

Everyone is part of a family. Whether we like the family we were born into or married into, doesn't change things. In fact, we even call this group that gathers at St. Paul's our Family of faith, because even with all our differences, we are connected. We just sang these beautiful words: **For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all.** What we share ... we're baptized children of our Father in heaven.

Today, we celebrate family by studying the wise words of Solomon that were sung earlier from Psalm 127.

To get the full effect of family, we need to go all the way back to the beginning where God designed family on the 6th day of creation's week. That's when he created a man: **"The Lord formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,"** and a woman: **"He took one of Adam's ribs to make Eve."**

But he wasn't done. There's something incomplete in a man that only a woman can fill. There's something incomplete in a woman that only a man can fill. If you are a movie buff, that truth came through in ...

- One of the Rocky movies. Rocky's brother-in-law asks him: *"Rocky, what do you see in my sister, Adrian?"* Rocky says: *"She got gaps. I got gaps. Together ... no gaps."* Rocky's grammar ... not so good, but he got the marriage thing right.
- And Jerry McGuire. Do you remember the famous line Jerry uses when he tells Dorothy why he wants to marry her? *"You complete me."* Jerry McGuire got the marriage thing right, too.

God filled the gaps and completed them: **"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh."** What he did is included the Marriage Rite we use in the ceremony: *Through this blessed union of husband and wife, **God established the family, provided for the physical and spiritual***

welfare of children, and fostered the peace and stability of society.

Single, widowed, divorced ... doesn't matter. Married with or without children ... doesn't matter. The Lord put you into a family. And so, as a family member, you have three God-given responsibilities: 1) **Build Up** your family, 2) **Protect** your family and 3) **Provide For** your family.

(1)

Let's start with **Building Up** your family: **Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.** You can work all you want and set all kinds of wonderful goals, but if you haven't included the Lord in your plans, it's a waste of time and energy. You can buy your family everything and give them a life full of things, but if Jesus isn't one of them, it's in vain. It's for nothing. Jesus said that: **"What good will it be for a person to gain the whole world and yet forfeit their soul?"** To build up your muscles, you need to train. To build up your family, spiritual training and teaching needs to be done.

In a society that eats, sleeps and breathes materialism, it's easy to lose sight of what's really necessary. The best inheritance you can leave for your family isn't a bank account, investments or real estate. The best legacy you can leave is having connected your family to Jesus. Your family witnesses the power of God's Word and the love of your Savior by your walk (how you live) and your talk (what you say).

(2)

The Psalm continues: **Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.** From Solomon's perspective, **Protecting** your family is just as important as **Building Up** your family. Back in the day, guards stood on city walls checking the countryside for enemies. They protected the people of the city by warning them.

Once again Solomon identifies what is a waste of time and energy. The guard who watches over the city without the Lord. Unless the Lord is present at

your dinner table, in your bedrooms and every other room of your house, you're not guarding or protecting anyone.

You protect your family by warning about the spiritual dangers that surround them ... each trying to yank them away from their Savior, and starve them by keeping them away from Jesus, the Bread of Life.

It's your job to alert your family to the things that try to make them forget about Jesus. It's your job to alert them to the danger of trusting in self rather than the Savior for what they need for this life and beyond. It's your job to sound the alarm so your family doesn't wreck their faith and crash and burn in hell.

(3)

The Psalm continues: **In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves.** Again, from Solomon's perspective, **Providing For** your family is just as important as **Protecting** them and **Building** them up.

How many work and work, and then work some more because you want to provide everything you think your family wants and needs? Again, Solomon points out something that is a waste of time and energy: trying to make the day last as long as possible if the Lord is walking with you. That only leads to a life of stress and worry.

Yes, you're to provide for your family. And yes, the Lord will bless your efforts, but you need to keep a balance. The Lord alone is the one who provides protection (salvation) and rest (forgiveness) to those who are part of his family. God has placed you into a family, to **Build** them **Up**, **Protect** them and **Provide for** them.

Have you ever failed at that? I know I have! None of us has done everything right, or even well. I've failed many times, and so have you. But God has forgiven me for my sins and failures, and he's forgiven you and your sins and failures.

Jesus Christ is the GOAT at forgiveness ... the greatest of all time. He forgives everything we've

done wrong. He bought and paid for that with his blood on the cross. That's where we draw the power and the strength to live as imperfect people with imperfect people in our families. That's why connecting your family to Jesus is the only thing that matters.

Every one of us here today is part of a family. You and I are children of someone. Listen to what Solomon has to say about children. He would know, he had plenty: **Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.**

In our country, we need to hear those words where many consider children a burden that can be murdered before they're born or neglected after they're born by those who have more important things to do.

God pictures children from an entirely different perspective. They're a gift and reward from the Creator. They're the strength of the family. As a family grows old, children are there to help. When a family wades through sad times, battles illness, or feels loneliness, children are there to bring smiles to faces and joy to hearts.

Family can be an interesting animal. We can joke about them and see them as a collection of goofballs. We can also see them as irreplaceable and without them there would be a huge hole in our lives.

It's the Lord who has placed you and me into our families no matter how we view them. And it's the Lord who has placed you and me into his family through his Word and the water of Baptism. And he keeps us connected to him through this family, your St. Paul's family of faith. Family is a blessing from God and a privilege.

With it comes the responsibilities to: **Build Up** your family, **Protect** your family and **Provide For** your family. May God continue to give you the strength to do exactly that!