

Psalm 127:1-5

## Introduction

### Attention

How many like commercials (besides Super Bowl ads)?

- Past: paid streaming services w/ no ads
- Now: same services, more \$\$\$, WITH ADS.

US Corporations: \$600B+ annually for marketing.

Retail marketing (Walmart, Target, Amazon): "This product = a better life."

"The Good Life" can be found by prioritizing...

- a better home
- better food
- better car
- cruise / vacation
- better job
- more money

### Need

**It must work! (\$600B) || We believe the lie.**

- Our appetites rule our priorities.
- Instant gratification  $\approx$  buyer's remorse

**We must have chosen wrong product. Try again!**

- Run ourselves ragged
- We climb the ladder ... leaning against the wrong wall ... worse = upside-down.
- Waste precious years ... ruin precious relationships
- End of Life: best we can say (w/ Sinatra) — "I did it ... MY WAY!"

**God help us ... "My life is a wreck ... my wreck ... proud of my mess."**

## **My 30th year in ministry. LOTS of death beds.**

Not once:

- "I wish I had made more money."
- "I wish I had worked more hours."
- "Earned one more promotion."
- "Had fewer children."

Countless times:

- "I wish I hadn't prioritized my work over my family."
- "I wish I had been there for my parents."
- "I wish I had served God rather than myself."

Not my goal to heap guilt on top of the wounded.

Rather ... today is the first day of the rest of your life ... day to make some changes.

### **Deathbed conversations taught me...**

- The "good life" isn't found in fun, finances or fame.
- Chase pleasure, prosperity and self-promotion ... empty-handed every time.
- There is a "good life" that can be had.

Instructions are found in our text for today: Psalm 127.

## **Passage Background**

### **Title: A Song of Ascents ≡ sung "going up" to Jerusalem**

Ancient Israelites ... Jerusalem for major festivals: like Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles

"Pilgrim songbook"

- Families would travel together in caravans
- Songs of Ascent would help prepare them for worship

Together, they trace movement: far from God (distress) ⇒ security of Presence

- Starts with feeling of distress: Psalm 120:1 – "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me."
- Drawing closer raises spirits: Psalm 121:1 – "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where

does my help come?"

- Arrival w/ joy: Psalm 122:1 – " I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"

## **Psalm 127 = 8th of 15 "Songs of Ascent**

Focuses on the goodness of God's blessings (gratitude and security).

**One of only two psalms attributed to King Solomon (with Ps 72).**

1 Kings 4:31 – "[Solomon] was wiser than all other men..."

**Book of Ecclesiastes is usually attributed to Solomon.**

Ran experiment after experiment to find fulfillment in life.

- Pleasure and entertainment
- Alcohol and sexual indulgence
- Achievements and Money

Looking for the secret to living "The Good Life"

### **Ecclesiastes 2:11 ESV**

<sup>11</sup> Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

No lasting pleasure, purpose, peace ... apart from living life God's way.

### **Ecclesiastes 12:13 ESV**

<sup>13</sup> The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

**In many ways, Ps 127 is a summary Ecclesiastes.**

\*\*\* [Read text here](#) \*\*\*

### **Psalm 127:1–5 ESV**

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. <sup>3</sup> Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. <sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. <sup>5</sup> Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

# A “good life” is a life built on God’s priorities.

## Prayer

- See vanity of building on the world’s priorities.
- Make clear where we have believed the world’s lies
- Convict us of misaligned priorities
- Give us courage to change thoughts, convictions, priorities ... ultimately life

## Transition/Keyword

A “good life” is a life built on God’s priorities.

To show what God’s priorities are, Solomon compares / contrasts  
3 KINDS of LIFE

### v.1 — *The Futile Life*

## Discover

### Two subjects:

*builds a house* ⇒ ‘construction’ or ‘raising a family’ (cf. context vv. 3-5)

*watches over a city* ⇒ ‘mere security’ and/or ‘overseeing social systems’ (civic leader)

- A city = many homes ≈ society.
- God must protect our society and individual families.

### Two statements: ***Unless the LORD ... in vain***

*Unless the LORD*

- LORD = יהוה! ≈ Not just any god, but only the One True God
- Not Hands-On ⇒ The LORD empowering us to live/build His way
- But human effort is necessarily secondary

*in vain*

- If apart from God ≈ “empty, useless, meaningless, or futile”

- In original Hebrew, *in vain* appears first in each Hebrew clause ≈ great emphasis
- Emphasizes outrageous foolishness of building a life/home/society apart from God's wisdom

## Illustration

### Texas SandFest Sand Sculpting Competition

- Widely considered largest sand-sculpting competition in US
- annually, mid-April                      • Port Aransas, TX (Gulf Coast)
- Drew ~30k attendees in 2026
- Master's Level contestants spend up to 3 days on sand-sculpture

### 2026 Grand Prize winner

- From Moscow, Russia                      • Traveled 6k+ miles to compete
- Formally trained at the Moscow State Academic Art Institute
- >20+ yrs of experience                      • World-renown sand sculptor

### Where is his prize winning sculpture from April 2026 now?

- Castles made of sand all wash out to sea.

