

# Psalm 127

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] and a special welcome to those of you who are new and many of you new to the idea of getting up on a sunday morning to attend this kind of gathering we are so glad that you've come and if that is you i want you to be aware that you've entered into the life of christ church chicago this autumn where we are taking 15 consecutive weeks to encounter god through the reading and consideration of the psalm the book of psalms is the bible's musical playlist it's comprised of 150 songs and this fall we're looking at psalms 120 through 134 think of these as 15 songs on an album of sorts set within the larger playlist what unites all of these 15 is the word ascents if you have your bible you'll see that word as a header given to us at the outset of each of those 15 songs today we arrived midpoint then and you've walked into a church where the eighth song in the set has been read and now will be considered it seems this morning to me as though we are lifting the vinyl record from the turntable and turning it over and setting it down with psalm 127 the first song on side two and glancing even at that paper circular label at the center we could see the title of this song i would put it this way the big house psalm 127 the big house so let's put the needle down and hear the songwriter as he gives voice and melody to a relationship that will exist between god's house verses one and two and our homes verses three to five the big house god's house and our homes what does god's house have to do with you and me and what do our homes have to do with god's house let me read again the lyrics on god's house verses one and two 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 it is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest eating the bread of anxious toil for he gives to his beloved sleep now because we're taught to read the bible existentially we normally would read those words and immediately think that there's some general principle being put down after all isn't that what the bible is doing giving us principles for living that somehow apply to me personally so it's really hard isn't it to even look at the psalm and not think about your house or your work or our city or your anxiety isn't it it's just impossible we read it with ourselves in mind but i want you to be patient for about 10 or 12 minutes or so you and i are going to be invited into this house we are going to be invited into the house of this psalm but we need to first

recognize the songwriter didn't have you and me particularly in mind when he first set these lyrics to sheet music in other words while we read these as general statements think of them as a spiritual aphorisms of sort conveying the idea that without the lord whatever you do in life whatever i do in life would be bound to fail actually there's some reason to think this is about god's big house and not ours let me see if i can explain that for us don't we all know that there are many people who build things whether they be houses or cities that do well quite successful at it without any acknowledgement of the lord but the psalm says unless the lord builds it it's all in vain but you know i know citizens and homeowners owners and city planners and nation builders who do lots of things successfully without the lord just as we know people who care deeply about god who in verse two get caught on that little phrase as though they always get a good night's rest it was just yesterday evening i was awake at 12 30 at night wondering am i not the beloved doesn't he give the beloved sleep in fact i had an event i had to be at the next morning and i decided to get in my car and drive there at night such was the lack of my sleep while i was considering the psalm in which i was to speak of the sleep that would belong to the beloved now there's something much more significant in play here than a simplistic reading of the text that puts you and me at the center let's think about it a little more deeply there seems to be a couple of reasons that the writer would have god's house in mind god's house god's big house not ours first look at the title a song of the sense of solomon it reads of solomon now if you don't know who solomon was he was the son of david he actually was the builder of god's house the temple the place that blood sacrifices were to be made where we would find our forgiveness with god solomon who was the heir to the promises that had been put down earlier in the biblical record that while david wanted to build god a house god was going to build his own house through david and his descendants and it would be a house that would stand forever and so here right at the outset our mind should think immediately of solomon of the one who was charged to build the big house as this psalm then either being contemplative thoughts for him to consider or if not him all the people of israel who saw those promises bound up in their city and what god intended to do for the world through them solomon that's one reason to think about this as god's house second there's a little known work of the early centuries called the targum the targum is simply means translation and you have to remember that as the hebrew language was receding from the public square

aramaic was taking over and as people tried to read these old songs someone would stand orally and translate it from the hebrew to the aramaic and in that translation which was oral and then written down the writers actually include some interesting words after the word city do you see it there in verse one unless the lord watches over the city the translator of jerusalem they wrote so the earliest readers of the text were thinking of the unique place of israel in the world and the city of jerusalem which was to bring blessings to all peoples of the earth and within that city the big house the temple itself where blood was shed for forgiveness of sins and in that sense then you read within even literature like the targum they serve almost like liner notes that the city here isn't chicago or the one you're from the city here is jerusalem we're talking here about something pertaining to israel in their place in the world now read it now read it again unless the lord builds that house those who build it labor in vain unless the lord watches over that city the watchman stays awake in vain it is vain that you would rise up early go to late to rest eating the bread of anxious toil for he gives to his beloved sleep in other words that the lord is going to build his own house that the lord has gone to guard his own city that the lord is going to be the one to free you from anxieties and enable you to rest because of what he has done for you in other words we read these verses on our activity and find the cessation of anything we can do to establish in this world a place where forgiveness can be granted a gate into his kingdom can be entered and the table can be set before me in which my anxieties are finally put to rest it's interesting when i consider it that way the takeaway for the early readers then would have been that without the lord building this it would all have been in vain without the lord watching over the efficacy of israel's worship it would all be in vain without god the labors of his people to construct a house for the forgiveness of sins would have been pointless without god the city gates entering into the kingdom of god would have been powerless it would not have mattered how many construction crews solomon put on site no one could accomplish what god intended to do through israel it would have been vain three times vain vain it would have been vain i don't know if you've read much of the bible but it's interesting to see how the bible story unfolds how it played out in history just let me give you a quick little run there's a historian in the bible named the chronicler and he says yes this house

