

Psalm 127:1-5

July 27, 30, 2006 – 8th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Trust God's Security in Christ

† Granting rest (vv.1,2)

† Saving from shame (vv.3-5)

In the name of Jesus, who brings us by grace into God's family, dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It's too easy after watching so many newscasts of war-torn Lebanon and countless movies of bombings and mayhem to get a false sense of security. We're so used to clicking to another channel that we may harden our hearts to the death and destruction vividly portrayed, but seemingly, oh, so far away. It's one thing to acknowledge a country's right to defend herself. We won't discuss the politics from the pulpit. But the anguished tears of the children seeing their homes and loved ones demolished ought to move us to pity and more earnest prayers that God would grant His peace. Yet we know that just because bullets and bombs stop flying, does not mean true peace will come. Graveyards are peaceful too, but people don't live there. Peace within our own borders masks the fact that behind the scenes the souls of men are dying. And smiling faces often prove how happily one can choose his own way to hell.

God has proven how sincerely He wants a far better existence and a much brighter future for us, for our community, for our world. The question is not what God wants; He has made that clear at the cross and in the empty tomb. The question is with us whether we will accept God's free gift of secure and eternal peace. Today He calls us to **Trust God's Security in Christ** which first of all is...

† Granting rest (vv.1,2)

A thousand years before Christ this "*song of ascents...Of Solomon*" was still true: "*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.*" It is meaningless vanity to labor and toil on your "house" in this life without trusting the LORD to do the actual building. No matter how early we rise or late we retire, we labor among "*the nations [that] exhaust themselves for nothing*" (Jeremiah 51:58; Habakkuk 2:13) unless we work for the glory of God and count on Him to bless with success as He ordains it.

Unfortunately, Christians are just as prone as our unbelieving neighbors to jump on the treadmill or dive onto the hamster wheel to get nowhere fast. Eternal priorities are turned upside down by advertisers hawking all the stuff we just can't do without. The place police officers call "Toe-tag Town," a.k.a., Sun City, Arizona, is not unique in the lesson that "you can't take it with you." As one pastor said, "Hearses don't have trailers." But we tend to ignore obituaries as if we will live forever. Self-help proves only empty falsehood in the end. For God to assure us that "*he grants sleep to those he loves*" is a priceless blessing. The Holy Spirit in the Word covers us with Christ and calms our hearts and minds to **Trust God's Security in Christ**. When houses collapse and nations fall, we say with the psalmist, "*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*" (Psalm 73:26)

The first believers who sang this Psalm had a great object lesson rising up right before their eyes. Our movies and novels lead to a climax at the end. But Hebrew style puts the climax in the middle like climbing a mountain. Look in your Bible at Psalm 127. It's right in the middle of the Psalms of Ascent (120-134) which the ancient Jews sang as they climbed Mount Zion up to the Temple of the LORD. Psalm 120 seems to start the journey "back home" where the worshiper is turned off by all the bickering and violence of the sinful world in which we live. And the last Psalm of Ascent, 134, has him and his companions calling to the temple-worker Levites to keep praising the LORD all through the night as they return down the mountain into the cruel, dark world. Sometimes children cry when they have to go home

from church. Many times we adults wish we could stay here where smiles are warm and hearts are united in praising our great and gracious God. But as we return to our everyday lives, things are different inside us. God the Holy Spirit has used His Word and sacraments to keep **Granting rest** which enables us to **Trust God's Security in Christ**. We cannot build the "house" of our heart and guard the city where we live from enemies we cannot see – the devil, the world and our own traitorous sinful flesh. But God reassures us again and again as we go up to Jerusalem that He will do the building and the guarding even as He puts the tools in our hands and hearts to work with Him in our families and communities. His powerful Word is the backhoe and jackhammer to break up proud hearts starting with our own. And His Word and sacraments spread the rich soil of the Good News of sins-forgiven in Christ faster and deeper than the best earth movers engineered by man. Thanks to **God's Security in Christ**, we work hard to God's glory by day and rest in His merciful forgiveness at night. God grants true peace and rest...

† **Saving from shame (vv.3-5)**

One of the very disturbing things about this Psalm is who wrote it. Psalm 127 is one of only two that were written "by Solomon," if we're translating the Hebrew correctly. Solomon was King David's royal successor to whom the LORD God gave the awesome responsibility of building His Temple in Jerusalem. But Solomon's track record of shame is a muddy road through a barnyard of sin. What kind of family man would take a thousand wives and concubines in spite of the LORD's commands through Moses that Israelite kings should not have many wives? Idol worship by Solomon with his foreign wives plunged into the sewer of child sacrifice to the vile god Moloch. Why would God use such a shameful individual to build His Temple, much less write the climactic psalm in the Psalms of Ascent?

Let's back up a bit. Have you ever heard someone say, "I'll go back to church when I get my life together"? Have you ever stayed away because you felt too sinful to come? There are times in our lives when we just feel dirty, when our thoughts and words and deeds are not what we want people to see. So we act like Adam in the Garden of Eden groping for somewhere to hide from God. But God says only those "*with clean hands and a pure heart*" (Psalm 24) can enter His presence to worship on Zion.

God's advice to us at times like that is don't turn away in fear. Remember Solomon. God brought him close to save him **from shame**. God wants us and our children to hear how He also brings us near to His loving heart. And doesn't God hide this wonderful truth in warm and intimate words? Right at the central peak of the middle Psalm of Ascents we read God's feelings about family: "*Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. 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.*"

Our heavenly Father has just one, only begotten Son. But when Jesus saw there was no one to save us from the **shame** and suffering, the violence and bloodshed of our sins, He stepped forward as the only Volunteer who could go on this mission of mercy. And God the Father sent Him. That's what I find absolutely amazing. I can't imagine why God would send such a pure and holy One to bleed and die for me. He blesses me daily with personal and professional gifts. But instead of praising Him with all my heart and soul, I become presumptuous, lazy and proud. Yet this is exactly why God sent His one and only begotten Son to save me from my **shame**. Jesus also took your **shame** with that of the entire world to the cross, washed it away with His holy precious blood, then buried it in the grave when He rose.

But Father and Son were not finished. They promised and sent the dear Holy Spirit to adopt us into God's family through Baptism. God gives us wisdom in His Word to teach our children the fear of the LORD and to grant them the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. **Trust God's Security in Christ**. Jesus gives us this solid invitation: "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*" (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV) **Trust** this kind of eternal **Security** which God alone can build and guard. Amen.

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