**New Kilpatrick**

**Sunday 7th November**

**Psalm 127**

**Podcast**

**Welcome**

Hello! I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for the invitation to be with you today. Just down the road and a wee bit to the left COP26 is happening at the Exhibition Centre. Not that you can easily get there. But there is a bit of a sense of optimism, which is a good feeling. We haven’t necessarily felt that for a while. It’s full of caveats, and promises and pledges of course, rather than anything too concrete. We’ve taken the easy step in promising to make changes: Proof will be in the pudding.

To accompany us doing so, there is a psalm and we explore it today, Psalm 127 and begins with the line: unless the Lord built the house, they that build it, labour in vain. It’s what the bible does so often: pithily captures the moment with a challenge. Unless the Lord builds it, it is in vain.

Now in my reading of the Bible, Lord means a lot of things: love, justice, hope, truth. So in some ways it is appropriate to substitute any of these words with the word ‘Lord’: unless love builds the house, justice builds the house, truth builds the house…

COP26, Presbytery Mission Plans, Build back better, levelling up: unless love builds the house they that build it, labour in vain. Welcome to worship.

**Psalm 127 (new version)**

Here is Psalm 27, a new version:

Unless the Lord builds the house,

A great cathedral or a humble home,

all the effort you put into it,

will simply be all about ‘self’.

Unless the Lord guards the city,

Or the community, or the clan,

stirs it with love rather than hate,

whoever keeps guard, keeps watch in vain.

Don’t think you can do this yourself.

You can rise as early as dawn,

and rest as late as dusk,

you can worry over it,

fear for it and love it in equal measure,

but unless the Lord is the compassion

that strengthens each relationship,

the city will be lost.

Children bring the gift of life

to all in a community,

like arrows pointing into the future

they offer promise in every generation.

Happy is the community

that has such a generation of hope.

Hope builds the house,

keeps enemies at the gate,

and the future alive between us all.

**Prayer**

When buildings seem so much less important,

When we are online and digital,

Unable to meet under eaves,

Or between mortar,

Or below stained glass,

May we see new insights into your ancient songs,

And build this house

On the gift of love,

And the shape of grace,

And the foundation of justice.

When we build this house,

May we give praise to you,

Because of the community that becomes the house:

Open and diverse,

The word that is preached:

Generous and loving,

The door that is opened:

Wide and welcoming.

So that what we build is not all in vain:

Like a memorial to a past preacher,

Or a museum to times gone by,

But alive in this ‘now’,

Vibrant with the words of life,

And willing to live them.

Loving God,

Builder of communities,

Shaper of relationships,

Architect of a common wealth of people,

May this house of faith we build in community

Be about love,

All this

Be held together by love;

Everything

Speak of that love;

For there is nothing more to this institution of the church

Than love

So may we proclaim it

And believe it

And trust it

And share it

And learn to love again

In all its diversity

And abundance

And generosity

And may we know

That same love

Is your gift to us

And we give thanks

As we say the Lord’s Prayer together

Our Father, who art in heaven

Hallowed by thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever

Amen

**Psalm Intro**

We’re going to read a more traditional version of the psalm now. But it is culturally bound. This is not the way we would talk today, hopefully. It is very stereotypical and we have to name that in the Bible. It is misogynistic and has cultural bias. Men are the protectors and providers, the main protagonists in politics and business, and the true blessing is to have male children.

Hear these words in their time, but let us not take them literally as gospel. Rather hear the deeper intent: the people of God being built up, a place for everyone, fighting for what is good and fair. That is perhaps the broader context, though not the literal reading.

**Psalm Old Version**

Unless the Lord builds the house,  
    those who build it labor in vain.  
Unless the Lord guards the city,  
    the guard keeps watch 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 sleep to his beloved.[a]

Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord,  
    the fruit of the womb a reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
    are the sons of one’s youth.

Happy is the man who has  
    his quiver full of them.  
He shall not be put to shame  
    when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

**Reflection**

The psalm begins with these well known, and well used words: unless the Lord builds the house, they that build, it labour in vain.

After that you don’t need to read much more, because everything that follows is just commentary. The only bit that speaks of holy wisdom is the first line.

