

Psalms of Ascent 127 “God Builds and Blesses”

Psalm 127:1-5

February 23, 2025

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.
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 of Ascent summary.
Baby dedication Sunday.

Psalm 127 gives insight into two major areas of life - work and family. How do these two ideas fit together? It can feel a little disconnected, work in v.1-2 and then verses about children 3-5. So we are going to look for principles that hold these two things together and the way in which God gifts and blesses.

V.1 - God builds the “**house**.” House can be a physical dwelling or the “house” can be a way to talk about family and legacy. “House Jaeger”

One idea connected to this psalm as it is attributed to **Solomon** is that the house is likely the **Temple** and the city is likely **Jerusalem**. It makes sense that it would be with many of the psalms of ascent highlighting a journey or arrival in Jerusalem. With Solomon building

something so incredible Temple, one could get caught up in the splendor of such a place and looking at what Solomon and Israel had built but remembering it was the Lord that accomplished such a thing. But the continually idea of work and labor being **vain**, or to end in failure or coming to nothing, allows the psalm to get more personal to us. With ideas of building, watching, working, repeated is the idea “in **vain**”. Unless the Lord builds the house, builders build in **vain**. Unless the Lord watches over the city, watchmen watch in **vain**.

Sincerity is a high value in our culture. As long as you are going whatever you feel is best and right, the idea is that you can't go wrong. As long as you are sincere, you determine your direction. Jesus uses the illustration of building a house to help understand that there are more important values than sincerity.

Matthew 7:24:27

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

There are two builders. The storm comes to both. The sincerity of the builder didn't keep his house from falling. You can imagine both worked hard and it is safe to say that neither builder wanted their house to fall. But one house suffered disaster because of its foundation.

Illus. Crack House. Years ago, Jennifer and I were looking for a home in the community. We stumbled across house with a finished out basement. Something happens inside of guy when they see a finished out basement. Testosterone gets released. You start seeing Big T.V., sectional sofa, 7-8 degrees colder than upstairs. Upstairs where there are dishes to do, laundry to fold, children to feed, but not in the basement. There was even bathroom down there so you could

go missing for hours. I was excited. Then I walked outside and over the garage door I saw a crack in the mortar and bricks. From the top of the garage door to the roof, a jagged crack breaking many bricks in half. This house became known to us as the “crack house” What does this mean? The house has shifted. The foundation moved. What would it take to fix it - money! The foundation wasn’t a noticeable problem a few years ago but a foundation with flaws just needs time and they will be seen.

The crack house builder - worked - labored - spent time and resources like everyone else. Buying brick, sheet rock, windows, and shingles - but problem wasn’t their sincerity. They meant well but he caution is that you can be productive and still miss it. You can be working really hard for your kids, for your future, working and building and miss it. In this Matthew passage, **Jesus is not speaking not atheists** but those who have been celebrating, worshipping, observing God’s laws for generations. This is the warning for them and for us - Is it possible to deceive ourselves in thinking we are working and building in a good way and miss it.

Psalm 127 says there is a best way to build a life. That sincerity and hard work do not guarantee the lasting and best results. **“Unless the Lord builds the house”** means you can build, watch, and work outside the best rhythm and best results.

“Eating the bread of anxious toil” is an idiom much like the way we use the word “diet.” To have a diet of something is do something habitually. And psalm 127 highlights the person who believes that success is from their own efforts. Building a house and and watching over a city are long tiresome jobs. Rising early and going to be late indicates an attitude of self reliance it is hinting and where one believes success comes from.

“Success may be sought as the result of my ever harder work, or it may be asked for as a gift.” - Christopher Ash

“Unless the Lord” also means that the Lord can and wants to be in your life. The Lord can make our efforts fruitful. Whatever good

comes. Success. Security. All of it is God dependent. The house. The walls. The protection. The prosperity.

“Unless the Lord builds the house” - Because God works, our work can have purpose. The value of vocation is affirmed. We aren't being released from good work. But work's goodness comes because God blesses and uses it.

? How often we think about no longer working? There are only so many house projects you can do with your time. There are only so many tv and movie streaming services.

Psalm 127 says **you can work in a way that it all feels up to you**, so of course you get up early and stay up late. When life is only what you make of it, then your hard work and ambition determine everything, but this psalm is saying that God has something better for you, a way to work and build with purpose and with rest.

Our work goes wrong when it loses its good connection with God - when we don't work and become **lazy**, or when we work too much and become **compulsive**. Our society rewards those that work all the time. 60, 70, 80 hour work weeks get your noticed, will get you promotions and more responsibility. But this always working, always striving, is a sign of **weak faith**, that at a core level you don't believe in the goodness of God, that God can't be trusted.

v.2 - “ for he gives to his beloved sleep.”

God gives - Success may be sought as the result of my ever hard work, or it may be asked for as a gift. **Beloved** - The gift is given the context of love. **Sleep** - What an interesting thing, sleep. God could have made us so that we never needed sleep but instead we spend **1/3 of our lives**. Out. Helpless. Vulnerable. Eye closed, blind. *Why?* Every time we close our eyes, is a moment to realize that we are not in control. That our lives are dependent lives. Sleeps reminds us that God can do a million more things while we are asleep than we can do when we are awake.

