

**Church of God Kilsyth**  
**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026**  
**Series:**

**Title/Big Idea**

Unless the LORD builds the house

**Key Passage/s**

Psalm 127: 1-2

**Introduction**

As we begin a new year together as a church family, I want us to look at the first two verses of Psalm 127 together.

Let's first read it together:

**Psalm 127** (A song of ascents. Of Solomon.)

<sup>1</sup> Unless the LORD builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain.

Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the guards stand watch in vain.

<sup>2</sup> In vain you rise early  
and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat—  
for he grants sleep to<sup>Ⓜ</sup> those he loves.

**Psalm 127 as a whole is a Psalm that is part of the wider 'Song of Assents'** that includes 15 Psalms (Song of Assents) associated with God's people going up to Jerusalem to take part in festival celebrations – In the song of assents we find songs of confidence in God, songs of thanksgiving, Psalms or both lament and celebration and wisdom Psalms.

**And here in Psalm 127 we find a wisdom poem.** Which as you'll see from your bibles includes a reference to Solomon and therefore includes similar wisdom examples found in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

**With the main overarching theme of Psalm 127** being that all life without God's involvement and therefore His blessing is essential meaningless.

- Human endeavour or work and indeed all our everyday actions and how we live - without God are worthless.
- In turn Psalm 127 is essentially giving wisdom on our everyday life and how we need God to be at the forefront and centre of all our activity.

**And as we begin a new year** there is no better time to set apart our lives a fresh to Him and His Kingdom purposes.

Although this Psalm can also be read and applied as a coherent whole, it is split into two sections and I want to look simply at the first section this morning (V1-2).

### **Firstly, we read in V1**

<sup>1</sup> Unless the LORD builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain.  
Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the guards stand watch in vain.

We see clearly that the wisdom given here is that– even all the hard work and endeavours is simply in ‘vain’ if when we are building we are relying on ourselves rather than ‘relying on God’.

- And here in V1 we see an emphasis on things that effect our everyday life experience – building, work, life, rest, our home and our family with the references to building a ‘house’ and ‘the Lord watching over a city’ being essentially our everyday lives.
- In other words, - Our lives or home’s (who we are and including family) and our lives in society (including our work, vocation etc).
- With the ‘city’ a representative of a place of security – in other words, with God involved in our lives we are protected and secure.
- With the Psalm also seeking to emphasis the work life rest balance that is needed.
- Like the book of proverbs, we see hard work and endeavour celebrated and associated with God’s blessing (rather than slumber) but is making t clear that even such endeavour is worthless without God’s involvement.

### **Therefore, the wisdom we need to head as we begin a new year is this:**

- What are we seeking to work to build this year and does it include God?
- More than that - Are we fully relying on God as we build.
- Or even better- are we building on our own or are we participating with God in what He is building.

“Despite our best laid plans, God has some ideas of His own for our lives. When we focus less on figuring out our own plans and more on knowing and enjoying God, we begin to see the future he has in store for us-His perfect plan-unfold”

***Louie Giglio***

**And Psalm 127 is also emphasising that if we rely on the Lord as we build and live then we don’t need to live our lives with worry** - As we can build in faith and rest in Him – knowing that he can and will supply all that we need in life. In other words, our security is in Him.

This is therefore the same wisdom that Jesus teaches in the sermon on the mount when He says (Mathew 6:25-26,33-34) –

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than

clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them .....

<sup>33</sup> **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** <sup>34</sup> **Therefore do not worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

You see, we all live for something or indeed someone. Or in the words of Psalm 127 – We are all ‘building something’ We all seek after what gives our life meaning and purpose, something on which to set our hearts and minds upon.

- The author and theologian John Stott in his commentary on this calls it ‘ambition’ but not bad ambition but ‘godly’ ambition – where, what we seek first concerns our goals in life, what we are aiming for, what makes us tick.
- In other words, what our goals are uncovers (not necessarily in a negative sense) our motives and inner desires for our lives.
- You could say, it’s possible to be ambitious for God and it’s possible to live in and to flourish in God’s Kingdom in our everyday world by seeking Him first.

So therefore, it’s not necessarily about what we seek per say (as long as its not contrary to God’s will for us or will cause us harm) but it’s primarily about who and what we are seeking first.

God - our loving heavenly Father who knows what we need before we ask Him. When we pursue God’s kingdom and his righteousness in our daily priorities and activities, we will have all of our needs met by their ever-caring, ever-watching heavenly Father — as we hear the words of Jesus to us a fresh <sup>33</sup> **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

#### **We see this emphasized in V2 of our Psalm:**

2 In vain you rise early  
and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat—  
for he grants sleep to[a] those he loves.

Emphasizing that this kind of toil (that this working relying on our ourselves rather than trusting God for our wellbeing) —constant work from day and night—proves deceptive and ultimately useless.

In other words, *if we build our lives seeking to secure our lives on our own our lives are filled with hardships and worry.*

**Then, we read of the opposite imagery of ‘God granting sleep to those He loves’.**

- What we see here is not the psalmist devaluing hard work, but that hard work is not all we need to be successful in life.

Tim Kellor in his devotional book on the Psalms in relation to this emphasises that *'Prosperity and security are not ultimately your accomplishments but God's gifts (V1). So overwork, worry, and strain and foolish and wrong (V2). If you know the One who loves you unfailingly is in complete charge of history, you will be able to sleep well. If you are overworked and overstressed, you are forgetting who God is. Jesus said it most bluntly: "Apart from me you can do nothing "(John 15:5).'*

- As we have noted - God's involvement in our life is what leads to true satisfaction, meaning and purpose – When we work and build our lives in relationship with Him.
- With the imagery here of 'God granting sleep to those He loves' means that we can rest and rely on God because even when we sleep God continues to sustain and be active.

As one bible commentator articulates well *'Human effort alone is not sufficient to create a meaningful life, but when divine involvement intersects with human effort, the fear of a vain and useless (shawe') life is erased'.*

### **Conclusion/Application/Ministry**

So, in conclusion and for some application right at the start of 2026 - Psalm 127 v1-2 is driving home that the wisdom we need and the question we need to ask ourselves is–

- Are we building on our own or are we participating with God in what He is building –  
For ***Unless the LORD builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain.***

**Therefore, are we seeking to apply the model that Jesus gives us in John 15 where He says (John 15:4-11)**

<sup>4</sup>Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

- Where Jesus is essentially saying unless you are building with me and in relationship with God you are building in vain - Jesus gives us this life changing practice - 'Abide in me, and I in you'.
- In other words - who or what we abide in (are rooted/make our home in) determines the fruit of our lives - Determines if we labour in toil or in satisfaction and success.

**You see, apart from Him we can do nothing –** Therefore, we are called to shun our pride, our self-importance and our self-reliance - ***and rest in and abide in God our Father.***

- We are made in His image and likeness to partake of God and to participate with him. We are never meant to live life and build anything without Him.

**What a wonderful image Psalm 127 portrays** - To place our lives, our families, work, our vocations, our Church in His sovereign hands as we are invited to depend on God and not on ourselves.

**This year** - Lets seek to partake of God and participate with Him, and in His work and in the building of His kingdom, for His glory – then in turn we find rest, satisfaction and purpose.

**Amen**