Blessed is the man who trusteth

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[0:00] I'd like if you would turn back with me this evening to the passage we read in the book of Jeremiah, the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 17, and some words that we have in verse 7 of that chapter. Jeremiah chapter 17, and in verse 7, blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. When we read through Jeremiah, it's sometimes a very heavy book to read through, because it seems to be a book that's full of woe, and of judgment, and of warnings, and indeed in the passage that we read there was very solemn warnings to God's people to turn from their ways, because if they didn't they would lose the promised land that God had given to them, and indeed they didn't heed the warnings of Jeremiah. But we find as we read through the book, and it would be worth doing if you haven't done so in one kind of sitting, to sit through the book and read it, because there is a rich vein, there is a kind of gold vein running through it, and there are some tremendous promises and encouraging chapters and verses that really warm our hearts and encourage us to focus on the Lord. And I hope that this evening, in looking at verse 7 of chapter 17, it will be an encouragement to look for and search for and remain in the blessing of the Lord in our Christian lives, and over these coming days of fellowship and worship and communion together. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord. Now some people would say that that is simply an encouragement to be happy as Christians, but happiness, and the English word there is much, much too shallow to express what blessedness is. It is a very deep word, and it's much more than simply happiness. It's the word that was used first when Aaron blessed the people, and the Aaronic blessing, may the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face to shine upon you. And it's the sense of being content and happy as God is turned towards you and his face is looking at you. It's the blessing and the contentment of being a believer, being in the Lord's presence, knowing his grace, experiencing his power. It speaks of abundant life, life to the full, life that comes from God. That sense of well-being that often we can't put into words. Well-being that knowing that all is well with our soul.

It speaks of the warmth of being in the company of one we respect. You know how it is when we're in somebody's company, not just a friend but someone who's maybe older than us, someone who we love and respect, and we just feel content as we listen to them. We don't need to speak necessarily when we're in their presence because there's that sense of well-being simply from being with them. And of course in a much deeper way and in a much more spiritual way, that is true for us as Christians, we are indeed blessed. And we are blessed when we, as we're reminded here by the prophet, when we are in the Lord. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord. That is indeed the key to blessedness. And we know that in the world in which we live, people are looking for blessing, happiness, contentment, well-being in all different places. And the temptation is for us as Christians to do that also.

But we know that where our heart is, is if we are in the Lord, in fellowship with him. That is where we must be. And that is why the Lord has given us times particularly, not just of worship and of praise, but of communion season and of sitting at the Lord's table to refocus our attention and to once again be in the Lord as we should be. And all of us, I'm sure to a lesser or greater extent, need to refocus our lives. It's a daily task. And yet the Lord in his mercy and in his grace gives us these times when he says, this is for you. This is for blessing. This is to re-engage.

This is to examine yourself and to look and see whether you are indeed in the Lord and blessed in his fellowship and company. You see, the people of Judah had lost that. They had lost that place of blessing. They had wandered away. They had taken the relationship with God for granted. And they said, ah, well, we're in the promised land now. We don't really need him so much. And so they wandered away from him. They looked away from this, the invisible God and began to worship idols and began to adultery their relationship with God by turning aside from him. That's why these

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verses are so poignant, because they are encouraging the people to return to the one that they had left and abandoned.
[5:13] How is it then in our lives that we maintain that sense of blessing and that sense of closeness to the Lord? Because there's no doubt we always have our part to play. God is sovereign, but he has given us our own responsibilities spiritually in cooperation with his own spirit, that we live in a certain way, live in obedience to him. And we're told here that we know blessing when we are those who trust, trust in the Lord, who hope in the Lord. Now that is not just a one-off event when we come to Christ.