Psalm 127:3

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb a reward.

Children take away your sleep so where is the this psalm going?

An interesting progression from work to children. I wonder if there isn't a connection back to **Genesis 1-3**. God placed Adam in the garden to work. To have dominion. To walk in husbandry and vocation. God tells man and woman to be **fruitful** and multiply. Have lots of kids. Fill the earth with God's image by growing a family. After God's work, there is rest. Man and woman were created on the 6th day, and 7th was rest so there is an idea that before Adam and Eve got to work they **rested** in God's completed work. "**God gives his beloved sleep.**" So we have this picture of God blessing, making work purposeful, marriage and intimacy fruitful, and rest.

Go a little further into Genesis 3 and what are the things that get difficult and confusing because of sin. **Work** gets frustrating. The world resists Adams labor. For Eve to pursue the blessing of family and kids, her **labor** will be difficult. So I wonder if psalm 127 isn't purposeful as it reminds us of **what God intended to be good and life giving**, is a recognition that life is hard, but just because work and family are challenging, God's purpose for both is to be a blessing.

"Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward." Eugene Petersen's book "A Long Obedience in the Same Direction" has brought special insight into the Psalms of Ascent. He makes a point that I might have skipped over about children. We go from fruitless striving work in v.1-2 to receiving gifts that God graces us with, the example of children. He says, ***"the entire miracle of procreation requires participation, but hardly in the form of what we would call work."*** Children are the result of love. Children are a gift. Anxious toil is compared with the efforts of making children.

Illus. Infertility. It surprised me that this wasn't an easier fix. It seemed that one medication created another problem to solve. And

after awhile realizing that having children a far from an exact science.
To have a child is a gift.

V.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!

Children are not blessings because they are cute or when they grow up they mow the lawn, they can get jobs, but they are like arrows in the hands of the arrow. They win battles.

You made your own arrows. Release them.

Charles Spurgeon said that “some quivers are large and some small but may they be full.”

A study by pew research shows that more and more couples feel that children are part of what they believe will bring meaning and fulfillment Do we think children are part of a purposeful life or do kids get in the way of other interests?

v.5 “He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”

The gates of the city were often the places where judicial matters were dealt with. So the picture could be that an accusation comes against you, a charge against your character but through our children, our love and devotion to them will create an advocate. As God gifts us with children, they will in turn be a blessing in times of need and difficulty. They will speak on their parents behalf. They will defend our days as you stewarded them.

Parents say. "You are a blessing"

Kids. "I recognize your hard work and sacrifice."

Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 127 and because of him we will not be put to shame when enemies are in the gate.

Isaiah 49:1-4 (NIV)

1 Listen to me, you islands;
hear this, you distant nations:
Before I was born the Lord called me;
from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.
2 He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me into a polished arrow
and concealed me in his quiver.
3 He said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."
4 But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing at all.
Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand,
and my reward is with my God."

Isaiah is writing about a servant, who would a true and better Israel. I am struck by the how many similarities to Psalm 127 there are. It is about a child, who was set aside like a special arrow, there is a question what would result from this sons work. Would the work be in vain? Would the servants work be for nothing? Yet, from this child and from this work would come a reward.

Jesus the Son is the one who labored, rightly questioning if the cross brought all he did to nothing. Yet through Jesus, his work, always us to rest securely, His role as the Son, made a way for all those who received him, for all those who believed in his name that they might become sons and daughters of God. Not children born of natural descent, or of human decision or a husbands will but born of God.

Jesus' work is the assurance that we are beloved. Hebrews 2 -Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same **family**.

Take aways -

Anxiety reveals an opportunity. Anxiety is something **God uses** to bring into view what we hope for, what we think we need. If you find yourself exhausted and eating the bread of anxious toil, then listen to your anxiety because in it, God is likely prompting you, wanting to shape you towards something better. The difference between

anxious work and restful work can be determined best by whether your work happens within the context of you being **beloved**.

Being beloved means it's not all on you. Work success and work failure are not greater than your identity as beloved.

- **Work may be uncertain.** The affects of federal work force changes are being felt everywhere in Huntsville. There are ripples creating fear and anxiety about the future. You are loved. **The psalm is a working out of** the character of God as gracious towards His people that he loves. God gives. God blesses. God builds. God calls us to trust Him and rest in Him. God wants our lives to be fruitful.

- **Marriage by uncertain. Children uncertain.** Those that don't have children are not any less in the family or any less objects of God's love. You have a special and holy calling and you make Gods' family better and richer.

Psalm 127 holds out to us the idea that what **God builds He fills**. Not only does God build and watch over the house, but God is committed to filling it with life and relationships. The work and life God calls us to is not empty work. It is not the drudgery of the a slave, but it is the purpose of God to provide meaning to His beloved and all efforts will come with rest and reward. God builds and fills. God builds, God watches over, God fills.

Psalm 127 points to the principle that **some of your best work will be spent investing and building up others**. The work that God calls us to is much less about acquiring things and amassing possessions but one in which we develop relationships. People, children, family, neighbors are at the center of the Christian work. We pour our lives into people and as we do we see brothers and sisters, sons and daughters.

Being the beloved is life giving and fruitful.
The godward life is blessed, full, rich in relationships.