

The Lord's Plan and Our Purpose

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[0 : 00] Psalm 127. We'll look at verse 1 and 2 of this psalm. Psalm 127. As I mentioned earlier, these psalms and this collection of psalms, they are known as the psalms or songs of ascent.

Psalms that were sung by the pilgrims as they made their way up to Jerusalem at festival times and times of worship. Although they're called the songs of ascent, that they sung on the way up, I do wonder if they were sung as they made their way away from Jerusalem after the festivals.

After the times of worship. So as they came away from Jerusalem, returning to their homes. I would like to imagine that these were psalms that they're not only sung as they were going to worship, but sung also as they were coming away.

Again, to give thanks to God for all his goodness to them. Times of worship are always a time of reflection for us.

By God's word, we reflect on our situations on a day to day basis. We reflect on situations in various ways.

[1 : 36] But all the time as we come to worship, we are being taken back to the hope that is ours in God. That's so that no matter what else is going on around us, we remind ourselves that our hope, our confidence is in the Lord, our God.

This psalm, Psalm 127. It reminds us, as it was reminding the people then, that we are fully dependent on God for all things.

Someone once put it like this, looking at this psalm. He said, our lives are pointless, restless and fruitless apart from God.

Because when you look at this psalm, it almost seems like it's different views just pushed together in some ways. It's talking about the building of the house at the start, the watchmen.

Then it seems to just take a change of direction towards the end of verse 3 onwards when it talks about children and God's heritage. You almost think to yourself, the thing that doesn't seem connected up, doesn't seem joined up.

[2 : 47] But yet if you put yourself into the situation of the people as they were making their way up to Jerusalem, as they were reflecting on God's goodness to them in so many different ways in life, you actually find that this psalm ties into life as a whole.

It speaks about three important aspects of life. Aspects of life that they would be singing about going up to Jerusalem and singing about coming away.

From Jerusalem, a dependence on the Lord for all things. So when you look through this psalm, you see three aspects of life that the psalm speaks about is building a house, protecting a city and rearing a family.

Now this would have been a pilgrimage of the people going up to Jerusalem. There would have been parents, grandparents, children, all making their way up to Jerusalem.

So it was very much a family occasion. There was a sense of thanksgiving for family. They were making their way from their own homes up to the city of Jerusalem.

[3 : 59] Looking at the walls that surrounded Jerusalem, the security that that offered and how the Lord offers protection to his people. How the Lord gives them a home, gives them a family.

So the psalm may seem a little disjointed at first in our eyes. But as you think of the people going up to Jerusalem, it's very much a psalm that covers every aspect of life.

And so as they were going up to Jerusalem, they're reflecting on these things. And coming to the conclusion in it all, that whether it's the family life, the home, the city, whatever is going on in life, the conclusion is that without the Lord, it's all in vain.

You see that in verse 2, how it speaks about in vain you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil.

It's in vain, apart from the Lord. And so the people are making their way to Jerusalem, a time of reflection, reflecting on God's activity in their lives and in their communities.

[5 : 11] And also perhaps wondering, what is God's plans for us? What is God going to do with us as we go to worship, as we meet with him, as we come away from that time of worship?

What will God's plans be for us? Well, the same is true for ourselves. Every time we come to worship, we come in that sense of thanksgiving for all that God does for us.

But there's also a sense of anticipation. What does God want from us? What are God's plans for us? Last weekend was a communion season in our midst, and it's a time of reflection.

A time for us to reflect, looking back. A time to reflect during the weekend, under God's word and in fellowship with one another. And also it's a time to reflect, coming away.

Coming away from the Lord's table, the Lord's day, and coming back in to our day-to-day lives and routines. What is God's plans for us?

[6 : 21] What were your own reflections over that time and since? I'm sure many of us would have gone through different reflections and different emotions. Sometimes we air on the glass half-empty side where we're thinking things just aren't what they used to be.

Perhaps the church has had its day here. I hope none of us come away feeling like that. How should we feel in everything that's gone on around us and going on around us?

We feel maybe a sense of discouragement, dismay, disheartened. We see internationally, nationally, locally, personally, there's so many things going on around us.

So much sad news, so many people unwell, so many crises throughout our nation and the nations of the world. We could easily lose heart.