We say, well, now I trust in the Lord as my saviour. Now my hope is in him. Then we walk away as if nothing has changed. It is an ongoing way of life. It is a continual present that we are trusting and hoping or confiding in the Lord. And that is what's so central to us. We don't trust and hope in a religion, in a way of life, in a book, in a philosophy, but in the person of the Lord. In a living and ongoing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what we are to foster and develop spiritually by his grace. And that trust and confidence is an ongoing and it's an everyday thing. We have therefore a responsibility to know Jesus Christ better on a day-to-day basis. You can't trust and you can't hope in or have confidence in somebody you don't know, really. It's not something we ordinarily do.
We don't walk down, maybe different in a smaller community, but in a city or in somewhere where we don't know anyone, we don't generally walk down the street and open up our hearts to somebody we've never met. We don't trust in them with our wallet. We wouldn't do these things because they're strangers to us. Generally in life when we trust somebody, it's because we have learned that trust, because we have seen them in action and we have seen that they are indeed trustworthy people.
And if we are sharing our hearts with people, again it is seldom with strangers, but usually with those who we know understand us and who we know will accept and will keep in confidence the things that we tell them. We have that great responsibility with Jesus Christ.
Not that he ever will need to know us better because he knows us better than we know ourselves, but that we grow in fellowship and in knowledge and in ability to lean on him and to find that when we do so he never lets us down. I've been a Christian for 22 years and I can say confidently with a gun to my head, he has never let me down. I've let him down many times, but I know in times when I thought he has let me down or when he hasn't answered my prayers, that in time and with retrospect and with a good dose of humility, that his ways are better than mine.
[8:30] So as we get to know him, we learn to lean on him and trust on him in our lives and in doing so we tell him our needs. That is what it is to have faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we pour out our hearts to him in prayer. An everyday living dependence, a prayerful walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, telling him our weakness, pouring out our doubts, shaking our fist at God, but coming round to recognise and know his sovereign goodness and love. How often do we see that in the Psalms when the Psalmists pour out their heart and soul in trust and in reliance on the Lord and sometimes in ways that we would be afraid to speak to God and yet coming round to adore him and praise him because they have gone into God's house and they have seen the end of the wicked and they recognise and know that his ways are good and his ways are perfect. So we pour out our hearts to him, confident of his willingness to learn, to hear sorry, and being willing to learn from him. There's a wonderful chapter in

Isaiah 43 we're preaching on in Edinburgh on Sunday which speaks in very human terms of God's request to the people and he says to them, I'm sad because you haven't wearied me with your prayers. You haven't burdened me with your requests. And what he's saying is I want to be, not that God can ever be wearied or burdened, but he's using human language so we understand. I want to be wearied with your own pouring out of your hearts. And he says instead what have you done? You've wearied me with your sins.
You've burdened me with them. We live in the light of God's presence sometimes with our sins instead of leaning on him. And that trust and confidence and trust and hope comes from following him in all that we do. See we are asked on every turn today to follow our own thinking, to go with our own feelings, to be true to ourselves. How often are we told that? How often do we hear that in the media? That that is what is important, that's what matters. That is where we are walking a different road from the world when we come to Christ because we are following him, not ourselves. See when we're following our own feelings apart from following feelings that are very often sinful,

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there's no risk there. There's no change.
We never move out of a safe environment, out of our comfort zone. We're just staying in what we know and what we do. But Christ says trust me, walk with me, come out of that sinful comfort zone and know what it is to be blessed.
And we are only blessed as we obey him. Not in the things that it's easy for us to obey him in. In the things that we struggle with. In the things that are invisible. The greed and the pride and the self-centeredness and the self-reliance. And all these things where we say, no my will, not thine be done.
[11:58] So blessing comes from trusting and hoping and being confident in the Lord. And that is our daily walk. And that is what we are asked to do. It's a very simple message. It's a very simple formula.

By his grace and with his favour. But as often in the Bible we have not simply precept, not simply theological truth as we have it in these glorious words in verse 7. But as often in God's word, especially as we see it in the Gospels, where Jesus would tell theological truth and then give a picture to explain it more clearly so that we can understand it better in everyday language or with everyday pictures.
That's what happens here. We have the same truth retold in the next verse. But by a picture so that we can understand and hopefully apply it more to our own hearts.
For he shall be like, he shall be as a tree planted by the waters and that spreadeth out her roots by the river and shall not see when heat cometh. But their leaf shall be green, shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. So we have this truth.
Of blessedness by trusting and obeying in the Lord. And then we have the picture of what it is to be blessed. And the picture is of a tree beside a river.
[13:29] And the river is the source of blessing. It's the source of life. It's the source of energy. Now that might be fairly meaningless to us at one level. Because we're surrounded by trees.

Maybe not so much in the island of Lewis. But in this nation we are. We know a lot about trees. And the grass is green. And the rain is falling. But in the Middle East, it was a very clear picture of need and supply and fruitfulness.
And it would come from being in the right place. And that picture of water is often used in the Old Testament. Spiritually. To speak about spiritual blessing.
And Jesus Christ himself takes it on himself in John 4 when he speaks to the Samaritan woman. He says, you'll be thirsty when you drink that water again. He says, but when you trust in me, a well of water will spring up to eternal life.
Because I am the water of life. And so we have this great picture of, for us with the retrospective eyesight of the New Testament.
[14:37] Looking back and seeing Jesus Christ. We can see that he is the river. He is the blessing. And it is as we are beside him that we know life of blessing.

