

Epiphany 6 – February 17, 2019

Text: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Theme: Who to Trust?

How can you know who to trust? One politician says one thing and another says the exact opposite. One church says one thing and another says the exact opposite. One parent says one thing and the other says the exact opposite. I try hard not to judge motives. The 8th Commandment bids me not to bear false witness against my neighbor and Luther spins it to the positive by saying to explain everything in the kindest way. So I choose to believe that all people, in whatever station they occupy, are generally doing their best to try to make things better. The Democrats care deeply about the poor and the underserved. The Republicans care deeply about people who work harder only to pay higher taxes and feel as though nothing gets them ahead. The Methodists care deeply about social needs and concerns and the Roman Catholics care deeply about the historic Church. Dad wants junior to know what he needs to know and do what he needs to do to survive in the world and Mom wants junior to be a loving and kind person.

It is true that people are blind. People are ignorant. People are narrow-minded, but people in positions of power are seldom evil in their intentions. I know we could spend days talking about the exceptions to that rule, but I choose not to make the rule based on the exceptions.

Having said all of that, I still don't know who to trust. If I trust everybody, I am left with a whole bunch of conflicting circles in which to run and if I trust no one, I am left alone on an island and as the poet, John

Donne, said long ago, "No man is an island unto himself." I think Jeremiah, in our Old Testament reading for today, had it about right.

"Cursed is the man who trusts in man." It is interesting that Jeremiah uses two different words for man. The first word means a strong healthy male and the second word means a descendant of Adam. It seems like he was insinuating that no matter how virile, strong and young you are, if you put your trust in any descendant of Adam, you will be cursed. So that answers that. Trust no one. No one except Jesus. Jeremiah goes on to say,

"Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, whose trust is Yahweh." Hear what he said there? Yahweh is the proper name of God and the Bible often translates it as the LORD, but it is important to know that Jeremiah isn't talking about just anyone who happens to be in a position of authority, any of whom could have been referenced by the word lord. Jeremiah is talking about Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And not only is the one blessed who trusts *in* Yahweh but the one whose trust *is* Yahweh. In other words, all real trust flows from Yahweh. If we trust in a human being it is only because he flows from Yahweh and if he does not, he should not have our trust.

"Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, whose trust is Yahweh." The word for man there is a strong, healthy male. That is the only way to be blessed. My trust, my ability to trust is held by, created by, empowered by Yahweh himself. He not only is trustworthy but he feeds my trust so that I am able to trust. Jeremiah says that one who's trust is Yahweh,

“... 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.”

If you have ever had the opportunity to fly over in the Sonoran Desert, Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico, you’ll see trails of green, if in the depth of summer. There is a sea of brown and little tendrils of green. These are the Palo Verde trees and Ironwood trees that have enormously deep root systems. They grow where the aquifer runs under the desert and along the dry river beds where there is still water down deep. I am reminded of those green tendrils by the prophet Jeremiah. The one whose trust is Yahweh is like a tree planted by water. There is no fear of drought because the roots are directly fed by the underground river.

That is how we trust. Yahweh has connected himself to us. He reaches through the baptismal water and fills us with nourishment. He flows into us through the body and blood of Christ and strengthens us. We place no trust in human beings, in the sons and daughters of Adam, because they are not the source of all things. We are connected to the source, and we know that this gives us everything we need.

The people to whom Jeremiah spoke were in exile because they had chosen to trust in people and follow people instead of God. That trust failed them as it always will and they found themselves forsaken in a foreign land. We too are so tempted to trust people who tell us what we want to hear. We overlook their lack of connection to the one, true God because we like

what we hear. What kind of things do you want to believe because it will serve you somehow when serving God will require that you sacrifice things of this world? We hear these untrustworthy things said all around us. "I believe that all good people go to heaven. Well, church is important, but it's not the only thing in life. My neighbor needs to pull himself up by his bootstraps and stop depending on me to help him all the time." These are not words from Yahweh. To trust in Yahweh is to alienate ourselves from these words of the world. To be connected to Christ and through Christ, is to disconnect from the wisdom of man. We, like Jeremiah's people, are exiles in a foreign land, but we find ourselves together in him connected not only to him but through him to one another.

One of the harder things to describe to a person disconnected from the Church is this fellowship we have with one another through Christ. Though we cannot trust in those who are disconnected, dry and dead, we can trust and do trust in each other through our connection to Christ. The same body and blood that courses through me also courses through you and that is what makes us stand together like those groves of green Palo Verde's and Ironwoods in the desert. We are one family, fed by the one source that is Yahweh. Who to trust? Trust Yahweh for he keeps you connected to his grace and empowers you to lead others to receive that same grace here in this place.