

## Life in the Love of God (Psalm 127)

Good afternoon, my name is Preston. I'm a deacon here at City Life and it is my privilege to be with you this afternoon as we continue our Summer in the Psalms series. I hope everyone had a great first week back to school. My back to school present for you all is a short sermon. Short psalm, short sermon. So let me pray before we get started.

Ok, I have to start out with a confession. I absolutely hate having to do a job more than once. Why is that something to confess? Well, I get pretty angry when I have to redo work that I've already done. I'm not talking about mowing the yard or taking out the garbage. I get that kind of stuff. What I'm *really* talking about is **home decor**. Hear me out. The Lord in his sovereign wisdom saw fit to give me a spouse who **cares** about how things look, who **knows** what she wants and who is **always looking** to improve things. This means we have a running list of home projects. Which is all good. I love working with my hands. I will seize any opportunity to use a power tool. I like **most** of the ideas that we're implementing. All good. But there is a point in each project when I hear the fateful words. Those words: **"I just need to see it."** I've heard those words before. I know what that means. Those words mean there *will be* multiple abandoned holes in the wall. I *will go* to Home Depot more than once today. I will yell obscenities at inanimate objects. Five hours from now I will be awarded a masters degree in how *not* to do this job. I *will* get frustrated. Why does this cause so much frustration so *regularly*? A simple answer: **my heart**. Because **my heart** is centered on my agenda, trusting in my skills, dependent on my timeline for my happiness. It's about my heart. Here's the thing. I only have one point for you today, rather than the usual three. So the good news is, this is not going to be a pointless sermon. I may only have one point, but I think it's a good one. **God wants your heart.**

Let's read the first two verses again.

*“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. 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.”*

First, look at the words build and watch here. You can think of building as **creating**. God created us in his image and as such we are sub-creators. It's a natural tendency we all have whether it's coding, construction, cooking, creating a sale or an experience for someone else or ourselves. We are creative beings. Secondly, we watch. You can think of watching as **keeping, preserving or protecting**. What does the programmer who writes the code do when the code is complete? They back it up so that it's safe and secure. **Most of our lives are spent creating and protecting**. We are drawn to create out of a sense of purpose. We watch and protect what has been created because it has value to us. This is life. We want our lives to have meaning. Like this sermon, we don't want our lives to be pointless. And thank God, because we were created in his image and given the task of cultivating the world around us, our lives are not pointless. In fact this is one of the most fundamental ways we can worship the Lord - through our creating, through doing our work with excellence. When we do this, we point to him, the **ultimate Creator of all**.

But, sometimes this desire for meaning and purpose gets divorced from God in our lives. We take it on ourselves. We put the burden of meaning making and fulfillment square on our own shoulders and we start to climb the ladder. We *rise up early and go late to rest*, toiling in pursuit of the life we dream of or the life we've been told to pursue. What is the life you are creating and guarding? Is it success, status, safety? For many it may be tied to a job. The means for creating and keeping the life you desire. Or maybe it is your actual career that you are creating and keeping. I'll tell you for me it is **a life of peace**. A life without conflict or strife. I work hard to create a life of peace and I'm fierce in protecting that peace. That's what's behind the anger when the home project doesn't go quickly and smoothly. When I have to redo it multiple times. It's eating into my time and my calm. My wife becomes an enemy rather than a partner.

Deep down I desire true peace, but in my toiling I **settle for quiet and isolation**. A false peace that doesn't really satisfy. The reality is that all of our striving, all of our effort to create and preserve is in vain if the Lord is not in it. The word vain here actually means worthless, futile. That's pretty harsh.

Now what does that mean **"if the Lord is not in it"**? That sounds like some first rate Christian jargon right there. But it reminds me that this sermon has a point. **God wants your heart**. We are told all the time to 'follow your heart', 'what's your heart telling you', 'where is your heart leading you'. And it sounds good to us. It even sounds spiritual. And so we do. We put faith in ourselves. Faith in our agenda, our skills, and our timeline for our happiness. Here he calls *all that 'anxious toiling'* But here's the thing. It's a dangerous game to follow the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"*. But the good news is in the very next verse. *v.10 "I the Lord search the heart"*. See, we get it backwards. Our hearts actually need to be led by the one who created us. The one who knows us. The one who searches the heart, sees the deceit and says - there is a better way. The better way is when God has your heart. Not just upon first belief, but every day following the instruction of 2 Cor. 5:7 to *walk by faith, not by sight*. But faith in who? Not hope in self and our abilities, but faith in God and his promises. Giving God your heart each day, in each moment, in each endeavor, in each thought. That is **faith**.

### **But how do you do it?**

I don't know that there is a more concise and beautiful application of how to do this than that found in Proverbs chapter 3. So I'm not going to try to come up with one.

*v. 5 Trust the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.*

*v. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.*

*v. 7 Be not wise in your own eyes;  
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.*

I'll let Eugene Peterson add some flair:

*v. 5 Trust God from the bottom of your heart;*

*Don't try to figure out everything on your own.*

*v. 6 Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go;*

*He's the one who will keep you on track.*

*v. 7 Don't assume that you know it all.*

*Run to God! Run from evil!*

That's what giving your heart to God each day looks like. That's what faith in God rather than self looks like. Question yourself, trust God. Don't follow your heart, direct your heart to follow after God. Practically this means - **pray about everything**. In the big things yes, but also in the little things. *Years* of life are made up of *minutes* in a day. And God cares about all of them. Are you anxious about job security, avoiding a hard conversation, feeling hurt by a friend? God wants to walk with you in all of it, so talk with him about it.

### **And what is the result?**

*'...he gives to his beloved sleep'* Sleep? Yes! A sign of ultimate provision, comfort, rest and trust. And not just that, but listen to the promise in the next verse of that passage in Proverbs 3 - *'It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.'* Who says no to that? No thanks! I'm good. With my constant anxiety, my overwhelming sense of inadequacy, and my general fear of everything. I'm fine. He gives to his beloved sleep. He heals your flesh and refreshes your bones.

### **Why? Why does he do this?**

Because we are his **beloved**. Why can we trust God with our hearts, our plans, our futures, our safety? Because we are his beloved. **You** are his beloved. He loves **you**. You might not feel that way. You might not feel beloved today. One consequence of following our hearts, rather than letting God lead our hearts, is that we believe lies

about God. Mostly lies about God's love. Lies like "You have to earn God's love." Or "You have to be lovely before God will love you." Or "God only loves me because he has to, he doesn't really like me." Do more, be better, clean up first, how could God put up with me lies from the enemy.

Let's let God lead our hearts to the truth. To the restful, healing, refreshing truth about his love. **That's why he sent Jesus!** For God SO LOVED the world that he gave his only son. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. The sin and death defeating, interceding on your behalf, creator of the universe loves you. He wants your heart, because he loves you. What better reason could we have to trust him with it. Let's pray.