

Sermon 2007 Epiphany 6  
Text: Jeremiah 17:5-10  
Theme: "You're No Shrub!"

When I lived in Arizona, I stood on a high hill in the desert and I could see from miles away exactly where the water of an underground river flowed. There are long ribbons of green growing above ground over where the water flows below ground. The poor, unfortunate shrub that found itself planted away from the water is a pale, dusty gray. But the big beautiful Ironwoods planted on top of the water are lush and all shades of bright green to forest green. The point of this sermon, however, is not to discuss desert horticulture as fascinating as that might be.

The point is that I have known people who are like those shrubs and I have known people like those Ironwoods and it seems to me that our texts today from Jeremiah and Luke would say that whether we are shrub-like or tree-like depends on where we take root.

Jeremiah is straight forward. Cursed is the one who depends on human beings and blessed is the one who trusts in God. The one who depends on human beings is like a

shrub in the desert. Your life will be dry and disappointing because human beings will ALWAYS, EVENTUALLY let you down. None of us are a source of water unto ourselves and there comes a time for all of us, even if we want to supply water to another that we cannot. So the person who depends on other human beings is eventually going to run dry.

Talk to dry and bitter people and you will hear them express this very thing. Someone, somewhere failed them and that is the source of their misery. Their spouses were unfaithful or don't understand, or are not attentive enough. Their co-workers cheated them. Their children ignore them. Their friends abandoned them. And while all of that may well be true...SO WHAT? Don't put your trust in human beings. WE ALWAYS FAIL EVENTUALLY. We are all corrupted by sin and sooner or later we will fail. Period. That's the way it is.

But, having said that, some human beings are also trees planted over flowing water. Blessed is the one who

trusts in the Lord. When God entered our lives, whether that was through his word or through Baptism, he transplanted us. He dug us up from the dry, dusty corner of the universe in which we lived and transplanted us over the rushing river of his power. He washed over us in Baptismal waters that never stop flowing and we are like that great Ironwood planted over the living water...or at least we can be if we want to be.

In our Gospel from Luke, Jesus came down from the mountain onto the plain and began healing people left and right. Evil spirits were being cast hither and yon. Horrible diseases were being wiped away. People were crowding in just to try and touch him because the power of God was literally bursting out of him and he healed them ALL. Not some of them. Not most of them. He healed them all.

And then he lifted up his eyes to his disciples and spoke blessings upon them...and upon us. Jesus Christ, the son of God declares us blessed. Don't worry about it if you struggle with money. Don't drift off into despair even if you

are hungry and cold. And if sorrow is a big part of your life right now, take a deep breath and give it to Jesus because it is all temporary. Jesus didn't have an "Easy Button" on this earth and neither will we, but we do not live forever in this valley. This valley is not our home. We are just pilgrims passing through and though our bodies may burn in the heat of the blazing sun, we remain green and alive and full of joy because our feet are soaking up the water of life.

We follow that river of life through this valley of death. Woe to the shrubs who have taken root in the arid places, who are filled with hate and bitterness because it does not have to be so. And if we mourn at all, we mourn for the poor unfortunate shrubs who believe that their salvation is in the things of this world; those who rob God to have the fancy trinkets of the world, those who think that God is but a convenient crutch for the weak and that they must be their own strength, those who build monuments of word and deed to themselves as though they were the important aspect of life.

But YOU'RE NO SHRUB! Never forget that. You are the great trees standing in the waters of eternal life and that is why you have joy regardless of the hardship life hands you. That is why you can sacrifice anything for God and for your fellow human beings because you know that no **thing** in this life is worth anything compared to the riches you already have. That is why you can laugh in the face of disaster because you don't trust in human beings. You trust in the one who scooped you up and planted you in the waters of eternal life, and you know that on the far side of this valley...you will flow into paradise. AMEN