

Psalm 127 A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.

¹ Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.
² It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives to his beloved sleep.

³ Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one's youth.
⁵ Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Psalm 127 | Unless the Lord

Pushpay giving announcement! Why we give, and how we give.

This is the final sermon in our series on the Christian Home. I personally am relieved by this, because preaching a sermon series on parenting has been a bit like praying for patience. The results in my life have been a bit of a hyperawareness of my own parenting which is good, even necessary for a time, but is no place to live. I've been seeking to be more proactive especially in my verbal instruction. I've sought to be more prayerful on behalf of my children. Likewise, I've sought to have a longer vision. Not thinking of discipline in terms of successfully bringing the temperature down in this moment, but rather forming my child's heart in the way that God disciplines me. My hope is that these will be fruitfully integrated into my life over a new season of not staring directly at them each week.

Likewise, I hope you can see how deeply in your face the bible's instructions are regarding child rearing. God talks to us like he is coaching children. I believe this sermon series is one of the most important for our church that I've preached. When I imagine the future of our Redemption Church Denver in this neighborhood I am prayerful for a church that our grandchildren will attend. Our Grandchildren will be elders and deacons, they'll cook meals for one another, they'll go to men's conferences with cheesy names. They'll look at pictures of themselves as babies when they were baptized and make fun of what I'm wearing.

I've been told that my emphasis on the family is not outward looking enough. This is a foolish critique. Families are the shop windows of the church. They are ordinarily people's first hearing of the gospel, and they are often the glory that strangers witness which attracts them to the gospel. Likewise, as I addressed in earlier sermons, to address individuals outside of the context of families is to address a fantasy. We're constituted by families as much as families are constituted by us as individuals. This series is my church growth strategy. Because it plainly is God's church growth strategy.

Not everyone in our church has young children, believe it or not. And a church community like ours is one of the few places left in which that loss hurts and the sting of that hurt can be made really present each Sunday. My emphasis in this series has been on the natural family being restored by the grace of Christ. But the grace of Christ doesn't only restore the natural family but brings us into the family of God. This means that in spiritual ways our lives may multiply well beyond our natural multiplication. In fact the gospel can even flip the ordinary patterns on their heads.

1 Sam 2:5 | The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.

How can this be? There are spiritual generations. Spiritual mothers and fathers. Those who have become mothers to children not their own, and fathers to children not their own. Paul had no children but Timothy was as his own son. Likewise the bible is saturated with stories of women who can't get pregnant who continue to pursue the Lord and the Lord is faithful to them. These are our stories.

Whether you are in a place where you don't have children you long for, or a place of having children, the weight of our hope remains the same, that God would build a glorious house for his name. Like all other aspects of the Christian life where we long for fruitfulness we must remember that all good things come from above. That is why I want to conclude with a look at who builds the house. As given to us by Solomon in Psalm 127.

1. The Lord Builds

Psalm 127:1 | Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

This Psalm involves two areas of dependence upon the Lord. Building and preserving. Solomon, as we learned in Ecclesiastes, has no fear of pressing us into apparent contradictions. Who builds, God or us? We might think if Solomon said, God is the one who builds then we should expect that we could sit back and do nothing. If God is the one who preserves then why lock our doors?

But Solomon is pressing us into the heights of creation and preservation. We can master the proverbs of parenting. We can perfectly structure our quality time, and even have a lot of it. Our speeches to our children can be tight, and our hugs long. But unless the Lord builds our homes we are hopeless. Likewise we can seek to protect and preserve what we've been given, but unless the Lord preserves it will be washed away.

Solomon is remember the truth of causality. The ultimate cause of all things is God. It is on him that we depend. All of our efforts and contributions are merely means which God must attend for their fruit to be realized. One way to interpret this deep truth is that we are not finally in control of the outcomes of our labors. And this is true, God is finally in control, he is the one who builds and establishes. We could imagine that this fundamental dependence on another would result in anxiety. But for Solomon it doesn't result in anxiety it relieves anxiety.

2. Against Anxiety

Psalm 127:2 | It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

The vanity lies in working beyond the limits that God has given to us. You rise earlier than you ought, you stay up later than you ought. You eat the bread of anxious toil. This in fact is vanity. What God gives is sleep. Some of your parents of newborns are thinking, when will God give this sleep! But sleep is an important thing that Solomon chooses because sleep is a time of doing nothing, and the Lord requires this of us.

The Lord requires a trust in him with our families which allows us to come to the end of the day and say, that's enough from me. I have done what seems good to me. I did almost nothing perfectly, but I did many things pretty good. I now entrust my home to the Lord. He is the one who builds. He knows everything and he knows how to bring chaos to order. God gives you wonderful generational hopes for your children. But he does not give you these to crush you in the present, he gives you these so that you might depend upon him. You may not have built the home you desired for your family. Habits and patterns you would like to see in your children, you likely recognized don't even exist in you yet. You might look and see what a mess you have made. You may be in a situation that you never anticipated, that you can't see a clear way out of, and that in some large measure is your fault. This is ordinary. In such a situation we sleep peacefully, entrusted to the Lord.

3. I build you a house

2 Samuel 7:2-3 | the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." ³ And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."

When David had received peace from the Lord from all his enemies he had a mind to build a permanent home for the ark of God. So he told this to Nathan who encouraged David that the Lord was with him. My hope is that this sermon series has put this desire in your heart. That you might build a home for the Lord. But the Lord speaks next to David.

2 Sam 7:5 | “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in?

2 Sam 7:8-11 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. ⁹ And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

This is the dynamic. David says to the Lord, I will build you a house. But the Lord responds to David. No I build the house. It is wonderful double meaning because David is talking about a literal building and the Lord takes it and looks down the generations and imagines a glorious household. In fact God promises to be a father to his children even when David is gone.

2 Samuel 7:12-16 | When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’”

Now let us return to the psalm which was written by this promised son.

Psalms 127:3-5 | Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

But consider the son who came from this line of promise. How sure are you God would fulfill the promise for you? That you might not be humiliated at the place of judgement. Well God has given his own son to ensure this promise. Parent by the promise. The is our hope in Jesus Christ, that the promise is for you and for your children.