

Key idea:

To teach that - It is the Lord himself who provides for his people

Application:

So that - those listening would move a step closer from reliance on self to reliance on their Heavenly Father through Christ.

1. How do we read the Psalms?

Last week we asked the question “How are we supposed to read the Psalms?”

We had to think about how Ancient Israel would have read the Psalms.

We asked what they might tell us about God’s promised King. And then we read them as people joined to God’s Promised King - Jesus.

Well that’s what we’re going to do today too. I’m going to pray then we’ll read the Psalm.

Psalm 127

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

*1 Unless the Lord builds a house,
its builders labor over it in vain;
unless the Lord watches over a city,
the watchman stays alert in vain.*

*2 In vain you get up early and stay up late,
working hard to have enough food—
yes, he gives sleep to the one he loves.[a]*

3 Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord,

offspring, a reward.

*4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons born in one's youth.*

*5 Happy is the man who has filled his quiver with them.
They will never be put to shame
when they speak with their enemies at the city gate.*

Here's where we're going today. We'll be looking at the Psalm from some different angles.

Unless the Lord builds a house for *Israel*

Unless the Lord builds a house for *David*

... for *Jesus*

... for *Us*

Israel, David, Jesus, Us. So we'll begin with Israel.

2. Unless the Lord builds a house for Israel.

Let's imagine a farmer in Ancient Israel, and he's singing this Psalm. It's a Song of Assents. Of Solomon.

**Unless the Lord builds a house,
its builders labor over it in vain;**

This might be the most basic lesson he has to learn.

Mate, you are totally dependent on your creator.

There's an attitude to work that rejects dependence on God isn't there.

"I work hard to provide for my family. No one else can do it, and no one else will do it."

But work can be an expression of dependence on God. Our farmer says, “The way you provide for me is to make me able to do stuff. You then produce fruit from that effort to provide for my me and family. The fruit might be a crop or a finished house. You don’t need my efforts to provide for me, but that’s how you choose to do it.”

It’s the same idea for our watchman isn’t it?

**unless the Lord watches over a city,
the watchman stays alert in vain.**

He could say “The safety of the city is in my hands.”
Or he could pray, “Lord God would you use my eyes and ears to keep this city safe.”

And as he watches, he might remember the story of Gideon. The Lord told him “Your army is too big for me to give you victory over the Midianites. When you win you might say “My own hand has saved me. Nope”, says the Lord, “your army of 30,000 must become 300. Then you’ll now it was me who saved you.”

Or what about an Israelite widow? She doesn’t have a husband to work alongside to provide for her family. She gets up early, works hard all day. She prepares dinner for her children. She works by late into the night. Each hour of sleep she steals for herself is one less loaf of bread for her children. She alone is responsible for them. She’s extremely anxious. But what does her Lord say to her? V2

2 In vain you get up early and stay up late,

**working hard to have enough food—
yes, he gives sleep to the one he loves.**

Well it's a rebuke at first isn't it. Daughter, do you think you need to drive yourself into the ground to have enough food? Do you think your Lord needs you to stay up all night working and worrying?

He can provide even while you sleep. In fact, because he loves you he gives you sleep. He gives you sleep for the rest you need, because you've worked hard. But he gives you sleep to remind you of something "The world will continue to turn without you. I will continue to provide for you while you're asleep."

So she says, "Ok Lord, I trust you. Because you love me, I'll go to bed."

Speaking of going to bed. It was something I should have done last night rather than watch youtube clips of pregnancy development. 9 months in 4 mins that was computer animation from inside the womb, then there was 9 months in 2 minutes -a cute time lapse - two and half thousand photos from the outside, 9 months in the womb – the stages in ultrasound - you get the idea. The development of a baby is the most staggering thing. The heartbeat can be heard at 6 weeks (!) and 6 weeks later the little baby has fingernails.

Pregnancy is an astounding time, but it's a time in the life a woman where her creator whispers, "This is a gift, it's out of your hands".

And our Psalmist agrees. V3

3 Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord,

offspring, a reward.

