

“The Problem of Hurry” (Ruthless Elimination of Hurry Pt. 1)
(Psalm 127:1-2)

- **The Problem of Hurry**

- **“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.” (Ps. 127:1-2 NRSV)** Have you ever found yourself living on that diet—“*the bread of anxious toil*”? In my mid-20’s, I spent so much time living on the edge of burnout that one day while driving, the thought entered my mind: *it might just be easier to not go on living*. That terrified me enough to start changing how I lived, but more on that later. We’ll come back to Psalm 127 as well.
- This series is based on a book by pastor John Mark Comer: ***The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry***. It is a timely and prophetic message for our culture that’s impacted my life. And if you’re anything like me, you’ll find it to be both *sobering* and *hopeful*, *convicting* and *freeing*. If you want to dig deeper, get the book, and join the **5-week small group on Zoom every Wednesday night (Pic)**.
 - The premise of the book is a conversation between two Christian leaders a few decades ago: John Ortberg was a “rising star” of pastors, about to make a *big move* to lead a *big church* in California. He called up his mentor, **Dallas Willard**, a philosopher and renowned Christian teacher. Dallas was a fountain of wisdom; John was anxious for insight. John basically asked, “*What do I need to do to succeed at the things that really matter?*” After a lengthy pause, he said this to the young, driven pastor: “*You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.*” John wrote it down. “*Ok, great, what else?*” “*That’s all. Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life in our day. You must eradicate it from your life; only then can you live the life He’s calling you to.*”
- Well, there’s a thought... Could it be that, of all things, *hurry* is the great enemy of our life with God today? It will help to define it: *Hurry* is not simply being busy. *Hurry* not just having lots do and doing it efficiently. Jesus was *busy—but He was never in a hurry*. Dallas defined it like this: **“Hurry involves excessive haste or a state of urgency, a state of frantic effort one falls into in response to inadequacy, fear, and guilt. || It is associated with words such as hurl, hurdle, hurricane. || We should take it as our aim to live our lives entirely without hurry. We should form a clear intention to live without hurry. One day at a time. Trying today.”**
- Corrie Ten Boom, the holocaust survivor and evangelist, once said: ***if the devil can’t make you sin, he’ll make you busy.*** Because *sin* and *hurry* have a similar effect: they isolate us from God, and others, and our own souls. This is just the way the world operates today, isn’t it? With each new breakthrough, our world has steadily advanced to this chaotic state we now consider normal.
 - Before the first clock tower was built in Germany in 1370, time was kept by the natural rhythms of seasons and sunlight—now we’re enslaved to our own inventions. Before the light bulb was created in 1879, the average person slept *11 hours per night*—today, it’s *less than 7 hours*. Before internet and smartphones, people in the 1960’s speculated by the 2000’s, technology would make us so efficient we’d be working 22 hours a week, 27 weeks a year—instead, our work follows us *everywhere we go*, and we *never unplug*. A 2016 study found that the average person touches their phone *2,617 times a day*. To that, John Ortberg asked, **“What would my life be like if I allowed God to touch my mind as many times as I touch my phone?”**
- You don’t need facts and anecdotes to know this is true. Regardless of life stage, we all feel it. We all see it. The way of the world is *hurried and noisy*—even when we have nothing to do. Our attention is fragmented, our souls are weary, our minds are overloaded. This is a big problem. Love, *holy love*, is the highest value of God’s Kingdom. But it’s impossible to truly give or receive love without *paying attention*. We struggle to give full attention and be fully present *anywhere*. *Love* and *hurry* are incompatible—and it seems that the way of this age is to be *always in a hurry*.

- **The Bread of Life**

- Back to Psalm 127: it comes in the middle of a unique collection of Psalms (120-134) called *the songs of ascent*, or *pilgrim psalms*. People recited them as they made the pilgrimage up to Jerusalem, the Temple, for the festivals of God. Israel’s Law prescribed 3 times a year to come

together to worship, feast, remember, and celebrate God's mighty acts of salvation in their history. And you always *went up* to the Temple, because it was in Jerusalem, the city on a hill.

