

Building Christ Centered Families

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church Rev. Dr. Eric G. Peterson

Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Our meditation this morning is on Psalm 127.

“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. 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.” - Psalm 127

There once was a builder, who built the finest houses for his friends and neighbors. Diligently he labored to make sure that every house was built the best he could make it. Unfortunately, the builder did not have a house of his own. His friends and neighbors were so appreciative of the houses he had built for them that they decided they would build a house for him. So they formed a committee and made a contract with their builder friend to build the best house he could build, sparing no cost. The builder thought to himself that this was his chance to finally make enough money to help himself. So he purchased the cheapest materials and cut costs wherever he could. The house looked beautiful on the outside, but on the inside, the house was filled with the poorest materials so he could make the biggest profit. When the house was completed the builder thought he was turning the house over to the buyer, but to his surprise, his friends and neighbors gathered around and told him that this house was his house. They bought it for him. Then every short cut, every cutback, haunted him because now he had to live with them for the rest of his life.

All of us are builders of some sort. Daily, each of us has an opportunity to invest in our personal life, in our family, in our community, and our world. Every day we have a choice to do something to make life better for someone and to share God's grace. But like the builder who built with poor materials, if we neglect the opportunities God gives to us, if we fail to seize the moment for God's purpose, the opportunities will be lost, and we can't get them back.

Today is Father's Day and I want to recognize all the men in our congregation this morning for all you do to bless your families. All of us are leaders. No matter how old we are or what our status in life is, we are all influencing the people around us. There is an expression, *"The only Bible people may ever read is the one they see in you."* There are times when I think my children do not care about a word I say. But I know that this is not true. I know because I was watching my father all the time, seeing how he handled his life. Our children are always watching and learning from us for good or bad. When a man commits his life to Christ and to serving God, it has a tremendous impact on the life of the whole family. It is also true for a mother and even for a child. Each of us is making an impact on those around us. Over the years I have heard many stories of children who attended our Open Arms Child Care Center, who learned how to pray at meals, who impacted the faith of their families. They would be having dinner with their families and everyone would be eating, and their child would stop them and say, *"We forgot to pray."* And so their parents began to pray, and many families started to come to church. John tells us that ***"one of the roles that Jesus played in our lives is to reveal God's love and presence to us."*** (John 1:14). ***"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."*** (John 1:18) Every day all of us are making God known through the way we live out our faith.

The good news is that fathers and mothers are not alone in building the life of their families. And we are not on our own when it comes

to witnessing our faith to others. Faith is a gift of God that comes from hearing God's Word and the working of the Holy Spirit. We cannot change the hearts of our children and create faith in them. In fact, it is not even our job to try to change people. Our job is to love people. And when we love people and witness our faith to them, an amazing thing happens, the Holy Spirit touches their hearts.

You can't get water out of a dry well. You can't get love out of an empty heart. Spiritually we can only give what we have been given. Jesus spent three years in a relationship with his disciples helping them experience His love. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the gift of time, to just be with them and share our lives with them. As a child, one of the greatest blessings I received was to work with my father and mother in their upholstery store. My father was a very talented man and he could cut fabric and upholster a chair in such a way that every stripe matched, every flower was perfectly aligned, and every detail was precisely woven together. The furniture my father and mother made was a work of art. My father never sat me down and told me how to live my life. But he taught me about what was important in life, by the care he put into his furniture, by the way he treated every customer with respect, and by how hard he worked. He taught me about the value and the importance of quality and not to buy junk. He made furniture, but the business he was in was lifting people up. He had a profound effect on my life. Our kids are watching how we live, and they are not the only ones. We are responsible for what they see.

An apple does not fall far from the tree. All our families are broken. Without learning to forgive each other we could never sit down at the dinner table. There were many days I struggled with my father and my father struggled with me. But even on the worst of days, I always knew my father loved me. I remember one event in particular that showed me his love. I was at Ten Mile River Boy Scout Camp in the Delaware Water Gap attending summer camp. The week I was at camp, hurricane Connie struck the New York/ Pennsylvania area and dropped 13 inches of rain. All activities at the camp were canceled

and the roads to the camp were cut off because of all the flooding. Despite the danger, my dad found a way to drive to the camp and he took all my friends and me home. He risked his life to save us.

There are no perfect followers of Jesus. The disciples were not the Brady bunch. However, the disciples knew that when the storms came and the winds blew, Jesus was there. When they were hungry, Jesus set a table to feed them. When they ran away in fear and abandoned Jesus, Jesus never stopped loving them. Jesus showed them a love that went beyond anything they ever experienced in life. It transformed them. And when their sins were like scarlet, Jesus bore their sins and carried their guilt and died to set them free. It was Jesus' love that motivated the disciples to go into the world and **want** to serve others. It was His love that made them fearless, even in the face of evil. Our world is broken and people are hurting - this morning Jesus is inviting you and I to hold onto God's radical love for us and to accept His call to share His love so others might find life in His name.

We can't change the world, but we can love one person at a time, and love people wherever God has called us to be. If we want to make the world healthier and a more hopeful place, it begins with each of us sharing God's love in our families and where we are. The healing of the world begins at our dinner table and in our neighbor's backyard.

God loves you. Hold onto His love.