

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

⁵ This is what the LORD says. Cursed is anyone who trusts in mankind, who seeks his strength from human flesh, and who turns his heart away from the LORD. ⁶ He will be like a juniper bush in the wasteland. He will not see good things when they come. He lives in a dry place in the wilderness, in a salty land where no one lives.

⁷ But blessed is anyone who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. ⁸ He will be like a tree planted by water. It sends out its roots to the stream. It does not fear the heat when it comes. Its leaves will remain green. It is not concerned about a time of drought. It does not stop producing fruit. **This is God's Word.**

Dear Friends,

Trust is a vital part of the relationships we have in our lives. In the relationship between husband and wife, trust is a key component in holding the marriage together. In the relationship between parent and children, trust is a vital component in teaching and training the child. Even at work, trust plays a major part in assigning work and giving promotions.

Trust is also a key part of our spiritual life. It affects our relationship with God. As we consider the words of Jeremiah before us, let's see how they stress the importance of trust in our spiritual lives. Our theme this morning is **"Blessed is the Man Who Trusts in the Lord."** **"He Stands Strong Like a Tree"** and **"He has no Fear When The Heat is Turned Up."**

I. Jeremiah paints a contrasting picture for us of those who are blessed and those who are cursed. That was something easy for him to describe because this picture was before him every day. Many of the Children of Israel were trusting all the wrong things. They had rejected God and turned to idols, their own intellect and even their fellow man to somehow guide their lives, but there were still some left who trusted in the one true God.

Jeremiah describes those who trust in the Lord as a tree. He doesn't describe them as a blade of grass which is easily cut down, or a stalk of corn which can easily be pushed over, or a shaft of grain which can be easily bent this way or that. No, he describes them as a tree.

Trees are big and strong. When we think of a tree, we think of something solid which can withstand strong winds and driving rains – something that can't be moved. Trees are able to do that as long as they receive nutrients and water. That keeps them strong. That's why you will find trees planted by streams of water where they have a ready supply of what they need.

Jeremiah uses this picture of a tree to describe believers. They are able to stand strong and withstand the winds of temptation and the driving rains of persecution as long as they are fed with the 'living water' of God's Word. The message of Jesus refreshes the soul by bringing forgiveness to the sinner through faith. Jesus has paid for our sins and the message of forgiveness refreshes us just as water brings life to a tree.

Jeremiah compares this picture of the person who trusts in the Lord – the picture of a tree – to the picture of the person who trusts in himself or who trusts in mankind. Jeremiah says that without God, this person stands alone like a juniper bush in the wastelands. Think of a lone bush out in the middle of the desert. It has no leaves and the branches are bare. It is only a few feet tall

and is easily pulled out of the ground because it is virtually dead. There is nothing to keep it alive. Jeremiah says that when a good thing like prosperity comes along, it doesn't even recognize it because the life has gone out of it. Trusting in man and rejecting God only brings spiritual death. This spiritual death makes it impossible to recognize the Word of God which once brought life.

As you consider the picture Jeremiah is painting for us do you see the point he is trying to get across? We might be tempted to think it has something to do with trees but it really is all about the water that feeds the tree. That is what makes the tree strong.

God is the source of that living water for us. That's why Jesus said, **"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."** (John 7:37-38). That living water is our source of life flowing to us through God's Word and bringing us blessings which never end.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word to bring us life found in the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins brings us peace, knowing that we are no longer enemies of God. It brings us a sure hope of eternal life in heaven with Jesus our Savior, and it brings us comfort knowing that we are never alone because our God is always right here with us.

As you consider the picture Jeremiah has painted for us, do you see yourself as a tree standing tall, being fed by the living water of God's Word? Or are you more like that scraggly bush in the desert? We would all like to think we are trees standing tall, but there are times when we wither and look more like that scraggly bush. Those times when we might push God's Word to the bottom of the priority list. Maybe skip church for a week or two or doubt the value of coming to one of the Bible Studies.

Maybe you are like that bush in the desert because you're starting to focus on idols. Idols don't have to be wooden objects or statues that you set in your house and worship. Money can easily become an idol. An obsession with anything that is so important you can't do without it can easily become an idol. Sometimes that is sports, or maybe the outdoors, or trying to out-do your neighbors in everything. It isn't wrong to use the things that God gives us in this world, because God has given us many wonderful things for our benefit, but it is wrong to put our trust in them above God or make them the sole focus of our lives.

The things of this world eventually wear out, die, and fade away just like the bush in the barren wasteland, but God does not change. He doesn't wear out and He doesn't fade away. He is always here for us, His believers, and He loves us! He sent Jesus our Savior to pay for our sins and when we come to Him, confessing our sins, He is always there to assure us that the debt has been paid in full. Our sins are forgiven.

God wants us to have the blessings that come through faith. Jesus said, **"Blessed.... are those who hear the Word of God and obey it."** (Luke 11:28). That doesn't mean once you come to know Jesus as your Savior you'll never have any more problems. Christians have troubles just like everyone else – the difference however, is how the Christian handles the problems and troubles that come into their lives. Even when trouble comes your way, Jeremiah tells us, "The man who trusts in the Lord will be Blessed because God will help him when the heat is turned up."

II. Jeremiah takes us back to the picture of the tree, “[the tree] does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.” Heat always causes stress to a plant and a lot of times the leaves wither and fall off, but that isn’t the case with the tree fed by the living water. The living water sustains the tree during these tough times and it stands out because of its vitality during this troubled time.

Jeremiah uses this picture to describe the spiritual vitality of the Christian during times of afflictions. The faith of the believer stands out in sharp contrast to the affliction. For the Children of Israel to whom he was preaching, the affliction was the persecution that was coming at the hands of the Assyrians. For us it may be that unexpected illness that comes into our lives or an accident, or problems in our relationships, or our physical life coming to an end. All these things cause stress in our lives and yet as we continue to be fed by the living water of God’s Word, our faith does not wither, but it grows and is able to withstand the heat of these afflictions, standing out like the leaves on a tree during the drought.

Jeremiah ends this portion of scripture by writing that in the year of the drought the tree never fails to bear fruit. Any gardener knows that if a drought is going on, water is limited and plants suffer. The 1st expectation is that there will be no fruit that year and you just hope the plant can survive. Jeremiah writes that the tree will bear fruit even in a year of drought because it is fed by the living water. God’s Word continues to flow during bad years as well as the good years.

Our Gospel lesson for today said, **“Blessed are you who are poor....Blessed are you who hunger.... Blessed are you who weep now.... Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy,” (Luke 6:20-23).** At 1st glance, these don’t sound like blessings: being poor, hungry, weeping, being hated by men, excluded and insulted. Yet, Jesus told His disciples these things will be blessings because they will separate believers from the unbelievers and will draw them closer to their Lord.

So when trouble comes into your life, don’t despair. Turn to God for help and strength and comfort. Let God draw you closer during those tough times and he will work your troubles out for your good and while he is doing that – working those troubles out for our good – he gives us a chance to bear fruit. A chance to talk about where our peace and strength come from – a chance to talk about our Savior.

Things haven’t changed much since the time of Jeremiah. Trust is just as important today as it was thousands of years ago when Jeremiah wrote this portion of scripture. It affects all of our relationships – especially our relationship with God. Trusting in man for spiritual life leaves you parched and dry until eventually you wither and die. Thanks be to God for the living water of salvation. Thanks be to God for the gift of life for all those who trust in the Lord.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord / for his faith enables him to stand strong like a tree / and His faith enables him to Have no fear during times of trouble. Amen.