- So, as you hear these profound words, attributed to King Solomon, imagine yourself on pilgrimage to that Holy City, a "thin place" where heaven touches earth. You're walking down the road many miles, leaving the cares and concerns and joys and blessings of ordinary life behind, with your face set toward God's throne on earth—the Temple. But even as you're going to worship, you're carrying with you the needs of your life: work, security, family. Not unlike what we do every Sunday when we make our way to God's house to worship.
- As you climb that hill, you start saying these words: **"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." (127:1)** This is the stuff of daily life: *building and guarding, creating and preserving*. In this Psalm, *we build and God builds; we guard and God guards*. But there is a contrast and a choice here: there is a way of life in which *we're doing it all by ourselves*. Or there is a way of life in which *we're doing it with God*. That choice was there in the very beginning of God's Story, in the Garden: humans were *made* to participate in this creation with God—He made us for good, godly work—to *build and guard, create and protect, with God*. But *we chose* to be our own lords and to *do it by ourselves*. That choice is what led to all *the toil, the worry, the hurry*. And then comes this word: *vain*. Life becomes *empty, meaningless*. Haven't you felt that when you're struggling with life: *what's the point?* That's life without God—*hurried, anxious, and 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." (Ps. 127:2)** You wake up, stay up, rush through the day, numb yourself to sleep. Coffee in the morning, wine at night. Stimulants, depressants, back-to-back. Endless scrolling, amusing ourselves to oblivion. Day after day. All this anxious striving, when the truth has always been: *He gives rest to His beloved*. We push past the limit or drown ourselves with distraction, because of some expectation or fear. But Jesus says there's a Father in Heaven who knows your needs, a Shepherd who leads you you, a Savior who loves you, and *in His Kingdom, there is always enough*. **Do you know that you're His beloved? You're His treasure? You're the 1 He'll leave the 99 to come rescue?**
- I am haunted by this phrase, *eating the bread of anxious toil*. We work, so we can get something, and when we finally get that something, it's just the bitter taste of fearful striving. *I plow the field and plant the crop and worry over the yield and bring in the harvest and grind the grain and knead the dough—all so I can eat the bread of anxious toil*. *Vanity*, Solomon says, *vanity*. Meanwhile, there's another kind of Bread far superior, that God wants to freely give us.
 - The Israelites found it in the wilderness—mana, daily bread, from God. Elijah received it when he was running away from wicked rulers—an angel came and gave him bread that sustained him on the journey. The disciples discovered it when Jesus fed the 5,000—all they could bring was their lack, but Jesus took it and brought God's abundance. Jesus Himself said, **"The bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life. Whoever believes in me will never go hungry..." (John 6:33-35)**
- Our *ruthless elimination of hurry* can boil down to this simple question: **Am I living on the bread of anxious toil, or the bread of life?** Am I doing life the world's way, on my own, apart from God—or am I doing life with God, His way? Am I freely receiving God's gracious, abundant sustenance that *really satisfies*, or am I rushing, striving, toiling to *sustain myself*?
 - This is why Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: don't be like the pagans, the godless, who incessantly worry about how they'll survive. Don't worry about tomorrow—today's trouble is enough for today. Your Father has it under control. Seek first His Kingdom and everything else will be given to you. And He says, *what good is it to gain the whole world and lose your soul?* You see, *Hurry* as we're defining it here is the emotional state of the godless life—it's all up to me, constant fear, self-preservation. The mind that is set on God's Kingdom is exactly opposite: *my Father has it. My Father's got me. I can work with Him and I can rest with Him, I can build with Him and guard with Him. Life has purpose and meaning, because God is on the Throne.*

- **The Invitation to Receive**

- You can lose sight of this so quickly—even if your job is centered on serving God! I was around 26. I rushed through college so I could marry my high school sweetheart, then jumped into ministry. I was an associate pastor at a busy, thriving church. I started going to seminary. We started having babies. I had so *many good things in life*. And I lived under a *relentless pressure to perform* that I placed on myself. There was no margin, no rhythm to allow my soul to breathe and be filled. I was just rising to the expectations of what I thought was needed to please others and please God. It wasn't just that I was doing too much; it's that I was moving so fast that I ignored what was happening in my heart. I ignored what God wanted to surface in me to bring healing, freedom, and growth. Instead, I was living to perform what was needed as a father, husband, student, pastor. Underneath it all my soul was suffocating, and I felt like there was no way out. I was driving one day with all this crushing down on me and a thought materialized: *it would be easier just to end it, you could just let go and drift off the road...* That quiet and embarrassing moment was one of the low points of my life, but it terrified me enough to wake up, to change my life and renew my mind. It was a very slow and arduous journey to learn the difference between doing life *my way* and doing life *God's way*. To sort through my false, pride-based expectations, and God's true, life-giving expectations. But it's a journey that saved my life. I had to embrace Jesus' Way to ruthlessly eliminate hurry and recover my heart.
- Maybe you can relate; maybe not. The point is this: there is a Bread that really satisfies. There is a Way that leads to Life. His name is Jesus. He bled and died so you could live and thrive. You've got to let go of what you're carrying to open your hands and receive Him. Today, as we come to the Lord's table, that's the invitation. These next 3 weeks, we're going to continue discovering ways we can eliminate this spirit of anxious toil, this hurry, from our lives. But today the simple invitation is: let it go, open your hands, and receive—receive the Bread of Heaven.
 - Isaiah 55 says, ***“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.” (Isa. 55:1-2 NIV)*** Are you the one He's talking to today? *Come and eat. Come, be filled. Come, receive.*