You see, I do think that sometimes we fail to appreciate how special water is. Again, we have so much of it.
It is very ordinary. We pour it down the drain all the time. Again, for the Israelites, they knew exactly how valuable and how precious and how life-giving water was.
Not many years ago, your own minister and myself went to Israel. And we passed through a lot of these barren fields. And we would come to desert-like fields.
We would come to a field that was green and luscious. Because there was this magnificent irrigation system. Miles and miles of pipes putting water into the field to make the desert bloom.
[15:39] To make it productive and good. And that is the picture that we are given this evening spiritually. The danger is that we take also Jesus Christ for granted.

We have known about him all our lives. We have heard the gospel preached week after week. We know the gospel story. We know the Bible. And it is ordinary to us. It is plain.
We are not moved by the centrality and the importance of being beside him. It is easy to look away. It is easy to be tempted. It is easy to walk another road.
Because, well, he is so ordinary. And the danger in our lives is always to look away from God. And try to be blessed elsewhere.
But there is no blessing anywhere else. Nobody and nothing satisfies us. And gives us blessing like being in Christ.

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[16:36] What is our responsibility then? In the light of this picture. Our responsibility is to send out our roots towards Jesus Christ.

May our lives be facing Jesus Christ. Not in theory. Not in profession. But in reality. That on a day-to-day basis, we are looking to him.
Rather than looking away from him. Because that is what repentance or what obedience is, isn't it? Simply that repentance is turning toward Christ.
And you know the great fear of the psalmist and others in God's word. Is if God turns his back on them.
And we know our responsibility is to face Christ. And to be drawing from him. Beside the stream. Drawing from him in energy. In daily dependence.
[17:38] And you say, well, what do you mean by that? Simply by being in the word. By praying to him. On a daily basis. Real, passionate, vibrant, dependent prayers. Asking for his guidance.

Looking for his help. Expecting him to answer us in our needs. Seeing that he is the source of strength to us. Drawing from him. So that it is not a spiritual, theoretical life we live.
But one of utter and complete dependence. Lord, guide me today. Show me the way to act. Forgive me where I've been short. And impatient and careless. And not God glorifying.
Our responsibility to face him. To make it a routine of our lives. To make it a pattern of living.
You know, people say again and again today. Well, don't bother with routine. Because it's dull and dry and boring. You don't really need to go to church to worship God. You can go to the top of a mountain. You don't need to read the Bible.
[18:38] Because that's ritualistic. But there's good routines. And there's good habits. And this is one that we must develop in our own lives. As I'm sure we do.

But increasingly, time pushes it. And is pressurizing it. That is where we face as Christians. We don't face another direction.
How ridiculous would it be for a tree in Palestine. That was rooted by a stream. Suddenly to decide. Well, I think I'll go elsewhere for my supply.
Of water. And the roots would move. And go toward the desert. How ludicrous is that picture. It would never happen. It's against nature. It's against what would happen.
And for us as believers. To look for spiritual. To look for satisfaction. Or health. Or nourishment. Anywhere other than Christ. Is against our nature.
[19:35] And comes from the evil one. We have found Christ. We ought not to be looking. Anywhere else. Daily. And when that is. Our life.

By his grace. And in the presence and power of the spirit. Then we will know a blessed condition.
And what is that condition? Well, it's for one. It's stability. Whatever the circumstances.
That tree shall not see. When heat cometh. In other words. When the drought comes. That tree doesn't mind. Because its roots are firmly planted.
Where it can receive water. And nourishment. So whether it's the rainy season. Or the dry season. It's not what's on top. It's what's underneath. And it's sustaining. And being strengthened.
And stable. Because of that. And that is our experience. And that is part of the experience. Of blessedness. That when trouble comes in our lives. When the storms come.
[20:30] To use a different picture. Our house is firmly fixed. On the rock. Changing circumstances. Don't take away our faith. And don't make us shake our fist.

At God. Because we know his blessedness. And we know his love. And we are in his strength. How often have you experienced it. In this congregation. When someone has gone through trial.
Or tragedy. As a believer. And we would shake our heads. And say that might well shake their faith. But it has made them stronger. Not in an arrogant. Or in a insensitive way.
But simply because they know. They have been receiving strength from God. Stable. Whatever the circumstances. And each of us. Will doubtless face darkness.
And pain. And suffering. And maybe even tragedy. In our lives. But as we are in him. There is the blessedness of stability. But the great reality.
[21:30] Also is that our leaves. Are always green. Goes on to say. But our leaf. Shall be green. And it speaks. So just. An evergreen. Picture that we have here.