A baby is another provision from God isn't it.

Dad plays a part of course, and mum's body spends 9 months working hard, but it's God who knits that little baby together in the womb isn't it.

The baby is a gift. Not something we've crafted or made, like a painting, and certainly not something earned.

But they're a gift who keeps on giving. Through the child God continues to provide.

**4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons born in one's youth.**

**5 Happy is the man who has filled his quiver with them.
They will never be put to shame
when they speak with their enemies at the city gate.**

God gave families to each other in Israel as one of His means of providing for them. Security in old age – there's no welfare. They're you're back up at the city gate – that's where disputes are settled – there's no legal aid.

Children were indeed a blessing from the Lord.

Of course, that's why there's so many laments in the Bible, by those who remain childless. And of course the pain of childlessness continues today. And we will talk about that a little later.

So what can we take from our first reading of Psalm 127 as an Israelite.

God shows his people that whether they acknowledge it or not, they are dependent on him to provide. And provide he will.

But before we move on from Israel, we need to have a look at that superscript at the beginning of the Psalm.

3. Unless the Lord builds a house for David

Our Psalm begins - A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

Just quickly, I want to ask "Why is this Psalm chosen as one of the Songs of Assents?" Remember, they're the songs Israel sings as they make their way to Jerusalem for their regular festivals. I wonder if the key is in the idea of the Lord building a house. The Lord building a house.

Do you remember when King David decided to build a house for God. What did God answer? "I don't need you to build me a house. Have I ever asked for a house? No David, I will build you a house. Not another palace, but a family line, a dynasty, the house of David."

The Lord promised that a descendant of David would remain on the throne over God's people forever. The Lord would build a house for David.

So I think the Israelite pilgrims are celebrating this house of their King David as they make their way to Jerusalem.

So Psalm 127 reminds the Israelites of two things.

1. the Lord's provision in daily life and 2. his provision for His people in the house He builds for King David.

Well that's good of you're an Ancient Israelite, but how does it apply to us? Well, we're getting there. Stay with me. We need to look at how it might relate to Jesus first.

4. Unless the Lord builds a house for Jesus

Cast your mind back to last year when we were in the first part of Matthew. Jesus has just gone public at his baptism where three people tell us "He's the Promised One" John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father.

What does the Father say? "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased".

He calls Jesus his Son. The Son of God. The Son of God. That's the title God gives his chosen King (back in Psalm 2).

By calling Jesus his Son, the Father declares "Jesus is my chosen King. Jesus is the descendant of King David. He's THE Son of God" Now immediately after, the devil tempts Jesus with an idea that was something like....

"Well if you are the Son of God then you can pretty much do what you like. It's your Kingdom, have it your way."

But Jesus is not taken in. His answers to the devil show a deep trust in his Father. They say "My Father is building this house (the Kingdom) for me. I will do it His way."

Jesus displays this trust time and time again. Here's an example:

From Luke Chapter 5 But the news about Jesus spread even more, and large crowds would come together to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

God really seems to be growing the Kingdom wouldn't you say? People are flocking to Jesus. But Luke continues
16 Yet Jesus often withdrew to deserted places and prayed.

Jesus prays.

And I suspect at those times as the crowds grew Jesus might pray in this way, "Father your Kingdom needs to be grow the way you would have it. Build this house for me, but in your way."

Or on the night Jesus is betrayed he prays...."Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you gave him authority over all people.

Jesus has authority over all people but he remembers it his Father who builds the house for Him. He does the work of salvation and yet he's fully dependent on the one who sent Him.

An hour or so later in the garden. "Father, not my will but yours".
The next day at his death. "Into your hands I commit my Spirit."
After His resurrection - "As the Father has sent me so I am sending you."

As Jesus works the Father builds the house.

Now I've just used the first verse of our Psalm as an example, but can you see how rich the Psalms are for us when we see Jesus in

them? How He embodies them, lives them, and how they point to him in some way?

This has been hard work hasn't it.

