

August 26, 2012
Pentecost 13

"Deeply Rooted Trust in Jesus"

JEREMIAH 17:5-12

T*his is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶ He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. ⁷ "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. ⁸ He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." ⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? ¹⁰ "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." ¹¹ Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool. ¹² A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.*

He held on for dear life. I am talking about an airplane pilot named Henry Dempsey. In 1987 he was piloting a small 18 passenger commuter on its way to Boston from Lewiston, Maine. Not too far from landing, they heard a strange noise coming from the rear of the plane. Dempsey handed over the controls to his copilot and went to the rear to check it out the strange noise. They hit an air pocket. He was tossed against the rear door of the plane. The force of his body caused the poorly latched door to pop open. He was sucked out of the plane as it was traveling along at 200 miles an hour, 4000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean. The copilot radioed for an emergency landing, not even knowing the Henry Dempsey had been sucked out of the plane, and not knowing that Henry Dempsey had grabbed onto the railing of the stairs and was holding on for dear life. He held on as the plane flew at 200 miles per hour. He held on as it descended for the emergency landing. He held on as it landed with his face twelve inches from the run way. And when the plane landed emergency crews told Captain Dempsey he could let go. He would not let go. According to the story it took them fifteen minutes to pry his hand from the railing.

The Lord our God wanted his Old Testament people to hold on tight to his love for them and his plan to rescue them from sin by the Messiah he had promised. Every lamb offered sacrificed in the temple of the Lord pointed to Jesus the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Did they hold on to God's life saving plan? No, they gave up the worship of the true God for idols with names like Baal and Ashtoreth just as people give up the worship of the true God today and cling to false idols they have created for themselves.

The Lord told Jeremiah to show the people how much he wanted them to trust in him. Off course at that time there were no examples of holding on to something tightly such as Henry Dempsey hold on to the airplane for dear life. Instead the Lord uses a picture of tree planted by a stream of water that sends its roots deep into the ground to tap into a water supply that never failed. This morning we ask you where you want your hope and

trust to be placed. Do you want it in false idols that you create for yourself or in the true God and his love that he has for you in Jesus? How richly blessed you are to have a faith deeply rooted in God's love and the gift of his Son Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This faith will sustain you in the best of times and the worst of times.

The curse of idolatry

The worst thing that could ever happen to you in life is that you live each day trusting in yourself for your hope of being blessed and loved by God. The Lord speaks to every human being on the face of the earth with these powerful words, "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord." The Lord God pronounces a curse on those who make their own idol of trusting in themselves rather than trusting in him. To be cursed means to spend an eternity in hell. In Matthew 25 our Lord Jesus speaks about the people who trust in themselves. They will hear these awful words on judgment day, "Depart from me you who are cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

The original Hebrew language actually has two words for man to describe how foolish it is to trust in ourselves. The first word for man translated as "one" is the word "GIBBOR" which has the thought of a mighty man or warrior. The second word for man is the familiar Hebrew word "ADAM" which literally means dirt or dust. How foolish it is for human beings to think they are like mighty warriors who can find hope in themselves when they are dirt, or as Abraham said of himself, "I am but ashes and dust." The largest so called Christian Church in this country with 45,000 people worshipping every Sunday in Houston, Texas has as its theme on its web page, "Finding the champion in you." What does the Lord say here about trying to find the champion in you to make yourself acceptable to God? He says you are under a curse if you think that way.

You cannot trust in yourselves for your salvation in any way, shape or form, because as the Lord says then we are depending on our flesh. Even after we become believers our sinful flesh will still be there in our lives to disappoint us and lead us away from the Lord. You know the words of Paul in Romans 7: "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." Psalm 73 says, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Lord God have mercy on me a sinner for putting too much trust in myself and not fully trusting you."

The Lord shows us the foolishness of trusting in ourselves and false idols with the powerful picture of the bush in the wastelands. The person who trusts in himself will be "like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives." The word for wasteland is the Hebrew word ARABAH from which we get the Arabia. The Arabian Desert east of Israel is one of the most inhospitable places in the world. Take a plant from the nursery, put it into the hot desert sand and within hours it will perish. This morning we sang the words of Psalm 1 which said, "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."

The Lord God had warned his people that they should not let themselves be taken in by the prosperity of the Promised Land and the worship of false idols. You could not walk the

streets of Jerusalem at night without smelling the sweet smell of incense being offered on the rooftops of houses to the gods of Baal and Ashtoreth. Parents were sacrificing their children in the fire with the hope that Baal would bless them with prosperity. How many generations did it take for these people to from being planted in the Lord to being deeply rooted in idolatry? Did it take several generations or hundreds of years? No, in only one generation they turned their back on the Lord and worshipped the idols in the land of Canaan.

How did this happen? The Lord has the answer in verse 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" The human heart is so deceitful because it can lead you to cover up and excuse sinful actions. It can lead you to tolerate and justify certain sins in your life. It can lead you to look at others and think that somehow because you are better than they are that makes you special to God. It can lead you to actually think that the little bit of good you do in life will outweigh the evil you have done. The corrupted human heart led Cain to kill his brother Abel, David to commit adultery with Bathsheba, Peter to deny Jesus, and God's people to prefer the worship of Baal over him.

The Lord our God will not let us alone because he loves us. He wants us to see how easily we can be sucked into putting too much trust in ourselves or even the riches he gives us. Then he goes on to say, "Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool." On the family farm brood hens were used to hatch duck eggs and then the little ducklings were taken away from the hens. Remember the glory days when people were able to increase their wealth with high interest rates, real estate growth and stocks that soared. What has happened to these big nest eggs? You have heard it said that "Money talks." One man said, "Money talks, I cannot deny, I heard it once, it said, 'goodbye.'" Jesus said so clearly "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Proverbs 23:5 says, "Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle."

The blessing of being deeply rooted in Jesus

How beautiful and blessed is the person who puts their trust in the Lord. "But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." O dear, beloved Christian, by God's grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit you have been transplanted from living in the wasteland of trust in yourself and planted into Jesus the spring of living water. You have sunk your roots deeply into what Jesus has done for you to rescue you from your sin.

God wanted his Old Testament people to put their trust in him and the forgiveness the future Messiah would provide for him. He took the people from the land of Egypt and transplanted them in the Promised Land. He wanted his people going up to his temple to watch as the priest sacrificed the lambs because he wanted them to believe that the future Messiah would shed his blood for their sin. He spoke through the prophets about His Son, the Suffering Servant who would be "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." Jeremiah spoke of a righteous Branch who would be the only source of

righteousness. The Apostle Paul spoke of being deeply rooted in Christ's righteousness with these words, "I now consider everything loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for who sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

Here in California you can see the beautiful sycamore trees that grow along the streams that come out of the mountains. We appreciate the wonderful peaches, plums, nectarines, strawberries and grapes that grow because of drip irrigations systems. You are like one of these trees that grows by the streams of water. Even in the worst drought life can bring, the tree is green because it lives each day in the love that Jesus has for us. As Jeremiah says in Lamentations, "His mercies are new every morning, great is his faithfulness." "Goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives." Jeremiah tells us, "A glorious throne exalted from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." Jesus is our sanctuary, sitting at the right hand of God and we are deeply rooted in his love. Nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's where we are deeply rooted. That is where we are holding on for dear life with the strength the Lord freely gives us. Amen.