## Argue/Explain

### We can build a life that the world will applaud.

- But if we are building apart from God, it's futile.

Without God's design and His power, all human labor—whether building, protecting, or establishing—is ultimately in vain.

## Transition

So how do we ward off the futility of life in a fallen world?

- Try harder?      • Work harder?      • Work smarter?
- Work endlessly to build a sea wall ? Protect the sandcastle?

Some do! ≈ 2nd kind of life compared

v.2 — *The Frantic Life*

## Discover

### ***rise up early ... go late to rest ... anxious toil***

- Toiling speaks of feverish activity
- Going in early. Coming home late
- No time for God, or loved ones

Choke down your bread just to get back to work

- Family meals — intended times of connection and refreshing ≈ mere pit stop

### ***It is vain = empty, miserable existence***

- Does not de-emphasize hard work
- Hard work valued throughout Scripture

Rather, warns against burning the candle at both ends ...

- It's harmful to relationships: marriage, family, friends
- It's harmful to yourself: stress, exhaustion, IDOLATRY (???)
  - If you think you are indispensable (i.e. savior), re-read v.1.

### ***gives to his beloved sleep :: understood a couple of ways***

#### **1. "grants sleep to those He loves"**

- How valuable is sleep?
- VAINITY: our own self-induced stress chases our sleep away
- Trust in God brings peace, even in the midst of great stress

#### **2. "grants those He loves what they need even while they sleep"**

- Heavenly Father is working to provide and protect while you sleep
- What credit could you deserve for what He does while you are unconscious?

#### **And why does He do this?**

Because you are His "beloved."

- You are dearly loved by your Father in heaven.
- And — because of His love for you — wants to give (freely) the rest you seek.

**Matthew 11:28 ESV**

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

## Illustration

When a small child, terribly afraid of thunderstorms.

- Lightning / thunder ≈ Mom would lay down beside me
- With her there, could sleep through a hurricane

The difference wasn't the storm; it was her presence.

## Argue/Explain

Are you truly dependent on God's daily presence in your life?

- Not just words, but DESPERATE, freely acknowledging w/out Him doomed!

When life is driven by anxious self-reliance, rather than trust in God,

- your life will be filled with exhaustion, frustration, and waste
- and will suffer the absence of peace.

## Application

### Two Quotes ...

| "A man's got to know his limitations." — Dirty Harry (Clint Eastwood), 1973

- Maybe out of context, but ... Don't overestimate how good you are.
- You are not indispensable / invaluable / irreplaceable / even necessary.
- Without God, we can't even draw a breath of air.

So recognize your limitations ... and God's lack of limitations.

### Rely full on God, not yourself.

How? Start everyday spending time with Him.

| "I have so much to do that I spend several hours in prayer before daring to attempt it." — John Wesley

Daily Quiet Time dry? *Praying the Bible* — Dr. Don Whitney

## Transition

### What if we've been measuring success with the wrong metric?

A 3rd type of life to compare and contrast

## vv.3-5 — *The Fruitful Life*

### Discover

#### ***Children are a heritage from the Lord ... reward***

Counter-cultural statement!

- Ask yourself: "Are children a BURDEN or a blessing?"
- Sacrificed prosperity and career to have more children, or vice versa?

v.3 teaches that children are the prize, the trophy; not degrees or corner offices.

“Every baby born is God’s vote for the future of humankind and our opportunity to help make some new beginnings.” — Warren Wiersbe

#### ***Like arrows in the hand of a warrior***

Arrows must be shaped

- Handmade. Time spent whittling and shaping the branch in a straight shaft.
- Sons & daughters must be shaped / trained at an EARLY age (most impactful years are before 5yo).
- Proverbs 22:6 — “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Arrows must be aimed

- The best crafted arrow can be wasted without careful aim.
- Must be directed in the right paths while under your influence.
- This involves intentionality. Deuteronomy 6:7 — “You shall teach [the Word of the LORD] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Arrow must be released

- Any arrow well-made and well-aimed must be released to fulfill its design.
- Parents must release their mature children at the appropriate time.
  - Send them into the world with a sense of eternal mission
  - Not merely to make a living, but to make a difference for God.

#### ***Blessed is the man who fills his quiver***

- *Blessed* = happy

How many is a “quiver full”?

- Some have tried to attach a number. Faulty interpretation.
- Our quiver? 2001 Nissan Quest. When it was full, we quit.

Shouldn't press metaphor too far, but ... clearly: more is better.

