

## **Written Copy: Jeremiah 17:5-8 Blessed are Those Trusting in the LORD**

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday @ the Epiphany

Sunday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### **Text:**

<sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. <sup>6</sup> He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. <sup>7</sup> "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. <sup>8</sup> He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

### **Exegetical Statement (the text's context)**

Jeremiah is warning the people of Jerusalem who have put their trust in other gods as well as in the Temple itself and the presence of the Ark in it. They believe that God will spare the city from any of the evil that Jeremiah is prophesying. Jeremiah teaches that those who put their trust in man or in the things of man-in created things are cursed. They are like a juniper bush that has been planted in the wilderness near the Dead Sea. They are surrounded by bareness that is uninhabitable, always worried about drought, and will see only bad days. But those who trust in the LORD are protected from the hard times that will fall upon the earth like a tree planted near water that has roots leading into the stream to satisfy its thirst even during a drought. Because the LORD cares for this tree it is always producing fruit and its leaves remain green.

### **Focus Statement:**

Our trust and faith belong in the LORD who alone can walk us through the troubles of today and promise us the perfection of eternity. He should Himself trustworthy by sending His Son to be our Savior who died to forgive our sins and rose so that we might know we are justified. His resurrection had numerous public witnesses. We can trust His promise to support us and mediate the hard times now, and for the perfect eternity to come.

### **Function Statement:**

#### **Why it's important to know:**

We trust in those things of the world and ourselves that promise us a good and fruitful life now. But in doing so we can make this our heaven on earth and make our eternity full of the suffering and pain we tried to skip out on now.

#### **What the hearer should do as a result:**

Look first to God in faith when trouble comes. See the earthly helps as gifts from Him, but not the answer. Do not let the earthly gifts and your faith in them replace your faith in Christ.

### **Subject Sentence: Christ provides for now and eternal life to come**

## **Introduction**

There's the story of the father who took his young son and stood him on the railing of the back porch. He then went out and stood on the lawn in front of him. He told the boy, "Go ahead and jump, I'll catch you." Of course, the young boy, as he looked down at the distance between him and the ground, which was all of 4 feet but looked twice as far, was hesitant to take the leap. The father encouraged him saying, "It's alright. I promise, I'll catch you." With a little more coaxing, the boy finally made the leap. But the father stepped back and let the child fall to the ground. He then came over, held him, dusted him off, and dried his tears. When the tears had subsided, he looked the boy square in the eye and told him sternly, "Don't ever trust anyone."

A very hard lesson. Not one I would ever teach my children, at least not that way. But you and I in this day and age can relate, especially in this day and age when scammers abound looking for a gullible trusting soul to take advantage of. People call on the phone pretending to be from the police officer's association, the IRS, your bank, or the utility company. All wanting information from you so they solve a problem that's come up, telling you that there is a problem with your account, and they need to verify information, or they are looking for a donation and need personal information from you, all so they can gain access to your bank account and your identity. When you click on the wrong thing on Facebook all of a sudden you hear you've been hacked, and someone is sending out friend requests and messages that did not, and never would come from you. "Don't ever trust anyone."

But there are times we need to find someone to trust. We look for doctors to whom we can trust to provide correct diagnosis, financial advisors and income tax preparers. In this day and age we look to the CDC and government agencies to advise us how to protect ourselves from COVID. But now many state governments are in favor of dropping mask mandates, especially for those fully vaccinated, while the CDC says they are still necessary. Who should we believe? And in the back of our minds is that slogan "Don't ever trust anyone."

So we put trust in ourselves and our wisdom. We look to public figures and put great weight on what they say, even though they may be experts in the entertainment industry, but not necessarily in the areas we are looking for advice on. We look to those in office and put our trust in them because of their political party affiliation. We place our trust and confidence in many things in this world but fail to look to the one person we can always trust, our Lord.

## **Words of Wisdom from Jeremiah and Luke**

**Jeremiah 17:4-5** <sup>4</sup> You shall loosen your hand from your heritage that I gave to you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever." <sup>5</sup> Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD.

Jeremiah is speaking a warning to the land of Judah and Jerusalem. They had turned away from the LORD and turned to the false gods of the nations around them, and to their own self-confidence. They believed that because Jerusalem housed the Temple, the house of God, that nothing would ever happen to it or to the city. Their faith was in the building and not the LORD who was to be worshiped there. They trusted in their leaders, and the false prophets that told them just what they wanted to hear. They had so turned away from the LORD that when Jeremiah came speaking the LORD's message, even though it was collaborated by the prophets of the LORD that had come before him, the people staunchly refused to believe. The result would be that instead of remaining in this beautiful land that was to be their inheritance, they would lose their grip on it all. They would be forced to leave this land as captives of conquering Babylon and spend 70 years in the land that they did not know. They had trusted in themselves, in their temple, and the false gods that were all inventions and works of men. And the result was they were cursed.

