



FROM THE PASTOR

Psalm 127 (NIV) of Solomon.

¹Unless the LORD builds the house,
the builders labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.
²In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—
for he grants sleep to those he loves.
³Children are a heritage from the LORD,
offspring a reward from him.
⁴Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.
⁵Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.
They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their
opponents in court.

It seems to me that some things just go together naturally. Let's consider today the coupling of two things that do just that: home and family. Many of us have lived in places that were not really a home. Places like dormitories, military barracks, summer camps, homeless shelters, health care facilities or rehabilitation centers are all important resources and may sometimes be pleasant places to live. But nobody would call them home. The thing missing is family. All of these may be a place to live, but none of them are home. Consider one place where many live that is not home—a personal care home. I remember when I first became a pastor over 40 years ago, most of these personal care settings weren't very homey. As the decades have passed, personal care facilities have become much more home-like. Part of the improvement has been a greater integration of family activities into the life of the facility.

That has been one of the cruelest aspects of this current COVID-19 crisis. For the best of motives, family members and family-like friends have been locked out of such facilities and the residents have suffered for it. I hope

we have learned from the last few months how to maintain the family and relational ties that each of us needs, just like we need food and water, and still keep the vulnerable safe from infection.

Our Psalm today is ascribed not to King David, but to his son and successor Solomon. Solomon was known, of course, for his wisdom. He may not have lived wisely in all aspects of his life, but he articulated wisdom so very well. In the 127th Psalm, Solomon combines the themes of home and family. It doesn't matter how big it is or how spectacularly it is built. Without a family it is not yet a home.

What is a family? Genesis teaches us in 2:24: ***"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."*** Marriage is the establishment of a family. Our Psalm today teaches us in verse 3: ***"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him."*** Having children is the establishment of a family. Families come together in different ways, such as adoption and extended family settings. In our culture today, the diversity of ways in which we become a family is greater than ever before. For this reason, it shouldn't be surprising that in our society we don't always agree with each other about what is a family. This is an issue that has splintered American and European Protestantism, as we all know.



The whole of society—as well as the whole of the Church—is not going to come to a common consensus about what is family anytime soon, if ever.

But what really establishes family began long before anything was even created. Psalm 139:15-16 says: ***"My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."***

Long before we were born, married or established in an earthly family in any way, we became part of God's family. This is our foundation as family. Family includes—and actually begins—with our relationship to God. It was made final with the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:19-20: ***"Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."***

To see the true beauty of family, we begin with God our Father, Christ our Brother and the Spirit that unites us to God, Himself. In a real sense, family doesn't begin with marriage. Family begins with baptism. In heaven, we will relate to one another through our Lord. When our earthly family is founded on God's heavenly promise sealed in baptism, we are empowered to relate to one another now as we will then.

In Christ's service,
Pastor Brian Shirey

Post Scripts:

- † Our lessons for this Sunday, June 21, the Third Sunday after Pentecost, are:
 - First Lesson: Jeremiah 20:7-13
 - Psalm: 91
 - Second Lesson: Romans 6:-12-23
 - Gospel: Matthew 10:5a, 21-33
- † It sure feels great to be worshipping at St. Luke's again. Even though we are gathering for worship in Centennial Hall which allows for proper distancing, that does not mean we can completely guarantee safety from infection nor that everybody should attend. I'm sure that our Lord wants you to continue to use prudence and caution. Let's err on the side of caution. If you are not feeling well or have been around anyone at risk for COVID-19, you should wait awhile before coming back. If you have any factors that might make you more vulnerable to getting or would have more difficulty recovering from the virus, you should wait a while before coming back.
- † Keep praying for one another and pray for our President, Governor and other leaders. And trust in our strong Fortress to get us through the remainder of this crisis.