

Worshipping God Together

Call to worship

Minister: The Lord reigns forever;
 he has established his throne for judgment.
 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
All: a stronghold in times of trouble.

MP 13 All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer

The Psalmist says: "The Lord is good; his love is eternal. And his faithfulness lasts forever."

Let us pray:

Everlasting God,
through your Son you have called us out of the world
and into this place:
to worship you, to give you thanks and praise;
that we might learn of you and seek to follow your ways,
not the ways of the world;
that we might learn to love with the love of Christ,
not the love of the world;
that we might feel your protection
when this time comes to a close and our daily lives resume.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever.

Amen.

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Psalm 127 (OT page 624)

Reader: John Nichol

Background to 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.

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.

Amen

MP 760

When we walk with the Lord

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.

It is like building a modern day house without digging a proper foundation, consulting the plan and ignoring the building regulations. And the results: well a building with big cracks that will eventually fall apart. We see the results of this so often around us. There is even a television program on the tellie about “cowboy builders” who ignores the plan and disobeys the building regulations.

But it is not about buildings – it is about giving buildings meaning. And it can only have meaning when God’s hand rest upon it. And that is exactly what a church is supposed to be – not a building where people meet on a Sunday, but a home, where brothers and sisters in Christ care for each other like family is supposed to do.

This reminds me of a story I once heard:

There was a family who had moved to a new city and they had difficulty finding a house to rent. So they were living in a hotel until they could find a place to stay. They had a wee girl and the only place this girl could play was in the lobby of that hotel. One of the porters had been watching her day after day playing in that lobby; felt sorry for her and walked up to her and said, "It's too bad you don't have a home." That little girl just smiled real big and said, "Oh, we have a home, all we need is a house to put it in."

That little girl was right, because there is a big difference between a house and a home. A *house* is just a building – a *home* is what you find inside...

I think he used the metaphor of building to refer to our lives. What do you have to do if you want to build a house?

- In the first place, you need to get plans drawn up, something which will be done by an architect.
- Secondly you’ll need to find the perfect place to build the house.
- Thirdly you will have to get all the right building material.

- In the fourth place, if you are not a builder, you will need to find a builder that you can trust.
- And finally it is of the utmost importance that you do everything right, from the very beginning – in other words, that you follow the plan religiously, because otherwise your house will fall to pieces before you know it.

Let's apply this metaphor to our lives: Every single day, little by little, we build our lives with what we do and say.

- If we want to do this properly, we must follow the plan that God, the Architect of our lives, drew up for us, in the Bible.
- Secondly, we obviously need a place to live, and for this purpose God gave us the earth. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that we take care of the earth – so that we don't destroy the only place we have to live.
- In the third place, we need the correct material to build our lives with, of which I think faith is the most important. Faith is like the bricks of life – without faith our lives won't have any substance.
- Fourthly, as the builders of our own lives, we need to be trustworthy and constantly do what is expected of us.
- And lastly, we should *follow* the plan that God drew up for us – it is totally useless to have a Bible but to never open it – we should *read* our Bibles and then live accordingly.

The Psalmist goes on to say that *if* you build your house according to God's plan, you will be like a man with many sons. Which, like I explained earlier, meant that you will be happy, that you will be well taken care of until the day you die – because that is what sons did in those days.

In other words, if we follow the instructions given to us in the Word of God – our lives will not only be like houses, but like homes. Places where love flourish and happy memories are gathered.

But unfortunately, it doesn't mean that if we build our lives correctly we will never have to face any problems anymore, because we are still living in a broken world. But at least we will know that when the storms of life – sorrow, loneliness, sickness – strike us, it will never ever be able to blow our houses down. A house build according to God's plan, will be able to withstand any kind of a storm.

And this applies to our personal lives and homes, as well as to our mutual home – the church. Outsiders needs to come into our buildings and experience that Jesus Christ is the foundation, that the walls are build with faith, kept strong by the cement of the Holy Spirit and that the love of God shines brightly through the windows, to light up the whole neighbourhood.
Amen

Responding to God's word

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while the organist plays a hymn.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Frances Young

MP 4:1,3, 5 Abide with me

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

Lord, go with us and go before us
that in all we do, we may be guided by you,
walk in obedience to you
and bring glory to your name,
and may be a blessing to your Holy name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
Now and for evermore.
Sung Amen

Please remain standing as The Bible is removed.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, light of the world,
when we have done something wrong,
and we want to hide in the dark,
help us to choose to come into the light
of your love,
say sorry, and know your forgiveness.
Thank you for loving us so much.
Amen.