The Psalm has shown us – the Lord's daily provision for his people

His building of a house for King David

His building of a house for his Son Jesus

So how might we now read it?

5. Unless the Lord builds a house for us

Remember how the Psalm helped our Israelite friends?

As people of the very same God it can certainly help us in the same ways.

God doesn't need your efforts to provide for you. But he'll use them. So work hard and rest in trust.

The safety of whatever or whoever you watch over is in God's hands. So keep watch...but trust him as you do.

And like our widow, your God can probably manage a night babysitting your children. Go to bed. You're knackered.

Now, I want devote the rest of our time to how we, as God's people, fit in with the house the Father has built for, and through, Jesus.

We know only Jesus could do the work that establishes this Kingdom couldn't he. His life, his death, his resurrection. And that work's finished.

But there's a Kingdom work that isn't finished. *Our* work is to witness to our Lord Jesus and *his* work. And Jesus modelled what it looked like both work and depend as His Father builds the house.

And if we want our work on this house to be useful and not be in vain we need to be like Jesus.

The most immediate question I could think of from my own life was this: "Am I like Jesus as I write my sermons?" So often I go far into the work of writing and have not prayed, "Lord, would you use these words to do your work in your people."

I could write the best sermon you could hope for, but if the Lord does not apply it to your heart, it will be labour in vain. A sermon that hasn't been prayed about is vain labour. Of course God's free to still use that sermon, but any good he works will be despite those labours, and not through them.

Friends, unless the Lord applies the sermon, the pastor writes in vain. So what should the pastor do? Pray. He prays that the Father would use this feeble work to build the Kingdom of his Son.

And of course it's the same for you as you speak and affirm the gospel in your corner of the world. Friends, prayer is the most important labour you can do for your brothers and sisters...and for the lost – because it's your Lord who builds the house.

If you are laboring at prayer, he'll give you the opportunities to witness. Don't stress about it. But do pray, if you believe the Lord builds the house. Jesus did.

And finally a word about this quiver full of children.

The Psalm tells us children are a blessing from the Lord. But perhaps if you're without children you know this better than anyone. As you look at those with children you may have asked yourself this question.

“Did God give them all those children because he is pleased with them? And do I not have children because he is not pleased with me?” Friends, the short answer from the Bible is “No, that’s not how it is.”

In the Bible, over and over again God expresses his care and concern for childless couples and single people. He does not treat them with disdain (unlike the culture of the time that too often did).

Alongside the pain and disappointment of childlessness God offers comfort. Similar to other hardship the comfort does not guarantee of a change in circumstances. Childlessness comes from living in a broken world. But for those joined to Christ, God offers both the comfort of his immediate love, concern and *approval*, as well as the promise of a new and restored world.

But right now, how might we view this section of the Psalm on children in the light of our Lord Jesus?

Jesus is the ideal human, the most complete human, the giver of all life. He didn't have children. And remember what his Father said? “With Him I am well pleased.”

But whether you are married or single, have a large number of children, or not, Jesus does want *you* to have a children. Kingdom Children or what Paul calls “children in the faith”.

Paul calls Timothy his “true son in the faith.” Why? Because Paul’s poured himself into Timothy, as a father would his son. He nurtured his young faith. He took him under his wing. He prayed constantly for him. He loved him.

And you can do the same for another. You can begin by praying for them. You don’t need to have biological or adopted kids to buy this book - “5 Things to Pray for your Kids”.

It’s said, as a boy becomes a man it’s a good idea for his parents to look for another adult male influence in their lives. It’s the same for girls. Someone to look up to apart from their parents. Kids are going to look for that someone anyway, so parents find someone who’ll lead them towards Christ.

You may have kids, you may not, but are you someone a parent would look to as godly influence for their child?

It has been such an encouragement over my life to see many couples who have been unable to have children raising children of the faith. Once couple ran the kids club at our previous church. In another church they brought new families to church.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful at the resurrection to have a quiver full of kids like that.

Why don’t we pray, friends, that God will use our labours, our prayers, to build the Kingdom of the Son he loves.