Steinbeck followed him around to the concentration, or I'm sorry to the labor camps and discussed these things. So he worked very hard to bring underprivileged people, under-recognized people, people who didn't have running water, people that didn't have paved roads, people that didn't have job security. He had all of this work so they could have better lives. But as a result, his children hated him. He got divorced. His mother hated him. His brother hated him. And at the beginning, he thinks it's all worth it. He thinks the choices that he made are worth it because so many other lives are better.

We all make choices in life. We all make choices to get wherever we're going. We don't always think about how it affects the people who are most close to us. While we are having this discussion, Half the group is like, yes, it's worth it. It's absolutely worth it because the greater needs outweigh the individuals. The other group, the other half of the group said, no, it's not worth it because you need to keep your spiritual life in check. You need to keep your family life in check. You need to keep your quality of life in check. If you can guess. The one group were all the churches that were there, and then the other group were all the laborers who were there. And one man stands up in the middle of it, not me, somebody else, for once, stands up in the middle of it, and he says, you're both wrong. And the room just fell silent. How can you both be wrong?

He was a lawyer. He'd spent all of his life defending Native American culture. He had been defending those people. He'd been helping them in any way he could. And as a result he fought with his wife. He fought with his son. He lost his church. And it wasn't until he had joined this group and started going to these things that he realized he'd been doing it alone the whole time. He'd been trying to help these people by himself. He didn't include his wife. He didn't include his son. And he decided I need to change. We can do both if we do it together. You recognize that God put him in that spot on that day because God had a plan.

Like the prophet, Jeremiah says in today's reading, I have a plan for you. God has a plan for all of us. We just have to choose to listen to it. We make our own choices. If you believe in free will, and something happens bad in your life because of the choices you made, not because God intentionally wanted all these terrible things to happen. Sometimes terrible things just happen, but you don't have to go through it alone, He says. If you look for me, you will find me. If you pray I am there. If you remember back in the story of Noah, God turned his face from us, turned his face from all of us, made the flood, wiped out as many people as possible at that time. And he swore to us; he promised. He made a covenant that he will never do that again.

And he will always be there. That he will always be there for us. He made us such a promise that he created the rainbow, and that the rainbows are everywhere. Whenever you see him, see them. You see him when you look around the room. Whenever you see us, you see him. We're not meant to do this alone. We're not meant to do these things and to isolate ourselves at the expense of everyone else. We will make the wrong decisions sometime. We all do. It's a fact, but if we ask for forgiveness and we try to include everyone and share God's love in that process, we'll be okay.

These choices and decisions are great. My friend realized that, as he started to tell everybody., He said, when he got home from one of those meetings, he sat down with his son, and he said to his son, I'm a terrible parent, and I'm sorry. And the son said, you're right, you are. But now, what? They sat down and they worked together, And now they're best friends because he stopped doing everything alone. He started to go back to a church, and when he went to the church, went up to the minister and the minister's like, welcome. We're glad you're here. What committee do you want to be on? That's what we do, right? We try to get everybody engaged. We try to get everybody involved, and he's like, no, no, no, I'm just gonna sit back here and be quiet. But he couldn't; hee couldn't do it. He saw God in all the people and all that they were doing together. He saw God in the families, in the friendships, in the fellowship. Eventually, he joined the church. Eventually, he kept working as a lawyer, and he realized that there is so much more in life than what he had originally clocked, All because he listened. He recognized that God had a plan for him. He stopped fighting it and followed it. He prayed, and he asked for God's forgiveness. And he asked for his love. And God gave it to him like that. That would have been so much cooler if that snap worked. But there's right like that, and we can all do that. We all know we're falling. We're all still here together, and we're here to support everyone, and to remember that we all love each other, just as God loves us, Let us pray.