

“Fathers as Warriors” (Psalm 127)(6.5.22)

Psalm 127 (NIV84)

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

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.

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

³ Sons are a heritage from the Lord,
children a reward from him.

⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are sons born in one’s youth.

⁵ Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.

They will not be put to shame

when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

LET US PRAY

INTRODUCTION:

Are you a worrier or a warrior? Jesus is very clear that we are not to worry. Matthew 6:25–26 (NIV84)

²⁵“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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes?²⁶ 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. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

Today, I will argue that we are to be warriors; especially men; and, especially fathers. Jesus says in Matthew 11:12 (NIV84)

¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

“Contrast it with this: “The kingdom of heaven is open to passive, wimpy men who enter it by lying on the couch watching TV.”

That was a quote from John Eldredge's book Wild at Heart – Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul. I will be using many quotes from that book throughout this message. This is an excellent book for a Men's Bible Study and it has a companion DVD set. Let me know if you are interested in this Bible Study.

BODY:

For what should a father go to war, be a warrior? Well, the whole of scripture is about the Kingdom of God overcoming the Prince of darkness and his evil cohorts. But, we will limit today's argument to the elements given in these five verses of Psalm 127.

We are to battle for our **homes**. We are to battle for our communities or **cities**. We are to battle for our **families**, our wife and children. And, as I established the first week of this sermon series, the father is the head of the home.

"Marriage is a stunning picture of what God offers his people. Scripture tells us it is a living metaphor, a walking parable, a Rembrandt painting of the gospel. The Enemy knows this, and he hates it with every ounce of his malicious heart. He has no intention of just letting that beautiful portrait be lived out before the world with such deep appeal that no one can resist God's offer. So

just like in the Garden, Satan comes in to divide and conquer.”

The condition of the family is a barometer for society. As the family structure crumbles, so goes the moral fabric of the culture. Contrast that with 1 Peter 2, which we used in our call to worship. As you listen, imagine our families if we lived out our Christian faith in all its fullness.

1 Peter 2:4–5, 9–10 (NIV84)

⁴As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

⁹But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Praise be to God that the Lord of Hosts leads us into battle and the victory is His.

Exodus 15:3

“The Lord is a warrior;

The Lord is His name.

Isaiah 42:13

The Lord will go forth like a warrior,

He will arouse His zeal like a man of war.

He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.

He will prevail against His enemies.

Zephaniah 3:17

“The Lord your God is in your midst,

A victorious warrior.

He will exult over you with joy,

He will be quiet in His love,

He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

And we must join the battle. We just sang in “We are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” that we are soldiers of the cross in each and every verse. Under our own power and resources, we would be ill equipped for the confrontation with the Enemy.

Romans 8:9–11 (The Message)

9-11 But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!

Thomas A. Kempis – “If we would endeavor, like men of courage, to stand in the battle, surely we would feel the favorable assistance of God from Heaven. For he who giveth us occasions to fight, to the end we may get the victory, is ready to succor those that fight manfully, and do trust in his grace.”

The house in verse one not only refers to the structure where the family lives, it refers to the family itself. When David wanted to build a house for God, the LORD said, “No, I will build your

house.” The LORD was referring to later generations, to David’s dynasty, legacy and kingdom.

Do not miss that there is work for the builders too. Surely you have heard it said that God will do what we cannot do; but, will not do what we can do. It is a partnership – with the Almighty carrying the lion’s share of the load.

Why does a city need watchmen? There is a threat against it. This Psalm is a song of ascents. It would have been sung as the priests walked up the hill to the Temple. Jerusalem then is most likely the city that Solomon had in mind.

It was heavily fortified with large seamless walls to surround and protect the people. There would have been a constant guard on the walls and gates. Yet, in 587 BC the Babylonians conquered the city. Those that were not killed were carried away into exile. This is what the prophets foretold would happen because Israel failed to repent and turn back to the LORD. Then again in 70 AD, just as Jesus predicted, Jerusalem was utterly and completely destroyed. When people abandon God, there will be dire consequences – God withdrew His protection.

Fathers, what are you guarding your families from? Many of our homes have locks, fences, security

systems with motion sensors and alarm systems. They are connected to monitoring companies. Maybe we have a dog or guns to protect our homes. Certainly, physical protection of our loved ones is important. How are we addressing spiritual protection?