was desecrated and their holy things were carried off to babelic nehemiah says yes i wept knowing that these gates had been burned but that wasn't the end of things god was able to keep a promise to this house because even within this written record isaiah said something like behold i am the one who has laid a foundation in zion a stone a tested stone a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation whoever believes will not be ashamed it was zachariah who predicted that god would encamp at his house as a guard so that none shall march forth to and fro no oppressor will march over them again it was the psalmist that sung that a later deliverer would arrive who says open to me the gates of righteousness that i may enter through them i thank you that you've answered me the stone that the builders rejected has become a cheap cornerstone it was jesus later would say if you destroy this temple then i will rebuild it again in three days it was the apostle peter who wrote that you and i would become to jesus actually come to the living stone the foundation stone through whom forgiveness is made into whom we enter through the gate into god's kingdom by whom all our anxieties are finally put to rest and so when you read the whole of the bible through what explodes from forth from this song god establishes in human history his own house through the blood of his own son who becomes our temple our gateway to the kingdom the one who is high and lifted up is the one in whom you rest in whom we can sleep and that is the home this morning that i so desperately want to invite you into i invite you this morning with a hand outstretched to enter into god's house through the blood of his son first as a guest but then it will dawn on you quickly that he is asking you to come in as a son or a daughter and to sit at his table and to dwell with him in fact jesus went so far as to say i did all of that at the cross but i am going away from you now to prepare a place for you he is the consummate builder it does seem that his construction work is nearly never done he is constructing even now a house with rooms many rooms for you to lay your anxieties down in the full knowledge that through his blood your sins have been paid for don't you want to live in that house i invite you to that house!

but what's god's house have to do with our homes what does my home have to do with his house interestingly the psalm makes an unexpected turn turn at verse 3 doesn't it the uniqueness of this psalm is the lyrical progression it makes between god's house and our homes let me read verses 3 to 5 again behold children are a heritage from the lord the fruit of a womb for reward like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them he shall not be put to shame when an edit when his enemies when he speaks with his enemies in the gate if the truth of verses 1 and 2 can be stated without the lord god's big house would fail then the truth of verses 3 to 5 can be summarized but by the gift of children in our homes the church will prevail let me let me summarize just quickly it'll fly by you you won't catch it let me see the whole movement of the psalm without the lord god's house would fail but by the gift of children in our homes the church will prevail that is stunning and an unexpected turn we would not expect in a song the writer to move so effortlessly from the salvation that is secured for us by god to the significance of the children in our homes and what they may accomplish for god let me make four brief observations from these verses about our homes first children are a heritage from the lord they're a gift i say that as a grandparent i say that as one who has been a parent i say that to many of you who are young parents the wonderful reconsideration this morning children are the gift they are a treasure they are and have been forever in the mind of god and they are born in such a time as this under your room children are a gift from the lord your home matters your time your home with your kids or if you don't have any you are a kid of someone your your time in your home is significant you were born for a reason secondly notice verse 4 children are like arrows let me put it to you this way children according to the psalmist are the arsenal that is let loose in god's army you know we talk a lot about weaponizing words and weaponizing this here you're reading a song where actually the children are the weaponized arsenal of the lord in a world gone wrong that godly children are the means by which in which he meets the dilemmas and the ungodly unbelief that surrounds us that that children in that sense are are warriors who accomplish the very designs

[ 19 : 55 ] of god in the world as they emerge from god's home they are gifts they are arrows notice third verse five they are a good thing when they are many many many blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them that there's something being said here about the number of children evidently the songwriter wants us to know that the strength of god's house now rests upon the strength of our individual homes and in particular that will be our children who carry on the work of his home long after we are gone the strength of god's house the strength of your home the strength of your home!