But our reflections should, even in the midst of the reality of everything that's going on, always remind us the goodness of God. How God is gracious.

[7 : 33] How he's abounding in love. How he is steadfast to all his people. How God is on his throne. How God is on his throne. That's what the people were doing as they were ascending to Jerusalem.

As they were worshipping in Jerusalem. As they would come away from Jerusalem, from their time of worship. God is good. Reminders to us in it all.

God is good. Reminders to us at the weekend in the Lord's Supper. Of what God has done for us. The price he's paid. And for us to be able to say, God has done good for me.

Our reflections should always bring us to see God. These psalms, they remind us that the people came in the midst of their own difficulties and trials.

But fixed their eyes on God. And this psalm, as we're looking at this evening, reminds them and us that God is building his church.

[8 : 40] That the Lord is building his house, as the psalm says. And we could say, as another psalm says, Psalm 116, verse 7, where it says, Rest, O my soul.

God has been good to you. We don't want to come away feeling discouraged. We want to come away feeling encouraged. Courage that God has a plan.

And God has his purposes for us in the midst of that plan. We want to go forward seeking God's blessing and favor as we work together for the glory of God.

That people would have been encouraged going up and encouraged coming away. And that's what we want to keep ourselves in that positive light.

That God is with us. That God is good. That God is faithful. This psalm reminds us that we go on with God.

[9 : 43] We look to the Lord who is building his house, building his people, building his kingdom. And that we can trust in him. And the two things I want us to take from these verses tonight is, first of all, that he has a plan.

God's plan. And then secondly, we have a purpose. We have a purpose in the midst of God's plan too.

So first thing is God's plan. God has a plan. We hear it so often. We've heard it recently in the ministry of the word that God has a plan.

You see it in Jeremiah. I know the plans I have for you. God has a plan. And here we see it again. And the plan in this psalm that he's speaking of is that his house will be built.

But it's not a physical place. It's a people. That God is going to build his people.

[10 : 52] Solomon, the father of David, had a plan to build a temple. He was going to build a temple for God. But what was God's plan?

In 2 Samuel chapter 7, David goes to the Lord and says, I want to build you a house. But the Lord says to David, you're not going to build me a house.

I'm going to build you a house. And he wasn't speaking of a physical place. A building. He was speaking about a people.

He was speaking about a family dynasty, if you like. That the Lord would always have a ruler over his people. Ultimately, the Lord Jesus himself, who is on the throne forever.

And God has a plan. And it's not always the way we would have planned it. But God is the one who is building the house.

[12:02] And of that, we can be sure. Because we have God's word. Here we see God's plan from beginning to end.

How he reveals it to us. We don't know all the details of it. But we know he has a plan. He had a plan for his people in the Old Testament.

Bringing them from Egypt to the promised land. He had a plan, even when they went into exile, that he would bring them back. He had a plan as we come into the New Testament. That the Old was pointing to words.

That he would send a saviour for the world. That saviour would have to die. And die on the cross.

That he would rise again on the third day.

And that he is coming again. You see, the plan is ongoing. God has a plan. When we build or renovate a house.

[12:59] So many different people are involved in that building. From the very beginning, when there's maybe nothing but the ground. To the very final point, when all the decorations are being put up.

Everyone has a part to play. And some people, they just want to get to the end point. The point where it's curtains and cushions. Where it's just putting out the design or things into the house.

And we lose patience coming to that point. But unless the work is done at the start. The laying of the foundations. The toil that goes into that. The building upon it.

And everything else that goes with it. Everything else is in vain. And that's the kind of thing we've been reminded of in this psalm. There may be many things.

Many plans that we might have for ourselves. Or even for the Lord's work. But in it all, we're looking for the Lord's plan. And being part of that.

[14:03] Unless the Lord builds the house. Those who build it. Labour in vain. It's worthless. Without God.

God's plans are for building his kingdom. And that's the plans that we seek. That's the plans that we look to.

Even as we think of what we have enjoyed together over the weekend. We see it's all God's plan. All his plan being worked out. That he gave his son.

And that we were doing it in remembrance of him. Taking the bread. Taking the wine. Reflecting on what was done for us.

Worshipping him. Praising his name. That his plan is working out. And that he knows best. God always has a plan.