And it is a wonderful picture. Of a freshness. Coming from stability. Now we think. Often in our lives. And we are educated. To believe that. Freshness comes from moving on. From trying something new. From having a different experience. But the great irony.

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Or the great paradox. Of the gospel. Is that when we are fixed. In Jesus Christ. Looking to him. That is the only place. Where we can receive. And maintain.
Spiritual freshness. That is why the table. Is so significant. Bringing us back. To our roots. To be fresh in him. There is no staleness.
[22:22] In fellowship. With the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a surface newness. It is that deep seated. Newness of experience. From being in his presence.

And that freshness. Will make you stand out. If you have driven through. Perthshire. Or somewhere like that. In the autumn. And there is all these beautiful trees. On the bank of the road.
And most of them. Are shedding their leaves. But every so often. You see an evergreen. And it stands out. So very clearly. And so. When we are fresh.
Spiritually. We stand out. And we stand out. Not through anything. In ourselves. But simply. From the blessing of God. And from. Our trust.
And confidence in him. And lastly. It means that we are not only stable. And fresh. But also. We are fruit bearing. Neither shall cease.
[23:18] From yielding fruit. And that is also. A great picture. We look in our lives. To be Christians. Who are fruit bearing. In other words. That we are reflecting.

Jesus Christ. And that we are bearing. The fruit of the spirit. Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Meekness. Gentleness. Self-control. These fruit.
That we are asked to bear. Lord. I don't have them. I don't show them. Show me how. It's so hard. It's so difficult. Be rooted in Jesus Christ.
Christ. And these things will by nature. Begin to characterize our lives. Great characteristics. Everyday characteristics.
Characteristics and fruit. That affect our relationships. And our workplaces. And our church life. Our homes. Our families. All that we are.
[24:14] That we are fruit bearing. Again. Fruit bearing trees. Are great trees. And they. Great thing about fruit bearing trees. Is that they provide.

For other people. Because we can take from them. And that fruit is replenished. As we are in Christ. And so as Christians. We are to be serving. And our gifts are used.
And benefit. The Christian community. And while often. We will feel drained. And tired by that. God replenishes. As we look to him.
Wonderful to be a fruit bearing. Tree. They were always. The most exciting trees. In the Manson Edinburgh. Where I grew up. The best tree. Was always the tree.
Just next door. Because it was fruit bearing. The temptation was always. To go to that tree. Because it was so. Good. That the fruit was so nice. And so in Christ.
[25:12] We have this knowledge. That our lives. Will be attractive. To others. Spiritually. Because we will be. Like Jesus Christ.

It is very simple. The encouragement. To be blessed. But so often. In our lives. We complicate. These things. And sin. Wells up within us.
To hide. What God means. For our good. May it be over these days. That we enjoy. Blessedness. In his company. And that we will feel like. Trees.
By a stream. That we would be. Those who are nourished. In his word. And in fellowship together. Amen. Let us pray. Gracious God.
We rejoice. At this great privilege. Of fellowship. And of worship. And of being. Under. The wonderful banner. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.
[26:17] We rejoice. That we can take. The gospel of Jesus Christ. And that we can. Share that gospel. Wherever his people. Are gathered together. And we pray.

That there may be. That great sense. Of unity. Among us. And of purpose. And that we would have. The single mindedness. Over these days. As believers.
Together. To examine. Our own hearts. And to. Root out. Any lifestyle. Or sin. Or way of thinking. That turns us away. From the living God. We pray. That we would not. Be tempted. To. Found. Our lives. And our experiences.
In anything. Other than Jesus. May the pressure. Of family life. Or of work. Or of. Whatever. May be. A temptation.
[27:12] To us. Not take the. Rightful place. That Jesus demands. And. Doesn't demand. Because. He is a tyrant.

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Or. A. Harsh God. But because he knows. Our hearts. And he knows. The path of blessing. Lord. May we enjoy.
Great blessing. Together. In these days. May we enjoy. The privilege. Of. Worshipping. Your holy name. And we ask. And pray. That you would bless. Those.
Who come to preach. That you would. Fill their hearts. With joy. And with solemn. Responsibility. And we pray. That many people. Will be drawn.
Closer to Christ. And many will be saved. In these days. That we are together. We ask these things. In the name of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Our saviour. And our sovereign. Amen.
[28:09] Amen.

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