

Reading:

Psalm 127

BACKGROUND OF THE READING

There are a few things I would like to emphasise in our text this morning.

Our reading is known as a wisdom Psalm which means that it was written to instruct humanity regarding its relationship with God. In the case of our Psalm it is wise to include God in all human activities and foolish to ignore Him. The Hebrew word for build can also mean to start a family. It can also mean to build a fellowship/relationships.

In our reading the writer emphasises two things namely that God is in control of all things and secondly that the Lord provides on four levels of life namely: the household, the city, in human labour and the future. Without God's existence, all else fails.

In verses 4-5 the writer stresses that God also determines the future. When this Psalm was written sons were indeed regarded as a blessing of God to ensure their future. The oldest son could take over when the father died and provide in all the needs of the family especially those like the widows and the orphans. In times of war the sons could defend the family. Even in cases of the law and business the sons could stand together and ensure the stability of the family's honour. Sons were like a modern day "life's policy". And the more sons you had, the richer you were.

SERMON

The text verse for the sermon is verse 1: “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.” Which by the way – I hope all of you know, is the motto of the City of Edinburgh, quoted from the Latin translation of the Bible: *Nisi dominus frustra – without the Lord, everything in vain.*

Psalm 127 tells us about a fact that we cannot ignore and that is the presence of the Almighty God. If we ignore Him, do not take note of His presence and do not consult with Him on a regular basis, then everything will turn into a disaster.

While we are sitting in this church, while we are busy living our lives God is building our houses. We do not have any say over this. We are not in a position to choose the carpets, the layout or the design. It is not in our hands. God is building our houses of faith unconditionally. He is the Almighty God. He does not need our help. He grants us our houses through His love and mercy. He makes us owners.

However He wants us to make these houses homes of faith. He gave each one of us gifts, talents and money to do exactly that. There are people who can dig the foundation, to mix the cement, to make the bricks, people who can plaster the walls, joiners, electricians,

plumbers and the list continues. Yes we are all instruments in His Mighty hands.

But unfortunately because of our human nature we rebel against God for building our houses, our lives. We moan about the bricks, the windows, how small the rooms are and the colour of the exterior. Yes we have all sorts of excuses why we cannot make the house that God has built for us a home of faith like - my hands are full of blisters because of all the hard labour. I do not have a raincoat to build in the rain. My shoes are getting damaged because of the cement.

NANDA read a quote in a book written by Charles Swindoll (The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1,501 Other Stories. Nashville: Word, 1998, p. 189). It's to show how very ridiculous the excuses we sometimes use in regards to church would sound if it was used elsewhere, by a football supporter, for instance. Have you ever wondered what would happen if people were as committed to church as they are to sport? Listen how silly these excuses, used very often in relation to church, would sound if it was used in relation to football OR RUGBY:

"Every time I went they asked for money.

The people with whom I had to sit didn't seem very friendly.

The seats were too hard and uncomfortable.

The coach never came to see me.

The referee made a decision with which I could not agree.

I was sitting with some hypocrites – they only came to see what others were wearing.

Some games went into overtime, and I was late getting home.

The band played numbers that I had never heard before. The games were scheduled when I want to do other things.

My parents took me to **too** many games when I was growing up.

I don't want to take my children, because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best."

Puts things into perspective, doesn't it?

Yes we use all these excuses. We question God by asking: where are the plans? Who is the architect, the engineer and the interior decorator? All this leads us often to abandon the whole project because we have the audacity to think that we are waiting our time. We do not want to be instruments – we want to be in power.

So we have to ask ourselves: Are we still committed to follow Christ and use our gifts, talents and money in His service? Are we willing to make the house God built for us a home of faith?

Let us not forget that God's house has plenty of room for each and everyone. No- one is excluded. In His house there is specially equipped rooms for those with disabilities, safe rooms for all those who are traumatized, comfortable rooms for those who are ill and sunlit rooms

for children from whom the sun was taken away through abuse, neglect and starvation.

We need to trust the architect unconditionally with the plans of our homes. We need to trust Him despite the fact that we have not seen the plans. We need to look past the blisters on our hands to see the miracles of how God is using you and me. We need to stop with our excuses and serve God with thanksgiving. We need to get on with what He wants us to do namely to proclaim the Good News to all people!

We need to do what John 9:4 says: "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. If we do not adhere to God's command, then everything we do will be in vain!"

May you as a Guild do exactly this – carry on, proclaiming the Gospel to all men and women who may not necessarily come to church on a Sunday!

Amen