

July 27, 2014
A Stark Contrast
Jeremiah 17:5-8

INTRO

In June I went for my regular optometrist appointment. I have a great optometrist who is thorough and carefully takes me through the examination of my eyes and let's me know how I am doing. But there are a few things I don't like about the exam. One is the puff of air that they shoot into your eye. I know it is important and is for an extremely vital part of the exam. But I don't like that very much. Another is that solution they put in my eyes to dilate my pupils and it fine when I am in their office but the moment I step outside on a sunny day, I can't find a pair of sunglasses that are dark enough. And then it lasts to about 6 hours and my eyes look like my cats. I want to go around hissing and scratching stuff. But it is not all bad. The part I enjoy is when they bring the viewing lens up to your eyes and then they have the letters or numbers showing. And she goes through asking me which is more clear...number one or number two. And then she clicks again and says three or four. And I am supposed to see the contrast between the two and tell her which one looks better. Which one is more clear. And some are more fuzzy than other, some it is hard to tell the difference, but some you can see a definite difference. This is all so that she can tell how good your vision is and if you need a change in your prescription if you have glasses.

Throughout the Bible, God has given us contrasts to look at. The old is gone, the new has come. The domain of darkness, the kingdom of light. Walking in the flesh, walking in the Spirit. The list can go on. But those contrasts are not so that we can point the finger at other people. In fact those contrasts are there for us to look inside and see what we can do to change our own lives. Today we are going to look at a passage of scripture that isn't fuzzy. It is not hard to see the contrast in what God is saying. In fact it is very clear what the difference is. That passage is found Jeremiah 17:5-8. I want to read those verses for you and then talk about what a man is like who trusts in man and what a man is like whose trust is in the Lord.

Let's read these verses.

I think you can see the stark contrast already. First of all we have a man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength whose heart has turned from God. What is he like? Well maybe like this poor tree. So here is exhibit one. He is in the desert, that has no future (doesn't see any good coming down the road), has no support system (dwelling in the parched places of the wilderness) and thirdly has no nourishment (uninhabited salt land). Secondly and in contrast to this man is exhibit two. We have a man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. What is he like? How about this? He is in a place where he is well fed (a tree planted by water that sends it roots by the stream), is stable and grounded (does not

fear when the heat comes and remains green and is not anxious) and is reproducing and growing and that is going out to all those around him (does not cease to bear fruit)

So the question we need to ask ourselves is how can I be like that tree planted by water? And that is a two part question. So that first part of the question means, maybe you are here and you are searching. You want to know more about what it means to live your life like a follower of Christ. So maybe you just need a little more information. Or maybe you are at that point where you believe and trust in Christ. That is not your issue this morning. But you want to continue to be that vibrant, well-nourished tree. So this morning I want to provide three reasons why people fall into the trap of living their lives trusting in man. And then provide three ways we can counteract that by living our lives as one who trust in the Lord.

1. PRIDE

The first way people fall into this trap of living their life trusting in man is pride. **I think we all know people who are proud.** They are proud of their accomplishments and they let us know that. They are proud in their intellect and when we are around them make us feel inadequate. They are proud of their possessions and we hear it every time we are around them. They are proud in themselves. And that pride takes them away from God. **Pride makes us do some pretty scary stuff. It takes us** down roads that lead us far from Christ. When

we think we know it all and have it all. When we think we have all the answers and we don't need anyone or anything in our life telling us what to do, we are in some deep water. Pride causes us to resist. When that happens we tend to resist anything that the Bible would have to say. We tend to resist what God is telling us. When we put our pride in self, our knowledge or our way of thinking as far superior to that of the Bible or someone who is a Christian than we can expect to be not anymore than a shrub in the desert.

The Bible speaks often of pride and it's effects. In I John 2: 16 we read about the boastful pride of life or some translations say the pride in possessions that is not from the Father but is from the world. The book of Proverbs is filled with verses about pride. Proverbs 29:23 says **ONE'S PRIDE WILL BRING HIM LOW. Proverbs 16:18 tells us PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL.** Pride puts our trust in man and the things of man and the ways of man. Because man must know the right way.

So how can we counteract pride slipping into our lives?
BY NURTURING A HUMBLE AND CONTRITE HEART

To counteract pride in our life we need to set our hearts, mind and thoughts to growing a humble and contrite heart. If we are to live our lives like a person trusting in the Lord and a flourishing tree we need develop humility in our lives. Scripture tells us in Micah that we are to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. **In**

Philippians 2 we find these words ... So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, **2** complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others.

So what does a person who has a humble and contrite heart look like? When the word humility is used in the Bible it literally means lying low. So a person is not up on a pedestal, flaunting themselves. They don't need to be the center of attention. But I think a humble person is confident and stable. They know when to bow to authority and they know when to stand up and defend the truths of scripture and the Lord. **Sometimes we think a humble person is quiet, sneaking in and out of the church, doesn't say much and has a timid disposition. That is not it at all.** A humble person has a strong, stable, deep-rooted relationship with Christ. As we see in these verses in Philippians, he is looking out for others around him and how he can help them. Not shut away in his house. A humble person walks with God.

So what does that look like in your life? What does it mean for you to have a humble and contrite heart. It means you are humbly seeking after God by reading His word, praying, meditating on scripture and seeking His wisdom in all **things. It means you are in relationships**

with other people. And you are helping them, putting them ahead of your own interests. It means that you approach life confidently, strong and stable knowing God; the creator of the universe is guiding your life and leading you down the right paths and you are obediently following Him. When we can implant just those areas in our life, then, we are trusting in God not man.

2. FEAR

A second way people fall into this trap of trusting in man is through fear. Fear in our lives will undoubtedly hinder us. Fear will make us turn from what we should do in our lives to what we should not do in our lives. The rich young ruler, who refused to follow Christ, had this problem. We are not going to read that passage this morning but it is found in **Luke 18:18-25**. Here is quick synopsis. This man who had a lot going for him. He was rich, he was young and he had power. And he asks Jesus, **WHAT MUST I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE.** Jesus responds with quoting 5 of the 10 commandments. And then this young ruler says back to Jesus I have kept all of these since my youth. Jesus says **Ok BUT YOU STILL LACK ONE THING. GO AND SELL ALL YOUR POSSESSIONS, GIVE IT TO THE POOR AND COME FOLLOW ME.** When Jesus hit at the very heart of what he held so important to his life, he could not give it up. You could argue that there are many reasons why he didn't follow Jesus and probably all valid, but I am going to say one of those reasons could have been because he was afraid of the consequences. He was not willing to part with all that he had accumulated and so although he

heard the words of Christ he was scared to let them go. We are the same. We can say I go to church every Sunday, I attend a Life Group, I am hospitable to those around me. But then Jesus says that is good, but I now I want you to follow me down this road that you haven't been down before. And we back off. It is like we are paralyzed. It is out of our comfort zone. We are fearful. Fear can take us from trusting in God, to trusting in man very quickly.

BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

So how do we counter fear in our lives and live as a person who trust in the Lord. **BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.** Let me say this to you. There will always be situations and circumstances in your life that will cause you to fear. It could be something you are asked to do. It could be a certain direction you are going in. It could be a relational problem. It could be a problem at your work. It could be a health issue. **You** will...let me say that again...you will encounter something in your life that causes you to fear. And as I said, fear causes you and me to do some irrational things and actions. We don't act wisely or even normal when we fear a situation or circumstance in our life.

We have been going through the book of Joshua this summer and I want to go back to that first chapter in Joshua. The Israelites have just come through 40 years of wondering around in the desert because of their disobedience and lack of faith in the Lord. Now that generation that disobeyed God have died and a new

generation led by Joshua is ready to take the land that God had promised for them. There they are, standing on the bank of the Jordan River ready to cross. Do you not think they are scared? Do you not think they are afraid and nervous? Sure they are or God would not have had to say these words to them. Listen to the words that the Lord says to Joshua to take to the people. **HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU? BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED AND DO NOT BE DISMAYED, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD IS WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.** Perhaps some of the Israelites would have heard the stories from their parents and other relatives and friends who stood there forty years earlier. They would have been told how big the people were over there. And how vast their armies were. And how daunting the task of taking over that land would have been. And how frightening and scary things are. And with that in their minds this new generation is thinking how are we going to do this? That is why God says these words to Joshua and the Israelite nation.

Be strong. Be courageous. Do not fear. Do not be dismayed. These are words I have often had to remind myself of over the years. I think back some 27 years when I was **going back to Bible College to finish my degree and enter ministry. I was scared. I knew God was taking me down this road and I was fearful. What if I get to school and it goes terrible. What if I realize I should not be in ministry? What if...what if...what if...** I would say I was not strong. I was not courageous. I had moments when I was driving down that highway to

Regina not totally convinced this was the right path in my thinking. But yet those words came back to me. And now all these years later it was the right thing to do and God has gone before me and with me every step.