We’ve just mentioned using an alternative word for ‘Lord’ such as love, or grace, or justice, or peace.

But the same is true for the other half of the phrase. What other word might we use instead of the word house? The context of this psalm is that it was sung by pilgrims climbing up to Jerusalem to visit the temple..

But online, there is no building to focus faith on, thus what others object might we use for house: community, parish, family?

Reimagining the psalm in this way speaks into who we are today: Unless peace builds the community, they that build it, labour in vain. Unless justice builds the relationship we have with the environment, they that build it, labour in vain.

The psalm shifts from a song that takes us to the doors of the temple into a challenge on how we live. Rather than a confident affirmation, and you can imagine the awe of the first pilgrims approaching this incredible temple building, the biggest anywhere: God was clearly here in all God’s power and authority, it has become a provocative line of wisdom.

So I’d like to challenge us all this week: how might we reimagine the first line: Where do you feel this ancient psalm needs to speak into our contemporary world: Would it be COP26 agreements, would it be in the rethinking of the church, would it be our own community and parish?

Take some time considering that context.

And then, with the first line of the psalm as the heartbeat of the piece, how might we rewrite it for today? This is how holy words work: they reimagine themselves in the world we inhabit.

Maybe it doesn’t need continuing. Maybe, unless love builds the house, they that build it, labour in vain, is all that is needed and might become the mantra for ourselves this week.

Let the psalm accompany us. Today there is just an invitation, an opportunity, while so much happens round about us, to simply be in this moment with the intent of God: Unless God, love, peace, grace, builds the house, the agreement, the pledge to cut methane, the community, they that build it, labour in vain.

**New Psalm**

I took myself literally and decided to reimagine this psalm using the first line as a starter. I started with the line, unless LOVE build the house simply because I feel that’s what so many of us need to hear: love does build the house.

We’ve travelled a lot recently through uncertain times, ideas of change, feeling fragile and vulnerable and not a little confused. So in such times, it is always good to go back to the foundations: and that is love.

It’s what we will need in abundance over the next while. It is the only thing to rely on as we negotiate futures for our environment, society, community and congregation. It is the only thing our institution actually needs. Everything else we do as a church, is commentary. It is only, actually, about love.

Unless love builds the house, they that build it, labour in vain

It is vain to build high towers

To fix a space with tradition

To bejewel what is holy

And let religion decide who we will be

Such bread of anxious toil

Limits our living in the imagination of God

Dreams and visions

Are the sons and daughters of faith

Compassion and grace

The offspring of what is holy

These are the fruit of the womb

Of the one who loves unconditionally

Such love

Is the foundation of everything faithful

The architecture of God’s way

The arrow that points us towards tomorrow

Comforts us in the present

And is companion through these times

Unless love builds our house

They that build it, built it in vain.

**News**

Quiz 7pm Monday

Sing Song 2pm, Mens Association 7.30 both on Zoom on Tuesday

Thursday: Bulletin published

Friday is coffee pot 10.30

Winter Shelter GCM two weeks in January - volunteers

Next Week Remembrance

**Prayer**

Creating One,

Still fashioning fjords and ice flows,

Still designing minerals and mountains,

Still imagining places and people,

It is this universe we bring in prayer,

And especially this planet

Which we have seen this week

As a planet divided,

And unequal,

In its possible future,

In its intent to be rebalanced.

So we bring here people in poverty,

Who far outnumber those living in luxury,

And a gospel that asks us why?

We bring a creation wanting to care for us,

And an economy that cannot care for planet,

And a gospel that invites us to rebalance things.

We bring the stories of those in the south,

Alongside those in the west,

And a gospel that speaks into them both.

Hear us, O God,

That we might build a house of love,

And labour in love for that house.

So for those still negotiating at COP26, we pray,

For those leaders who have made pledges, to keep those promises.

For nations to recognise how diverse and beautiful humanity is, and to learn to love it,

For those most wealthy to compare that wealth to the richness of creation and decide what to invest in.

For communities

And families

And friendship circles

For those who are ill and recovering

Those physically and mentally ill

Those lacking jobs and opportunity

Those fearful still and vulnerable

In all our diversity and all our hope

May we together

As humanity

Build this house

This planet

This church

This community

With love

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**