Preacher Adrian Rogers gives a list of how to fight for our homes:

- A. Lead Your Children to a Saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ (“just letting our children decide for themselves is simply an absurdity!”)
- B. Help Your Children to Discern True Values
- C. Teach Your Children the Principles of Purity
- D. Cover Your Children with Prayer
- E. Make a Family Covenant
- F. Memorize Scriptures
- G. Create the Right Atmosphere in Your Home
- H. Remove Temptations
- I. Teach Your Daughters to Dress Modestly (you want to be attractive? Well, what are you trying to attract?)
- J. Learn to Counterattack

From a very early age, start instilling in children the fact that they are different, that your family is different, than the rest of society. We live under the authority of God Almighty, saved by the Lord Jesus, and empowered by God the Holy Spirit. Popularity is not to be pursued. Jesus says in Matthew 6:33 (NIV84) "But seek first [God's] kingdom and [God's] righteousness."

Verse two speaks about the futility of working ourselves to death. Working all day and half the night is futile if we are living outside the love of God. A common mantra today is that God loves everyone, which is true in a certain sense. This verse then must be speaking about relationship, for love is relationship. Those in relationship with the Lord will be rested and restored, fit for labor.

Now, some work so hard because they feel they have no choice. Others work for money and possessions. Some work for prestige or power. Sometimes men work long hours because they find working easier than being a dad and a husband.

The Special Music today, "Cat's in the Cradle," by Harry Chapin, was specifically chosen to demonstrate the lesson of misplaced priorities. The father was a successful businessman who traveled a lot and was too busy for his son even when he

was home. As the son got older, he became too busy for his father.

"What I'd really like to do, Dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them, please?"

The song concludes with the father's realization:

"And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me."

This is reality. In the case of this song, it is a sad reality. But, it doesn't have to be. It should be a celebration!

Verses 3-5 make it crystal clear that children are a gift of God. A few weeks ago, the Supreme Court's pending decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade was leaked. Since then there has been an uproar by abortion advocates. Truly, I cannot comprehend their position. These verses and many others undeniably say that a child is conceived through God's blessing.

I only had a vague idea what it meant that Sons are a heritage; so, I looked up the word heritage:

1. property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance:

>valued objects and qualities such as cultural traditions, unspoiled countryside, and historic buildings that have been passed down from previous generations:

>denoting a traditional brand or product regarded as emblematic of fine craftsmanship:

2. a special or individual possession; an allotted portion:

3. Christians, or the ancient Israelites, seen as God's chosen people.

Solomon says that having many sons when you are young are like arrows in the hands of a warrior. Fathers, you are that warrior. A large family can help each other. The farm or family business can prosper when everyone comes together. Of course, remember the central issue – the LORD must build the house.

There will be enemies and adversaries in the human realm and in the spiritual realm. The reference “in the gate” refers to a place of commerce. It also refers to the place where legal issues were debated and settled. And of course, the gates are the access point to the city that the Lord watches over against all enemies.

Yes my friends, C.S. Lewis was correct when he said, "Enemy-occupied territory – that is what the world is." In 2 Corinthians, Paul says that we are not **unaware** of Satan's schemes. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV84) Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. James 4:7 (NIV84) Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

"We dare not take on any angel, let alone a fallen one, in our own strength. That is why Christ extends his authority to us, "and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority" (Col. 2:10). Rebuke the Enemy in your own name and he laughs; command him in the name of Christ and he flees."

"Don't even try to take the masculine journey without at least one man by your side...This may be our weakest point, as David Smith points out in *The Friendless American Male*: "One serious problem is the friendless condition of the average American male."

"We don't' need accountability groups; we need fellow warriors, someone to fight alongside, someone to watch our back." One of my favorite movies is the classic western "Shane." I love the scene where Shane and his friend are standing back-to-back fighting the bad guys.

How do we prepare for battle? "Against the flesh, the traitor within [us], a warrior uses discipline. We have a two-dimensional version of this now, which we call a "quiet time." But most men have a hard time sustaining any sort of devotional life because it has no vital connection to recovering and protecting their strength; it feels about as important as flossing. **But if you saw your life as a great battle and you knew you needed time with God for your very survival, you would do it."**

Brothers in arms, do not forget it is critical to put on the armor of God. You will find it described in Ephesians 6 starting in the 10th verse.

CONCLUSION:

Now let us hear from one of the greatest warriors our nation has ever produced.

While General Douglas MacArthur was stationed in Australia and acting as Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, he penned this prayer for his only son, Arthur.

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds; a son who will know Thee—and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.

Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail.

Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high; a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men; one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the weakness of true strength.

Then I, his father will dare to whisper, "I have not lived in vain. " [AMEN]

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

“The Big Lie in the church today is that you are nothing more than “a sinner saved by grace.” You are a lot more than that. You are a new creation in Christ. The New Testament calls you a saint, a holy one, a son of God. In the core of your being, you are a good man.”

AND, you are called to be a warrior.

Amen and Amen. Let us pray.