

## Where else – Pr Jim Sprengle – Sixth Sunday after Epiphany February 13, 2022

- I. **Jeremiah 17:8** – “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.”
- II. **Cursed or blessed...**
  - a. God’s Word gives us many examples of curses –
    - i. The first example comes from Genesis 3:14 – as God calls the serpent, or the devil, cursed because he encouraged Adam and Eve to sin against God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil –
      1. Right after that – God tells Adam that “...cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:17-19)
    - ii. God also speaks of cursing anyone who is against His people – as Abram is given the promise of a future (Genesis 12)
    - iii. In Deuteronomy 28, Moses writes, “But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all His commandments and His statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you... “(Deut. 28:15)
      1. Which is followed by a litany of troubles that will befall the people of Israel for walking away from God.
  - b. On the other hand, God blesses more...
    - i. Again, at the beginning of creation, Genesis 1:22 says that God “blessed” Adam and Eve saying, “be fruitful and multiply...”
    - ii. Genesis 9 says God blessed Noah and his sons...
    - iii. Genesis 12 says God called Abram blessed, along with all his offspring that would one day be a great nation.
    - iv. And throughout the New Testament, just like our Gospel reading today – Jesus calls people who are poor, hungry, weeping, or hated as blessed...
    - v. But also, as the Gospel of John points out in chapter 1, “From [God’s] abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.” (John 1:16)... which was especially given through Jesus Christ, our Savior.
  - c. So, the curse is separation from God and His will for our lives, while the blessing is being connected to God by faith and trusting in Him alone.
- III. **Jeremiah reveals the curses and blessings of where we place our trust.**

- a. Our readings in Jeremiah and Psalm 1 compare those who trust in God alone to a tree.
  - i. A tree that has roots that are fed by a stream of unending water will flourish and produce good fruit...
- b. God situates each of us by a stream whenever we come to faith...It is the spiritual connection we have to God that feeds us and keeps us in the faith.
  - i. And remember, God brings us to faith by pure grace (Eph 2:8-9)
  - ii. We just covered this in Confirmation last Friday – the Holy Spirit comes upon us and gives us faith by nothing we could do ourselves – so, as we are baptized and hear God’s Word – He does the work of converting us.
    - 1. Because, just as it says in Genesis, all of us are cursed by sin and so is all creation...
    - 2. However... God loved us and blessed us by sending our Savior Jesus – who even died on a cross to become the curse for us... in our place.
      - a. Paul tells us in Galatians 3, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” (Galatians 3:13)
    - 3. The point of all this is to say that Jesus died and rose again so the curse of our sins would not be held against us...and by the faith He gives us, we receive blessings instead...
  - iii. So when we have faith and are plugged into God’s power and blessings, we are like a tree with roots that always receive sustenance and support from an unending supply – God Himself.
- c. Jeremiah is giving the people of Judah a message that they are trusting in the world and its idols... instead of turning to the God of never-ending sustenance....
  - i. Trusting in the wrong thing is a curse!
  - ii. Jeremiah is calling God’s people to repentance before they face destruction.
  - iii. Of course, no one wants to listen to a prophet calling them to repentance!
    - 1. Have the times changed?
    - 2. The idols might be different, but we have just as many troubles with trusting in the things of the world over and above God.
- d. When we trust in our own path and seek out answers in the world, God tells us it is a fruitless endeavor... and many times it means we reject the Word of God – and we reject those who preach and teach it.
  - i. Yah, yah... we hear you Jeremiah... or Pastor Jim... but we don’t agree with you (that’s *your* interpretation).
  - ii. God calls us into a holy relationship that gives us deep roots in Him –

- iii. Yet, the temptation is always there to look for help – to trust in – a dying and desperate world... rather than God Himself.

IV. **The world is dying and desperate by the way...**

- a. Just look at all the troubles and trials around us and it can be overwhelming.
  - i. Death is knocking at our door – when... we don't know... but certainly things can change in a moment's notice.
  - ii. Disease is always around us – if it's not impacting someone we care about, it's impacting us personally.
  - iii. And the world is a constantly changing place, and I don't mean always for the better... as new ways for sin and brokenness are invented daily.
- b. Here's the kicker – we often take our trust that is in God to deliver and bless us, and we turn to a broken world and put our trust there!
  - i. It doesn't work – and we will always lose when we place our trust in anything other than God.
- c. Later in the Book of Jeremiah, God promises an ultimate blessing:
  - i. In Chapter 31 it says, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31:31 & 34)
  - ii. How did God do this? Jesus Christ the Redeemer.
- d. Remember that Jesus covers us with His righteousness – and He is our model for living in the world.
  - i. What did Jesus do? He trusted in His Father completely.
  - ii. He prayed and sought out His Father's will constantly.
  - iii. He walked through the most horrible and difficult of times without turning away to idols or trusting in anything else but His Father.
- e. We are also a people who can trust fully in the Father by our gift of faith.
  - i. With all the great pressure around us – it's important to spend time with the God who deserves our trust...
  - ii. We spend time with Him in the Word, in prayer and meditation, receiving the Lord's Supper – and even spending time with other people who are rooted in Christ.
  - iii. All of these things nourish us from the inside and keep us spiritually healthy and focused on our only source of help – God.
- f. Where else can we possibly turn to receive true blessings and eternal life?
  - i. The answer of course is nowhere... God alone is our trust and our salvation.
  - ii. May the roots of your faith grow deeply in the Lord, as your trust in God blesses you with forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen