

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON— Sunday 13th October 2024 am
TITLE: "The Fruit of Faith in Christ" TEXT: Jeremiah 17 verses 5-14
Scripture references from the ESV

Jeremiah 17:5-14 Thus says the Lord:

"Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.

⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

⁷ "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.

⁸ He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

¹⁰ "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

¹¹ Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool.

¹² A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

¹³ O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water.

¹⁴ Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.

Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission (now OMF), was 23 when he first went to China and he founded CIM at the age of 33. His first wife died after 12 years of marriage, having given birth to eight children, four of whom died in childhood. His second wife, Jenny, bore him two more children and died the year before him. In 1900, when Hudson Taylor (now 68) was still the mission's director, the Boxer rebellion took place, and 58 adult missionaries plus 21 missionary children were killed.

Hudson Taylor had plenty of cause to be an anxious man as he dealt with personal tragedy alongside the constant pressure of heading up the mission, which covered such a large and dangerous area. Yet he was not anxious. His son wrote of him: *Here was a man almost 60 years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, yet absolutely calm and*

untroubled. Oh, the pile of letters! Any one of which might contain news of death, of lack of funds, of riots, or serious trouble. Yet all were opened, read and answered with the same tranquility.

We would surely all like to be like that, but what is the secret of that kind of life? How do we live a life of change that is not only tranquil but leads to greater fruitfulness?

In this passage from Jeremiah (**vv5,7**), we see something that is true for every human being.

We all trust – you cannot be human and not trust.

It is not only the religious person who trusts (**v5**), the person who turns away from the Lord also trusts. Faith is at the heart of what it means to be human.

- Children trust parents and other adults to care for them, feed them and to tell them the truth.
- Friends trust friends with confidences
- Adults trust banks with their money, doctors with their health, and other drivers to stay on their side of the road

Even atheism is a result of faith, as atheists make assumptions that are based on a belief system. They believe there is no god, and that everything in life is physical and the result of evolution, even though they cannot prove it.

As humans, we are hardwired to trust. Everyone trusts in someone or something and we act out of those belief systems.

That raises three questions, which the Lord answers in this passage.

1. Where will you put your trust? (vv5,7) There are only two places where we can put our trust. We can either trust in humans or in the Lord.

- **Trusting in man** means trusting in ourselves or other humans; trusting in human wisdom, strength and resources; trusting in savings when a financial need arises; trusting your own or someone else's intellectual ability to make decisions; trusting in your own or someone else's strength to fix problems.

This is a fragile place to put your trust. When you face something that is beyond you, or someone else, to solve, you will feel overwhelmed, angry and fearful.

We all know that deep down so why is it that we do not put all our trust in the Lord?

We have a heart problem.

Those who trust in human resources are those whose heart is turned away from the Lord

(v5)

That is the state everyone is born into. Everyone has the capacity to trust, but people do not trust in the Lord because their heart is turned away from him. They do not know the Lord, and, hence, they do not know his promises, the infinite resources he has stored up, the infinite wisdom he possesses, or the infinite strength he makes available.

These people turn to humans to meet their needs and to enable them to function.

- In contrast, those who trust in the Lord are people who know him and all he offers (v7).

That is the place where we are meant to put our trust. Jeremiah shows us that

It is futile to trust in humans but it is right and wise to trust in the Lord

Which of the above best describes you?

- You may be not trusting in the Lord at all, because you are not yet truly saved
- If you are truly saved, it is likely that you probably are a mixture of both. You trust the Lord with some areas of your life, but not others. Perhaps you trust him with your finances, but not with your family. You might trust him to help you at work, but struggle to trust him with your health. Maybe you can trust him to give you strength each day, but you do not trust him when it comes to making decisions.

That mixture of trusting/not trusting is probably the truth for most of us, so we need to answer two more questions.

2. Why should we trust the Lord? (vv6,8) The Lord gives us a powerful metaphor with the picture of two contrasting trees. The first, a shrub (v6), depicts a person who trusts in man, while the tree is the picture of a person who trusts in the Lord.

- The shrub just dwells wherever it lands, like tumbleweed, while the tree is planted, placed in the garden for a purpose and cared for. It is rooted firmly.
- The shrub has no access to water, but the tree has its roots down into a stream. It is being sustained by living water.

- The shrub is twisted and only produces thorns, but the tree is alive, its leaves are always green and there is fruit on the branches.
- The shrub is all alone in the blazing sun, but the tree does not fear the heat and is not anxious in drought

When we foolishly place our trust in humanity we will:

- have lives like tumbleweed, blown wherever someone else's influence takes us
- have a life that is dry, finding ourselves exhausted by the many voices calling for our attention
- show zero spiritual fruit, and find ourselves bitter and twisted because all we crave has been taken from us
- be fearful and anxious when trials come, thinking it is down to us to fix everything

When we wisely and rightly place our trust in the Lord, we will:

- Have strength, wisdom and resources that go beyond our human limitations
- Be drawing life from outside ourselves, resulting in change in the deepest level of our heart, showing in the spiritual fruit of Christlikeness and enabling us to face trials without fear and anxiety
- Have infinite wisdom in our decision-making
- Have infinite strength to accomplish all that God gives us to do
- Have every resource available to us for every need we have.

