

## INI

Jeremiah 17,5-18

Trinity 14 — 6 September 2015

**Greeting:** To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; mercy, peace, and love be multiplied unto you. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Old Testament lesson from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, which was read earlier:

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD  
And whose trust is in the LORD.  
8 For he will be like a tree planted by the water,  
That extends its roots by a stream  
And will not fear when the heat comes,  
But its leaves will be green,  
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought  
Nor cease to yield fruit.

**So far the reading. Let us pray:** Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Introduction:** I'm sure you've seen the sign in some stores: "In God we trust — all others pay cash." That saying speaks about a trust in God and a distrust in humankind. Mind you, it probably places more stress on humor than trust, so I'd hazard a guess that the trust in God to which it speaks is probably not much higher than its distrust in humanity.

Trust is a problem in our country. Major institutions are not trusted very much. Whether it is big government, big business, or big labor, whether it is Washington, D.C. or Sacramento, trust is in short supply.

What about God? Do people place their trust in Him? And if they do, what kind of god are they talking about? As a matter of fact, what

kind of trust are they talking about? After all, there is the trust of total reliance, and then there is the trust of hedging one's bets; they are different.

Trust was also a problem in Jeremiah's day as well. But since human nature remains the same, God's Word given to Jeremiah also speaks to us, some 2,600 years later. There is still the problem of what kind of god we are taking about as well as what kind of trust we are talking about. This brings me to this morning's sermon topic, "**In Whom Do We Trust?**" I'll develop this topic in three parts:

- 1) Man's Nature Is Deceitful;**
- 2) Trust Jesus;** and,
- 3) Jesus Does Not Make Us Ashamed**

**1) Man's Nature Deceitful.** Through the prophet Jeremiah, who lived some 600 years before Jesus, the Lord spoke words of judgment to His people.

God's indictment is spelled out in chapter 16, where He tells Jeremiah to tell the people that

... your forefathers have forsaken Me ... and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken and not kept My Law [or, "My Torah" or "My Word"]. ... each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own heart, without listening to Me. (Jeremiah 16,11-12)

Faith in God and trust in God flow from the heart, and the people listened to their own hearts instead of to the Lord.

The Lord said He would meet His people in the temple at Jerusalem. There, in sacrificial offerings, He would meet them with forgiveness. But rather than listen to the Word of forgiveness, the people listened to themselves and turned away from God to idols,

corrupting themselves and their society.

In other words, first comes a spiritual falling away, and then alongside of this comes material corruption, so that people place their trust in both false gods and in material goods. But if people trust in what they have, then at the end of life they will see that neither their false gods nor their material wealth, in which they trusted, will be able to save them.

Those who forsake the Lord will have their names written in the dust of the earth. Here the Authorized Version has a better translation: “they that depart from me shall be written in the earth.” What does this mean? It means that rather than being written in the Book of Life, their names are inscribed in the dusty desert wilderness of death, and are far away from God’s life-giving waters of forgiveness.

In spiritual things, not much has changed.

The natural heart of man is still deceitful above all things and man’s natural inclination is to trust in what He makes rather than what the Lord gives.

Thus, if we read our text aright, we see that God’s charge to Jeremiah points ahead and we are to:

**2) Trust Jesus.** In the Old Testament, God’s call to trust in Him above all things is not given apart from trusting in the Promised One to come, that is, God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Our text clearly shows the contrast between the waters of life, the forgiveness promised by God which works faith in the heart, and the dusty desert of sin, whose reward is spiritual and physical and eternal death.

Jesus is the One who thrice speaks of Himself as the Water of Life.

In the first instance, Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus tells her:

Everyone who drinks of this water [from the well] will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. (John 4,13-14)

In the second instance, Jesus had gone to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, and there said,

“If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.”” But this Jesus said of the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7,37-39)

And the third time Jesus speaks of this is in the vision granted to John on Patmos; Jesus said:

I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of Water of Life without cost. (Revelation 21,6)

Jesus speaks of Himself as God’s Living Water, because in Him God grants the forgiveness of sins. Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the means by which this water is a Water of Life, because it is the work of the Spirit to speak of Jesus. The Spirit speaks of Jesus through Word and Sacrament to create and sustain faith in He Who is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

In California we should be aware of the value of water as much as those who lived in Jeremiah’s day or Jesus’ day. Without water at the proper time, much of the Central Valley would be as barren as the waste land of the Middle East. But here Jesus speaks not about land, but about

people.

