

## THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – May 3 & 4, 2008

### Family Sunday

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

### OUR FAMILIES ARE A BLESSING FROM THE LORD - PSALM 127

If you work hard enough and apply yourself, you will be successful. It all depends on you and what you do. If you do things right then your life will be free from trouble, sickness and pain. How often don't we hear that message? But then we work as best we can, we spend most of our time, put in our best effort and everything falls flat and we blame ourselves. It's my fault that things didn't turn out right. We often see that happen when it comes to the raising of children, don't we? God blesses us with the gift of children. We see that our children are baptized. We faithfully bring them to church. We enroll them in Kids 4 Christ. We send them to a Christian School. We try and give them the best example that we can in our homes with our lives. And lo and behold one of our children turns out to be a drug addict or an alcoholic. What did we do wrong? It must be my fault that my child turned out the way she did. Even our society blames parents that it is their fault that their child turned out the way they did. If we adopt that premise then it was also our Savior Jesus' fault that Judas betrayed him and later committed suicide. And it was Jesus' fault that Peter denied that he even knew who Jesus was after Jesus had been with him for three years instructing and teaching him. Obviously, it wasn't Jesus' fault. He had done nothing wrong. In fact, he was the perfect teacher and leader and one of his followers denied the faith and took his own life and another of his disciples denied that he even knew Jesus. Judas and Peter made those choices. It wasn't Jesus' fault. As Christians we need to understand this truth so that we don't continue to blame ourselves for choices and decisions that our children made which were beyond our control. However, as Christian parents and members of families each of us still has responsibilities and work that God has given us to do.

Today as we celebrate our Family Sunday we wish to consider the words of King Solomon in Psalm 127. As we do so the Holy Spirit sets this truth before us **OUR FAMILIES ARE A BLESSING FROM THE LORD.** The psalmist makes it clear that **I) We Have An Assignment.** However, lest we put everything on ourselves and think it all depends on me Solomon also says to us, **II) We Are To Be Content.**

#### WE HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT

It is the Lord who has put each of us in a family. You and I did not choose to be in the family we are in. Whether you are single and never have married, whether you are a widow or widower or divorced, whether you are married without children or married and have children, every one of us has a family. As members of families we have an assignment. This assignment has three parts. We are to build our families. We are to protect our families. We are to provide for our families.

“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” (V. 1a) You can work all you want and set goals and objectives for your family, however, if the Lord is not a part of those plans, you are building in vain. Part of our assignment as members of families is to build our family up. The most important part of that building is the spiritual training and teaching that needs to be done. You can buy your family everything and give them a life full of all the luxuries of this world, but if you don't give them Jesus Christ and His Word, it's all meaningless and vain. In the materialistic society that we are living in, it is so easy to lose sight of what is really important and vital for building our families. The most important legacy or inheritance that you can leave the members of your family is that you brought them to the Lord Jesus Christ. You witnessed to your family the power of God's Word and the love and forgiveness that is offered to every one through the work of Jesus the Savior of all people. As Jesus once said, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul.” (Matthew 16:26)

Another part of our assignment is to protect our families. Solomon writes, “Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.” (V. 1b) In ancient times there were watchmen who stood guard on the city walls watching the city to warn the citizens if an enemy were near and about to attack the city. The psalmist notes that unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. It is necessary and vital that we watch out for our families. Yet we can do nothing alone and our guarding and watching will not be successful, if the Lord does not bless our efforts. What do we need to watch out for as we carry out our duties as a watchman? We need to warn our families about the spiritual dangers that are all around us trying to draw us away from our Savior Jesus and His Word. As watchmen we need to sound the cry concerning all the attractions of this world that tempt us to renounce Jesus and trust ourselves or something else for everything that we need for this life and for eternity. We can’t be watchmen and not sound the warning and point out the dangers that are all around us that would shipwreck our faith and lead to eternal punishment and torment in hell.

The last part of our assignment is providing for our families. Listen to what Solomon writes, “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves.” (V. 2) How many people don’t work, work, work because they want to provide everything they think their family needs and wants? Solomon says trying to prolong the day and work more and more hours is meaningless and useless without the Lord. If all this is gotten through anxiety, sorrow and stress to provide for the family, if it is a life of fear and worry without the Lord then it is useless. It is also dangerous because it kills the body and also the spirit. We are to provide for our families and the Lord will bless our efforts, but we need to keep that in balance. For it is the Lord alone who grants security and rest to his people.

Every one of us has an important assignment within the families that God has placed us. We are to build our families up spiritually. We are to watch out for our families and we are to provide for them.

### **WE ARE TO BE CONTENT**

As we carry out our assignments as members of our families we are to be content with what the Lord provides us. Solomon now points out one of the great blessings that God does grant to families – children. Every one of us here today is one of those blessings. We are all children of someone. Listen to what he says about children, “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.” (Vv. 3-5) In the United States of America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we need to hear those words – “Children are an inheritance from the Lord. They are a reward.” How many people consider children a reward from God? Many today look on children as a burden or a commodity that can be murdered before they are born, neglected and abused after they are born or forgotten and cast aside by people who have more important things to do with their lives than deal with children.

God, on the other hand pictures children from an entirely different perspective. They are the strength of a family. We see that as parents and family members get older and there are children around who can help take care of their older family members. Also when family members face dangers, illnesses, problems and troubles, one’s children are there to be of assistance and help.

As Christians we understand that all depends on God’s blessings. However, we also know that we are required to work in our families and to do everything we can with the gifts and abilities that God has given us. Yet we need to be content on how God blesses the works of our hands remembering that all still depends on the Lord and his blessings and not on us.

At times we may look on our families as a necessary burden, expense or embarrassment. When you start thinking that way consider the words of Solomon and remember that my family is a blessing from the Lord. The Lord in his infinite wisdom has placed me in the family I have no matter how seemingly dysfunctional and strange it may appear. For every member of each of our families is a creation of our heavenly Father and every one of them has been redeemed by the precious blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. Every one of them needs to

hear that message of God's love and forgiveness. For the Lord loves us all and does not desire any of us to perish but all of us to come to repentance.

Amen.