In fact, we will be people who can face daily challenges with peace and tranquility.

Why would you NOT want to live your life with a heart that trusts the Lord, rather than trusting in self or other people? We need to find the answer to this third question.

3. How can we trust the Lord? The Lord shows us that, in order to trust him, we need to know three things.

a) We need to know our hearts (v5). To trust the Lord, we need a heart that is turned upward to the Lord. However, there is a problem (v9). While this describes the heart of unbelievers, nevertheless it is true that

None of us can fully know what is going on in our hearts

We all have deep places in our hearts that are like locked rooms, and ultimately it is only the Lord who knows what is in there (v10). How can we know if we are truly trusting

the Lord or whether we are trusting in human wisdom, strength and resources? The Lord tells us that the person who is trusting in him does not fear when the heat comes (v8).

The heat exposes where the heart is trusting

The heat can be any situation we face. It might be a trial of some kind, such as illness, redundancy or betrayal, but it can also be a good thing that happens.

How we respond to these things is an indication of where our hearts are trusting.

Suppose you get a better

job, and your immediate response is to buy something new, and generally

improve your standard of living, rather than considering how you might further

God's kingdom or bless those who are less fortunate. The heat has exposed your

heart of materialism, known only to God who searches your heart. He needed to

expose

that, so that you could confess it to him, and seek his help to change you at heart

level.

Everything that happens to us, along with our response, is an opportunity for us to know what is going on in our heart and to experience Christ's redemptive grace.

- We need to ask ourselves questions, seeking to understand why we respond in the way that we do, so that we can know our heart.

b) We need to know God's promises. If we do not know what he promises in his word, then we will not be able to trust him. As we believe those promises, something wonderful happens. We experience the work of God's Spirit within us. Paul asks: **Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?** (Gal 3:2). The answer is obviously by **hearing with faith**. We hear the word of God, and, as we trust what God says so:

- We experience the Spirit of God changing, assuring, helping, strengthening and counselling us
- We begin to display Christlikeness, see the fruit of God displayed in our lives, and we stop fretting and being anxious and fearful

c) We need to know the Lord. All this can only happen when we know the Lord. You may well feel that your life resembles the shrub more than the tree, but there is

hope. That hope is found as we look at another tree, the cross, and see Jesus there. He is offering up his life to death, in order to redeem you. This is not just for your soul on some future day.

**He is offering up his life to death in order to redeem the whole of your life
and to begin that process of redemption now.**

Our failure to trust God has resulted in twisted, ugly, thorny lives. Christ has taken on himself the ugliness of our twisted lives and atoned for our sin. Flowing out from the cross of Christ is the stream of living water of God's Spirit.

**Through Christ's death and resurrection,
we are able to truly know him and to have a living relationship with him.**

We are able to:

- Hear from him in his word, so that we come to know his great and precious promises
- Speak with him in prayer, confessing our failure to respond in spiritually healthy ways to life's situations and asking him to give us faith to believe his promises.

As God's Spirit changes us, our roots sink deep into this stream of living water, and we have a life of growing intimacy with Christ. Thus, spiritual fruit grows in us and sustains us in the heat and drought.

**The truly fruitful life, free from fear and anxiety and full of love for God and our fellow
man,
is the life of complete trust in the Lord.**

That was the secret of Hudson Taylor's life: *Here was a man almost 60 years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, yet absolutely calm and untroubled. Oh, the pile of letters! Any one of which might contain news of death, of lack of funds, of riots, or serious trouble. Yet all were opened, read and answered with the same tranquility – Christ his reason for peace, his power for calm. Dwelling in Christ, he drew upon his very being and resources...and this he did by an attitude of faith as simple as it was continuous. Yet he was delightfully free and natural. I can find no words to describe it save the Scriptural expression 'in God'. He was in God all the time and God in him.*

That is what is available to every Christian believer, and it is a challenge to us, but God is at work in you and he will finish what he has started. He is always at work in your life and he promises the help of the Spirit in all that you face.

- Take time to think about how you are responding to any particular situation in your life.
- If you are convicted that you are not responding in a godly manner to something that is happening, take time to confess it to the Lord, and ask him to show you what you need to trust in to change your response.

Christ his reason for peace, his power for calm.

*Dwelling in Christ, he drew upon his very being and resources...
and this he did by an attitude of faith as simple as it was continuous.*

He was in God all the time and God in him.