### ***He shall not be put to shame... in the gate***

- City gate = center of commercial, legal, intellectual life
- Like arrows extend the reach of a warrior, children extend the parents' values into society

**Your children make a significant impact on the world that will outlive you!**

### **Illustration**

Consider the effects of birthrates on a society.

- 1950s–60s: US birthrate = ~ 3.5 children per woman
- 1980s: ~1.9 children per woman (below replacement rate)
- 2020s: ~1.6 children per woman (~25% below replacement rate)

Muslim Somalia = ~6.0 children per woman (affecting Minnesota)

Who is gaining influence “in the gate” in Minnesota?

### **Argue/Explain**

#### **If v.3 is true, what have we cheated ourselves out of?!?!?**

Think about your children/grandchildren. (If with you, touch them.)

- If they were gravely sick, what would you be willing to part with to see them healthy again?
- If multiples, would you delete any one of them to have more money / bigger house?
- If someone was trying to hurt them, wouldn't you give your own life to protect them?

And yet, we exchange more money / toys / career for fewer kids.

**We say we are “pro-life”, but perhaps just “anti-abortion.”**

- Celebrated overturn of Roe v. Wade. As we should!
- Pray that abortion rates plummet!

### **But when unwed mothers or unplanned pregnancy ≈ birth, what then?**

- Will we demonstrate that we LOVE CHILDREN (foster care & adoption) or just hate abortion?
  - It's right to hate abortion! It's murder. It's a scourge on society.
- But if we ignore the children that we saved in the womb, are we morally righteous.

### **Objections**

- Foster Care or Adoption not an option for everyone. I get it!
- Not everyone is supposed to get married. (Singleness isn't a disease to be cured.)
- Not all married couples are able to have children.

But ALL adults should value children the way God does!

### **Is our valuation of children inconsistent?**

- What does it say when we will drive into CLT to Prayer Walk in front of an Abortion Clinic...
- but we won't walk down the Preschool or Children hallways to teach our own kids about Jesus?!?!

**If we view children as a burden — when God calls them a blessing — who is right?**

### **Application**

#### **Are you saying that we should have more kids?**

- Not my place to prescribe the number of children you should have.

#### **BUT — You should ask God about it!**

- Ask Him to examine your attitude towards more children.
- If you are married and HE says, you should have more kids ≈ well... homework.
  - "Having more kids" is not the only way to "expand your quiver."
    - Foster Care    – Adoption    – Mentoring
- If HE says "quiver is full" or "old, beyond stretching", fine.

**But then ask how else and where else you can properly value the gift of other children.**

- How better to pour into your (current) children or grandchildren?
- Serve / Disciple the next generation here / rec field / tutor / mentor.

## Call to Faith

### Visualize

#### **Recent visit to Wright Bros Memorial in KDH.**

Part of museum dedicated to the people that the Wright Bros influenced.

#### **Brought to mind: Famous Aviator Howard Hughes**

- Designed / Built fast plane in world at the time: H-1 Racer (1935)
  - Introduced innovations like retractable landing gear
- Designed / Built largest aircraft at the time: H-4 Hercules "Spruce Goose"
- Bought and transformed Trans World Airlines (TWA) in a mega-airline

#### **By 1970's ...**

- Net worth of over \$15B (today)
- Control over massive industries
- Global influencer

#### **How did he accomplish this?**

- He trusted no one
- Worked obsessively
- Withdrew from relationships

He lived the Frantic Life.

#### **He spent his later years ...**

- Consumed by anxiety, control issues, and isolation
- Lived in dark hotel rooms
- Gripped by fear of loosing his sandcastle
- Unable to enjoy what he had built

He lived the Futile Life.

**Howard Hughes died April 5, 1976.**

- Died on board an airplane, being flown to Houston, TX for medical treatment.
- He died from kidney failure caused by malnutrition, physical exhaustion and drug dependence.
- He died childless, with no heirs to care for all he had built.

He did NOT live a Fruitful Life.

**Mark 8:36 ESV**

<sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

## Appeal/Apply

**What are you building? What are you building it on?**

- The good life is not about how much you accomplish.
- It's about how much glory you bring to the LORD through what you accomplish.

**Jesus said ...**

**John 15:5 NLT**

<sup>5</sup> "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

- He is the true builder of your life, your family, and His church.
- He invites the weary to find rest in Him.
- By His grace and through faith in Him, He makes us part of God's family; and makes us co-heirs with Him in God's Kingdom.

The "good life" is not found in self-effort. It is found in surrender to Christ.

## Call to Respond

Surrender your plans to the Lord. Adopt His priorities.

Trust Him to provide instead of striving in anxiety.

Commit to investing in what truly matters.

- For your legacy
  - Glorify God, not yourself.
  - "Be fruitful and multiply"
    - have/raise more children

- pouring in to someone else's children
- For eternity
  - Be saved.
  - Baptized.
  - Be Discipled. (Join)