What is in your life that God is asking you to do and you are fearful of? What is in your life that God is showing you but yet you are not strong or courageous in? What direction is God calling you to go and you are scared? We, that means you and me, we need to follow God and implant in our hearts and minds these words of scripture. When we do that, we live our lives as one who trusts in the Lord. We are not tossed around in life, wavering on what to do or what direction to go. When we go in the strength and courage of the Lord we are like a tree planted by water, that does not fear, that remains strong and does not worry.

3. WORLDLINESS

The third way people fall into the trap of living their lives trusting in man is their love of worldliness. Many people love their life. They love the things of the world. And let me say this. There is nothing wrong with loving your life and loving the beauty of this world. My wife and I have had the privilege of traveling to many countries and seeing the amazing beauty of God's creation. We love our life. We love living in London. We love our house and our friends. We love this church and all that it has going on. But all these wonderful things and people cannot take us down the path of being swallowed up in them. And that is what can happen so easily in life.

People think they need the next gadget, the next toy. They get caught up buying that big house, having that really nice car and all the other things of the world and so they just go through this life clinging to what it has to offer and not seeing or believing in a much more solid foundation. And I want to say there is nothing wrong with a big house or driving a lamborghini but don't let that define who you are and don't let the things of the world and the ways of man be your stability.

The Bible reminds us of that in Colossians 3:2 where it says TO SET OUR MINDS ON THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS THAT ARE ON THE EARTH. And then we have these words jumping out at us in I John 2:15-17 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

So that brings us to a dilemma doesn't it? How do we set our minds to things on Christ and yet live our lives in this world? How do we then try to live a balanced life of living in the world but not loving it? How can we fight this seemingly impossible battle of not getting caught in the world and falling into its hopeless ways?

REMAIN IN HIM

We do that by remaining in Him. If we are to have any

hope of overcoming worldliness and the sways of the world we need to remain in Christ. **Jesus said: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" John 15:4-5.**

But what does Christ mean when He says those words REMAIN IN ME? Let me take a stab at this. I think there are three ways to do this. First of all, we remain in Christ by having a vibrant, personal relationship with Him. In other words believing in who He is and trusting Him as your Lord and Savior. Secondly, we remain in Him by obeying those things He tells us to do. So we have trusting and obeying. The hymn writer got it right when he penned the words TRUST AND OBEY FOR THERE'S NO OTHER WAY, TO BE HAPPY IN JESUS BUT TO TRUST AND OBEY. A third way we remain in Him by keeping up on our spiritual disciplines. That means, reading our Bible on a regular basis. Spending time thinking about what we just read....that is meditating on scripture. By praying to Him. By taking those moments to be still and listen to His voice speak to you. By being around a group of believers who can encourage you and pray for you, that is accountability. That can happen by joining a Life Group in the fall. You will hear more about that as we get closer to September.

And so we need to look inside into our hearts and ask

ourselves do I long to read His word? Do I long to have that time in my week and in my day when it is just Christ and me? Do I let myself have those moments when His calming voice can speak to me? When we begin to envelop that into our lives and remain in Him we counteract this urge to succumb to the world and its temptations.

To be a person who trusts in man doesn't take a lot of effort but it causes a lot of pain, worry and frustration. To be a man who trusts in the Lord takes time and commitment but the benefits of peace, joy, stability, confidence and assurance make it all worthwhile. So we need to ask ourselves in closing do I want to live like this? Or do I want to live like this?

We are going to transition to the communion table this morning and so I am going to ask the worship team and those who have been asked to serve communion this morning to make their way to the front. The communion table is for those who have put their trust in the Lord. They believe in Him, they have committed their heart to Him, they believe in what the Bible says about Him. And so these two elements, the bread which symbolizes His body and the cup which symbolize His blood can be taken. And it is one of the benefits and privileges of having a personal relationship with Christ and being a person who trusts in the Lord. But perhaps you are not there this morning. And let me say, we so glad you are here. And perhaps as you have sat here this morning,

you have seen something, heard something, experienced something that is causing you to think about what it would mean to have a relationship with Christ. You have seen in the Bible the difference between what a person looks like who trust in man and what a person looks like who trust in the Lord. But maybe you still have questions. And if that is you this morning, then come and talk to me after the service or to one of the staff. We would be more than happy to do that. But this morning I have to instruct you to pass by the two elements because these two symbols on these trays are for those who placed their trust, their beliefs, their obedience to following Christ the Lord and knowing Him as the Savior of their life.

**WHEN HE HAD GIVEN
THANKS HE BROKE IT
AND SAID THIS IS MY
BODY WHICH IS FOR
YOU, DO THIS IN
REMEMBRANCE OF ME.**

**THIS CUP IS THE NEW
COVENANT IN MY
BLOOD. DO THIS AS
OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT
IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME**

