

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

TRUST IN ...

Do you have enough, enough time, enough money, enough possessions? Our society has become fearful of not having enough. There's always something more to want, to have, to think that you need, but you don't really need it. You see the constant pressure, you feel the constant pressure to have that next greatest thing. However, it's not only things that we're pressured by. It can be relationships, going to concerts, hockey games or on vacations. Without these things you don't fit in, your life is worth less than those who do partake of these things.

This message to us from Jeremiah is asking you to think of where you find your value. Does your life find meaning in the things of man, or in the things of God? This theme is found throughout the Bible, and throughout our readings for today. As I asked last week, I ask again this week. What did you learn from the Psalm that we read together? Do you remember it by now?

To help you to remember our Psalm I'll review it like I did last week, because as I said then, if we're hearing the Word of God and you're not getting anything out of it, then it's of no benefit to you. And because I introduced the reading of the Psalms to you, I'll try to help you to understand why we read them. Today we read Psalm 1. I'll read it again now, with commentary.

First I prayed, [1] "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;" First I tell you that you're blessed if you don't walk after wicked ways, the ways of the sinful people whom we live among, nor even sit down among them. You may not appreciate such words. The wicked, sinners, and scoffers of the Christian faith may be your friends, or even your own family.

Then even before you have a chance to react, to have these words sink into you, you have to read, [2] "but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night." You may have wondered if you do delight in God's law or meditate on it. You may have realized that you don't delight or meditate. You may have wondered if that means you're not blessed. Where do you stand with God? This question now enters your heart.

Then I prayed, [3] "He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers." You may have reflected that this sounds nice, but wondered if you are that blessed person. These words could've come back to you when you heard our reading from Jeremiah, and again you wondered if you are that blessed person. Are you bearing that good fruit?

Yet the reading of a Psalm goes by too fast for such deep reflections, and that's why you should be praying them on your own at home, and why I reflect

on it in the sermon. After I prayer you responded by reading, [4] “The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.” The wicked, the blessed, where do you fall in the sight of God? In Jeremiah the division is between the cursed and the blessed. We all like to be blessed, but wicked and cursed, we don’t want to be those kinds of people.

I responded with stronger words, [5] “Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;” The wicked and the sinners are removed from a righteous congregation? You listen, because you’re here, but now you may not like what you’re hearing.

But then you had to close with these words, [6] “for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” If you’re righteous the Lord knows that you’re righteous. You may have your doubts if you’re righteous. You may wonder if you’re among the wicked. Will you perish? But before you could reflect any further the service continued with the Kyrie. Maybe you tried to sing the Kyrie. Maybe you didn’t bother with this new Kyrie. Maybe you’re still wondering, ‘Are you cursed, or are you blessed?’. Maybe you don’t care, and you didn’t pay any attention to our readings about the Lord cursing and blessing people.

Yet, if you do care, let’s reflect a little deeper on the reading from Jeremiah. Jeremiah cuts open our hearts to show us the problem that lies within. We either believe in God, or we live without faith. We’re either blessed by God, or cursed. Jeremiah says that those who are cursed are those who put their trust in the things of man, and in fact turn their hearts away from God.

Today our power is seen to be in technological advances, the latest electronic gadget, or money and being able to buy an electric car, but power and status is not seen in being a Christian. Back in the days of the Old Testament the fancy cars were horses. If you had horses you were of the elite. And yet God said in a few places, “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!” (Isaiah 31:1).

Jeremiah is speaking woes and curses to us who trust in men and their strength, and not in God. That was the point of Psalm 1, and we could hear that in other Psalms like Psalm 20(:6-8). “Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving might of His right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.”

Those who trust in God, the anointed, the righteous, they are the ones who are blessed by God. Those who boast in what they have and in what they do, they’re the cursed, the ones who will not receive blessings from God, but

rather they'll go on to live like a scraggly juniper bush in a wasteland struggling to live.

These are not just Old Testament warnings. You find these warning in the New Testament as well. The Apostle John wrote, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions — is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

That's our goal as Christians, to be blessed, to be righteous, to follow the will of God and abide forever – in heaven. You see this contrast is not between the cursed and the blessed now, but rather in the life to come. You may reflect that those who are not Christians are more blessed than you are now. They don't appear to be cursed. You may feel cursed. You may feel like a wicked person standing under God's judgement.

Yet, as a Baptized child of God you don't stand under God's judgement. You stand under Jesus' righteousness. You were clothed with Jesus' righteousness in your baptisms. When God looks upon you, He looks at you through the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus did the whole will of God. Jesus delighted in the law of God. Jesus trusted in the LORD. It's because of Jesus that you don't need to be afraid or anxious about the life to come. You have already been judged through Jesus who died to pay for all of your sins.

Before Jesus was crucified for our sins He told the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was then given to you in your baptisms. The Holy Spirit enables you to have faith, to do good works, to bear fruit as Jeremiah and our Psalm put it: to help others, your neighbours and your enemies. A baptized child of God shouldn't be afraid that they fall into the category of the cursed, nor worry if they're blessed. Yet, it's only a baptized child of God who would worry about those kinds of things. Someone who's not a Christian wouldn't be concerned about our readings about blessings and curses. They would already feel assured that they're blessed because of the hard work that they put into life. The Christian on the other hand rests assured in Christ's hard work for them. We rest assured in Jesus' promises to us as heard in our Gospel reading when Jesus talked about the blessings in the life to come for those who believe in Him as the Son of God, come to take away the sins of the world. Listen again to what Jesus said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:20b, 21, 23a). Amen.