To get water in California to people and to land, we spend billions on water diversion projects. Jesus, however, spent even more to get the life of His forgiveness to people.

For it was with a price far higher than all the gold and silver in the world that Jesus earned for us the forgiveness of sins. It was with His innocent suffering and death and the shedding of His holy and precious blood on the Cross that Jesus earned the forgiveness of sins. It was through His sacrificial death on the Cross, in the arid and dusty wasteland of death itself, that Jesus died for us so that we might not be spiritually dead to God.

It is only in Christ that we are like trees planted by streams of living water. These streams are the forgiveness that the Holy Spirit works in Christ as He comes to us through the Word and through Baptism and Holy Communion. Here that Word of Forgiveness is continually renewed and made fresh again every day. And these streams in this life are but a foreshadow of the stream of life awaiting us in heaven.

Those who thirst are the ones who are aware of their sin. Who know that by themselves they are but names written in the dust of the earth, destined for death. Who know that they are burdened by sin which they themselves cannot remove. They sorrow over their sin. They thirst for forgiveness and reconciliation with God. They look for forgiveness, and behold, God comes to them in His Son. And the Son invites them with words of comfort and grace.

Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11,29)

Here the Good Shepherd leads His people to the pools of refreshing forgiveness, where they may have life and strength in the

midst of our earthly lives.

To believe that Jesus died and rose for me, for the forgiveness of my sins, is nothing less than to trust in Him above all things for the one thing needful. And in trusting in Jesus, we see that

**3) Jesus Does Not Make Us Ashamed.** Even though Jeremiah trusted in God above all things, the old Adam within him still made him at times doubt, and these doubts were reinforced by the taunts of his people.

They keep saying to me,  
“Where is the Word of the Lord?  
Let it come now!” (Jeremiah 17,15)

In these ways the devil would have even us doubt, for the taunts have not changed throughout the ages.

As Jesus was on the Cross, He too suffered the same taunting and ridicule from the religious leaders and the passers by:

You who destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. ... He saved others; He cannot save Himself; let Him come down from the Cross and we shall believe in Him. (Matthew 27,40+42)

But as a lamb led to the slaughter, Jesus did not open His mouth. He came down from the Cross, but as a lifeless corpse to be laid in the grave. On the third day, however, He rose from the dead.

It was through His glorious resurrection from the dead on the third day that Jesus proved that He successfully conquered sin and death and broke the power of the devil's deceitfulness in luring people away from the true God.

It is in the resurrection that Jesus answered His critics once and for all. He died once and for all, and He rose once and for all, never to die again. He is the firstfruits of them that die, so that all who believe in Him should not die but have everlasting life.

The apostle Peter also spoke of critics,

and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” (2 Peter 3,4)

But God’s answer given through Peter is a Word of Grace and promise:

For the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3,9)

In Word and Sacrament, and only in Word and Sacrament, God gives His life giving waters of forgiveness. These are the means the Holy Spirit uses to bring people to Jesus and create and sustain faith in Him as the only name given among men by which men may be saved.

God calls on us to trust in these means of Grace that through them we are not only saved but also sustained on our life’s journey. And because Jesus rose from the dead, we see in His triumph our present and future triumph, in spite of the critics and nay sayers.

**Conclusion:** We are called to trust in God. But not in any god. God calls us to trust in Him as He had revealed Himself in Grace and Truth in His Son Jesus Christ.

The natural man does not understand this. The natural man would rather trust in himself and the things he creates, believing in the deceitfulness of the devil, our flesh, and the world.

In the midst of this deceit, the deceit of the dusty desert of death, however, God pours His Water of Life through His Son. In Jesus' death and resurrection, mediated to us through the Means of Grace, God gives us forgiveness and life and salvation, and there plants us as trees continually nourished by the Water of Life.

In His death and resurrection, Jesus has broken the power of sin and taken away sin's wage, which is death itself. He gives this to us without cost for us, for He paid the price once and for all. Jesus is the only One on whom we can depend, not only for this life but also for the one to come. He cared enough for us to die, and in His rising shares with us life without end. Amen.

Now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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**SDG**