[15:02] A plan for salvation. He is able to save to the uttermost. We've been reminded of that over these last couple of months.

As James has been preaching through 1 Corinthians 15. There we see so much of God's blueprint. His plan.

That everything else is being built upon. Christ Jesus is the cornerstone. We're reminded how the resurrection is at the heart of it all.

God's plan. It wouldn't have been our plan of the way. We would have done it ourselves. But it's God's plan and his way. As it says in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 14.

If Christ has not been raised. Then our preaching is in vain. And your faith is in vain. But he has. He is risen. As God had planned.

[16:02] From the very beginning. So we don't lose heart. Because God has a plan and a purpose. He is building. His kingdom. Hudson Taylor.

The missionary who went to China. He was a man of great faith. And always trusted that God would have a plan. Going forward at all times.

And he said this at one point. How God's work should be done. He said. We can make our best plans. And try to carry them out. In our own strength.

Or he said. We can make careful plans. And ask God to bless them. But then he said as well. Yet another way of working.

Is to begin with God. And to ask his plans. And to offer ourselves to him. To carry out his purposes. [16:59] That's what we are looking to do. And should be looking to do. To see that God has a plan. To build his church. And that we seek not our plans.

Or our ways. But his. And offer ourselves. To help him fulfill. His plans. And his purposes. So God has a plan.

And too often. We could take this psalm. And say. Only God. Can do it. There's nothing. That we can do. But we would be wrong.

To stop there. We know that only God. Can build. Only God. Can save. But you see. In this psalm. He says. Unless the Lord.

Builds the house. Yes. We know. Those who build it. Labour in vain. He has. His people. He has. [17:58] His labourers. He has those. Who are to serve him. With all their heart. We are dependent on God. But we are also called. To be faithful.

To God. And that's. When we see the second thing here. Our purpose. In the midst. Of his plan. He has a purpose.

For his people. They're not just. Standing by. And waiting. They're not just. Watching on. At a distance. Waiting for God.

To act. They are involved. They are in it. They are fulfilling. His purpose. And that's the call. Of God. To his people.

Through all the generations. He calls his people. To follow him. In obedience. To take up their cross. And follow him.

[18:54] He calls on the church. To be salt and light. The house that he is building. Is the people of God. And as we see ourselves.

As God's people. We come to him. To worship him. But also to serve him. We are reminded of that. At the end of the morning service.

On Sunday. That we are to be. Servants. To God. To go out. For him. And here is. Our purpose.

As we think again. Of the building. Of the house. The laborers are there. There's all kinds of people. Involved. And you see it here. There's those who are laboring.

And he says. In verse one. As well. Unless the Lord. Watches over the city. The watchman. Stays awake. In vain. The watchman. Was involved. And guarding. As the laborers.

[19:49] As the builders. Got on with the work. And again. It's just so relevant. To our own day to day. As well. How everyone. Has a part to play.

In the kingdom of God. There are those. Who are laboring. More active. In the work of the Lord. On the ground. There are those. Who are watching. And watching.

So often. Means play. Everyone. Has a part. To play. Unless the Lord. Does it. Of course. But we have a purpose.

In it all. As well. We are to labor. For the Lord. God's word. Gives us direction. It gives us focus. So we're not like. The hamster. In the wheel. Just going round. And round. In a circle. With no direction. That's those. Who in vain. Rise up early. And go late.

[20:46] To rest. In verse 2. Eating the bread. Of anxious toil. There's nothing. At the end. Of the day. For it. Aimless toil. But we have a purpose.

We see God's plan. To build his house. To build his kingdom. And we see our purpose. To be a part of it. To be his laborers. To be his prayer warriors.

To be all. Of these things. The word of God. Always reminds us. Of that. Paul writes. Into the church. Colossians. Colossians chapter 3. Verse 16. Says. Let the word of Christ. Dwell. In you. Richly. Teaching and admonishing. One another. In all wisdom.

Singing psalms. Hymns. And spiritual songs. With thankfulness. In your hearts. To God. There's the sense of worship. In these words. Thankfulness. Song.

[21:41] Praise. Is there. To God. But then it goes on. In the next verse. There to say. Whatever you do. In word. Or deed. Do everything. In the name.

