

Have you been watered sufficiently?

Jeremiah 17:5-10 • Luke 6:17-26

Those who've had a long period time of hearing my preaching know that I have often interrupted myself in the middle of a sermon to go off on some kind of tangent. (laughter) Okay, I've been here long enough. FREEDOM!!! Oh, sorry.

I'm going to go on the tangent right off this morning to say I'm tired. Anybody else out there tired? Really tired, like almost bone weary with all of it. You know, two years ago, people were opening their balcony windows and singing across the street to their neighbours. What are they doing now? Not that. Not that. No, not that. We've taken to actually being quite, dare I say, abusive to our neighbours in the world. And I don't understand this devolution of humanity. I guess I kind of find it frightening. I said this morning, "I wouldn't be waving the Canadian flag on my truck." Then I thought, wait a minute, I used to proudly wave the Canadian flag on my truck every First of July, and sometimes the rest of the year too. I've always proudly displayed a Canadian flag on the back of my travel trailer. Now I think, what's that going to hook me up with?

I used to also proudly proclaim to be a Christian. Yeah, it's almost a scary prospect at this point. Because the kind of Christian that I want to practice being is not what a lot of people hear or think of when first they hear that word. So thanks, Karen...oh, you didn't choose the scripture. No. Trust, trust, trust...ooh, ouch. In this climate? I trust you. Okay, I trust you. Well, that's pretty good actually – I trust more people than many do in the world. I mean, I can look around. I don't see anyone in this building that I'd say I don't trust. That's pretty impressive, considering. But I go out the door and I'm not so sure. We don't know where it's safe to park. We don't know where it's safe to walk. We don't know where it's safe to...well, we know it's not safe to hug. I'm tired.

Jeremiah had some words for those of us who are tired. He reminds us that those of us who trust in God are like trees by water, and that image that you have on the front of your bulletin – it yelled at me across the page when I opened it up. All I did was click "images of blessing". There's the water pouring, pouring over that individual and what they're holding. It was an outpouring of blessing, and that, my friends, is what I invite each of us to hold onto. I can tell you, I haven't done overly well at that myself recently. You can read Still Spirited and you'll know. It's been a challenge.

Blessed are those who gather in worship. (These are my words; Jeremiah didn't say that.) Blessed are those who still gather and reach out and extend open arms and give praise and support one another above all else. Support one another. Luke spells it out – well, Jeremiah and Luke both do. Because Jeremiah uses the image of the tree. When you come from Saskatchewan, it's hard to talk about trees. When you come from southern Saskatchewan, you have to look hard. But, but, that meant that a tree was one of the most precious things in the world to me. Because, indeed, if you had one, you had shade.

If you happen to have a dozen in the right place, the wind didn't whistle through your house the same in the middle of winter.

The tree by the water is not just secure on its own, but is a blessing to all around it. A tree nurtured and given what it needs to sustain life has, just by its very nature, something to offer to everyone else. Being nurtured in community, in this time, is the single greatest blessing for each of us to hold. For indeed, if we are nurtured and watered and given that which sustains us, we too don't need to fear when the heat comes. We feel as if we're standing alone, or when our minds and our hearts are tested.

I love the very first line of the Beatitudes on the Plain as Luke has given the account, because the very first line is: "He came down with them." He, being Jesus, came down with them and stood on a level place, and isn't that exactly what Jesus' life was all about? Jesus brought God to the here and now and stood in the midst of all on a level place where, you know, it's not as bad as walking on a ruddy sidewalk right now. The ground that Jesus surrounds us with is a stable place. A secure place. A safe place, at our level, where we all are. Where we all gather. And in the midst of what we have to face today, and tomorrow, and I fear in upcoming weeks, the blessing that is poured down upon us is the blessing of God's love flowing over us like water. Washing away all the grime, leaving us feeling refreshed and filled with the knowledge that Jesus is right here. Right here. Amen.