**Jeremiah 17:6** He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

What about those today who trust in themselves and the false gods of this day and age: who place the kind of trust in human beings and things of this world that should be reserved for the LORD Himself? What happens when the problems and difficulties of life hit hard? When all the things we look to in order to find joy and hope begin to disappear? When life changes from something luxuriant and beautiful to become like living in a parched wilderness? When we look to mankind and things of this world which are not immune to the brokenness that invades our life? Our life can seem like shrub in the desert, just barley getting by, and we're planted in a ground is so full of salt that nothing can grow.

The Church, just like Jeremiah, is charged with calling out to members whose faith is slipping away, as well as the world that has no faith or trust in the Lord. Like Jeremiah we call them to repent, to turn back and be restored through the forgiveness offered from the cross. But like in Jeremiah's day many ignore the call.

**Luke 6:24-25** <sup>24</sup> "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. <sup>25</sup> "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

What happens when we live for today alone, gathering unto ourselves all we can? When we so focus on our life now, making it the best it can possibly be and doing all we can to extend it for as long as possible that we forgo the service we are called to give to others? When we see our life as ours to do what we will with at the expense of our call to be the Church? What happens when we ignore God's voice of law and reprimand like the people of Jeremiah's day? What happens when we are so focused with making our lives today heaven on earth that we allow our relationship with our Creator God to slip away? When we place our trust in other things before Him? What if we received our consolation now, and our satisfaction now, and our laughter now at the expense of what God has for us in eternity?

### **Jeremiah and Jesus' Call to Faith**

**Jeremiah 17:7-8** <sup>7</sup> "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. <sup>8</sup> He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

Jeremiah was sent by a loving God who used him to call out to Judah to return to faith in Him. He called them to place their trust and hope in the LORD alone, the one who brought them to this land, fought for them and with them, in order to remove the inhabitants that lived there> He promised to keep them in this land as long as they remained faithful to Him, trusting in Him alone, centering their hope and trust on Him and His Word first and foremost. He calls to us to do the same thing. To place our hope and trust in Him first, and to see all the things of this world that we might trust in as His good and gracious gifts through which He cares for us. We are to make Him, and our faith relationship with Him, the most important thing. When we do that, even when drought comes, even when trouble and sickness comes, we will be like the tree planted by the stream.

In ancient Egypt life flourished along the banks of the Nile River. Even in times of drought the Nile continued to flow and bring water from the snow runoff from thousands of miles upstream in highlands of Ethiopia and Uganda. Through irrigation channels the Nile provided for abundant life for those who lived near its banks. But one didn't have to travel too far to encounter the desert sands where nothing would grow. So too when we remain in contact with God by faith through the working of His Spirit. He keeps our life well irrigated with the blessings of His Word, even when trouble strikes around us and in our life.

**1 Corinthians 15:1-4** <sup>1</sup> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you---unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

Paul reminds us why Christ is the only place to turn and the only one to trust for life now and eternal life to come. He explains how the Gospel message of Jesus suffering, death, and resurrection all happened according to the Scriptures. God promised it in the Old Testament, and Jesus came and made it a reality in His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. He died for your sins and mine. He died to forgive all the ways we trust in ourselves and the world instead of Him. He died for all the ways we try to make our life heaven on earth and in doing so threaten to forfeit our eternity to come. Jesus told His disciples He would suffer, die, be buried and rise again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. And He did exactly as He said. Paul goes on to give a list of witnesses, most of who were alive at that time that the Corinthians could go and verify that His resurrection face to face, including over 500 brothers who saw Him alive.

You and I can't go and talk with them today. But we have a greater witness: the Holy Spirit Himself, given in Baptism, who grants us the power of faith to have and hold the Gospel Message as the undeniable truth, and that it is the answer for us in this life and beyond.

### **Living Our Lives Trusting in Christ**

**Luke 6:17-19** <sup>17</sup> And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, <sup>18</sup> who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup> And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

The same Jesus whose power healed every kind of disease is the Jesus we are to turn to in faith when trouble and sickness comes. There is nothing that He cannot heal. And when healing does not come, when sickness or trouble means the loss of something precious or the loss of a loved one, He is there in power to walk with us through this time of trouble. Times of drought will hit all of our lives, but the Spirit that was sent into your heart at baptism will be there through anything and everything to come and will walk with you to keep you close and keep you in faith.

**Luke 6:20-21 <sup>20</sup> And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup> "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.**

Blessed are the poor - the poor in Spirit. Blessed are you who are kept in repentant faith no matter what comes in this world, because the kingdom, the reign and rule of God is active in your hearts now. And when your time in this world is over, you can trust that Jesus will welcome you into the eternal kingdom where you will no longer be poor, hungry or weeping. Where Christ Himself will wipe every tear from your eyes.

### **Conclusion**

Who and what are you trusting in? Things of this broken world? Human beings who are subject to the same problems and droughts as you are? Or are you trusting in the God who has proven Himself trustworthy? He has planted His Gospel message in your heart. He has given you His Spirit to keep your faith relationship alive. May your trust be in Him first throughout your days on this earth and all the way to life everlasting. Amen.