Of the Lord Jesus. We do it for him. Giving thanks. To God. The father. Through him. So we. We have.

This activity. We have this purpose. To labor. To work. For the Lord. But you notice too. In the end of verse 2.

He says. He gives his beloved. Sleep. The psalmist tells us. That when we trust. In the Lord. And when we see. That he has a plan.

And we have a purpose. It gives us a sense. Of rest. That we rest. In him. That we rest. In Christ. [22 : 37] We find rest. In knowing. The Lord. Is on our side. And delighting. In doing. His will. So instead of being anxious.

And worried. And afraid. In the midst of all things. We have a sense of peace. Peace. With God. That he can take away.

Our worries. And our anxieties. And our fears. As we trust. In him. What is it. To labor.

For the Lord. Well the Bible. Uses. Different ways. Of describing. What it is. To labor. For the Lord. We read.

In first. Well we've mentioned. First Corinthians. At the end of that chapter. As we've heard recently. It's not a labor. In vain. We do not labor.

[23 : 34] In vain. First Thessalonians. Chapter 1. Verse 3. Reminds us. It's a labor of love. We love him.

Because he first. Loved us. The book of Revelation. Chapter 2. Verse 2. Reminds us. It's a labor. Known. By Christ. That he sees.

Our works. Or perhaps. The lack of them. We're also reminded. It's a labor.

That God. Does not forget. Hebrews. Chapter 6. Verse 10. First Corinthians. 3. Verse 9. Reminds us.

It's a labor. Done together. We labor. Side. By side. Colossians. 1. Verse 28.

[24 : 28] It's a labor. For eternal. Things. So we labor. In all of these ways. We have.

That purpose. But let it be. A labor. Of love. And a labor. That doesn't end. Because we don't. Lose heart.

A farmer. Once. Said. Or observed. On his farm. Is that the hardest thing. About milking cows. Is that they never. Stay milked.

They had to be milked. Twice. A day. And it goes on. Day. After day. But for a farmer. It's a labor. Of love.

And for ourselves. In the work. Of the kingdom. Of God. In the midst. Of his plan. And purpose. For us. We should never. Lose heart. But to do all.

[25 : 23] As to the Lord. As a labor. Of love. The work. Of the gospel. Is always. Ongoing. Because the Lord. Is building.

His church. And the people. Are to see. That unless he does. We labor. In vain. But we remember. That he's on our side. And so we love. To labor. For him. When we think. Of what we were remembering. On the Lord's day.

Jesus. On the cross. At Calvary. Was that. The greatest chaos. This world. Has seen. When there was darkness.

In the middle of the day. As Jesus. Was crucified. When people. Whose plans. With. Were putting forward. To get rid.

[26 : 19] Of the Lord Jesus. When their plans. Would have seemed. To have been accomplished. And successful. And yet. God.

Had a plan. His plan. Was being fulfilled. Just as Jesus. Had said. Destroy. This temple.

And in three days. I will raise it up. His plan. His plan. Was fulfilled. He rose. Again. Today.

It would seem. That God's plans. Are in chaos. In the eyes of many. The world. Is falling apart. But we don't listen.

To the world. We listen. To the word of God. And that he is building. His church. And the gates of hell.

[27 : 13] Will not prevail. Against it. God has a plan. And he is building. And he has a purpose. For you. And for me. To labor.

And to watch. And to find rest. As he gives his beloved. Sleep. May we rest. In him. And know. His blessing.

As we go on. Laboring. For the Lord. Let us pray. Lord our God. We thank you. That your word. Reminds us. Again and again.

That in all the chaos. That so often. Surrounds us. When the plans. Of this world. Are in disarray.
That your plans. Are being fulfilled. At all times.

And that you have. A plan. And a purpose. For all your people. In every generation. That you are
the God. Who is building. His church. And nothing. Will prevail.

[28 : 07] Against it. We thank you. That we have Christ Jesus. As the cornerstone. And that it is all.
Built on him. And so we pray. Lord that you will help us. To find.

Our purpose. In your plans. That you would use us. For your glory. That you would help us. To
labor. And to labor. In love. For you. With all our heart.

And all our soul. So Lord bless us. We pray. And continue with us. And pardon all our sin. As we
ask it all. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. ■■ you. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.