this is why the church can never rise above the spiritual strength of your own identity we are you and you are the church this is why it's important for us to walk together well in this way in part let me just say a couple of things this is why christ church chicago speaks unapologetically about the significance of the family and over the years i've constantly met at various times with others who wonder if i make too much of it but this is why i celebrate and we celebrate as a church family the birth of every child because they're gifts because they'll be sent into god's words fulfilling god's purposes because we want many not few this is why i when we baptize or dedicate a child normally i actually would walk with the child in the midst of the congregation to demonstrate to you in the most paternal loving ways that we are to honor this this is why i have said for 25 years at every dedication and every baptism to the eyes of the infant you are loved by god you will be adored by this church because the strength of the church rests upon the children that will emerge to carry on the word this is why we write curriculum for children this is why we want the best trained adults in our congregation biblically to work with children this is why we actually read the bible to infants in our nursery every week they're not babysitting they're they're demonstrating through their volunteer capacity the convictions of the congregation the children are a gift to be leashed into the world and populate things to the very glory of god so while they're on our laps we read them the scriptures when they're in our little children's classes we teach them the scriptures we sing the songs why we have people that are laboring to write in ways that the six-year-old can understand it because if we can win the six-year-old we win the world this is why we partner with young life this this mysteriously might be why some of you are not married would not ever get married or are single in that god knows that if you were married you would have less capacity not more to meet the needs of the world by giving yourself to others i have a friend a dear friend one of my closest friends no children they fought off those tears for years and god has given them children all over the world as they have given themselves to god's house and god's family and the cities in which they live this is why many of you need to volunteer you have more capacity to meet the needs of the children of the homes of our city that are not being nurtured in the lord because of your single state rather than a married state this is why we actually have not my name i won't do it men and women in our church who would arrive for a preschool play group and give themselves to children that they would teach them the

stories although they have no spouse they have no children they are ministering to many it all falls out of a song like this that the lord has established his own house to his own son and he has made you his child and he wants to capture the world with his glory and to do so he raises everything up within homes i'm not standing here to lionize the nuclear family i'm standing here to demonstrate the glory of god's family and the significance of where you and i spend our time the way verse five closes accentuates this point in climactic ways take a look and then i'll find my seat my bible reads he shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate that the way yours reads as you look at it on your phone or in front of you he shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate i spent a little time this week to see what was going on there and evidently some of the copyists took the plural verbs of verse five b in other words the verbs here are actually plural they shall not be put to shame when they speak of their enemies in the gate but but because the first part of verse five had the singular man blessed is the man they they took the plural verbs and made them singular to match with the man but in all likelihood it really leads it reads like this blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them full stop and then the them the children they shall not be put to shame when they speak with their enemies in the gates what's the significance of that observation it's this that the gift of the children in verse three have become the guardians of the city by verse five and now the whole song has this intricate beauty to it verse one unless the lord builds the house verse three and the children are now in the homes verse one unless the lord watches over the city and now the children are the ones standing in the gate verse five the children are the guardians of the gate who protect the walls of god's kingdom who in their sheer numbers and force keep the emissaries that have been loosened from the depths of hell from prevailing over the church let me put it to you this way if you're in our youth group this is why you need to give your life to jesus today because you are ordained by god having grown up in his house to be a warrior for him an arrow loosened in the world who would actually guard and protect the gates of the kingdom of god one day it will be in your hands very soon so start with him today what what a glorious purpose for living you must be the ones who will see through

the charade of any religious leader any irreligious leader any political leader who would attempt to build a church without jesus who would attempt to build a city without god who would attempt to build a nation under anything other than the rule of christ in regard to being known his ways being known there are far too many men and women adults in the world for plowing ahead building under the word my way rather than yahweh and you must be there to meet them at the gate put it differently you must ascent the psalms of ascent you must stand rise walk with him live for him fight for him speak for him love for him win others for him and as you do you will not be put to shame what is the relationship between god's house and our homes what's the relationship between your kitchen table and this church!

what's the relationship between our children and the future security of this city the relationships are profound that without the lord Christ's church will fail but with the lord and through the gifts of children the gates of hell shall not prevail our heavenly father we open the service gathering to the worship of god who would invite us into his home and who would free us from the anxieties of our own life through this song and through this preaching may many here today commit to give their lives to jesus looking to his blood as sufficient for the sins of their own life may we enter into your kingdom may we guard all that you've given to us in jesus name