

Jeremiah 17:5-10, 14

Soil and Roots: The Key to Being a Fruitful Christian

The Summit Church

Introduction

My name is Daniel...

I'm a guest speaker. 3 Rules for guest speakers:

1. Laugh at my jokes
2. If I ask you to do something, do it. Raise your hand, respond, jazz hands

We are in the last week of a series called Bear Fruit. My hope today is that as you leave, and as you think about this what God has taught you over the course of this series, my hope is that you are praying to God and saying, "Lord, I want to bear fruit. Whatever it takes, I want to bear fruit. I want my life to look like someone who deeply loves you and is committed to you."

Let's pray

How many of you love the great outdoors? Western NC, the mountains, wildlife? How many of you seeing the great outdoors from your car and spending the night in a hotel with AC and a decent bed?"

How many of you have ever been to a desert? I was recently visiting one of our families from this church who live overseas. What you do on these trips: pray, meet some of the people that our people are working with, meet native believers, show you a part of the country. They love their country and want to help you appreciate it as well: certain part of India, you may see the

Taj Mahal, certain parts of SE Asia, you may see the Himalayan Mountains.

Where we were, they said, "We are going to take you to one of the most beautiful places here: a desert. "You're gonna love it." I tried to act excited, but really, I was like, "I don't think so. It's sandy and hot without the ocean." Well, I was wrong. It was amazing, it was beautiful. I would highly recommend to anyone to go and visit this desert, and if I had the opportunity I would go visit any desert in the world.

However, no matter how beautiful this desert is though, I would never want to live there. There is almost no life. Almost no animal life, no plant life, and there are still mosquito's though. **The only reason you know it isn't hell is b/c there is no cats.** This is a great place to visit IF you have a guide that knows the area well, a 4-wheel drive truck with plenty of gas, and lots of water. It is a terrible place to get lost. You get lost in NC wilderness, you can make it. If you get lost in a desert, you will have a tough time surviving b/c there is almost nothing in the environment that supports human life. **A desert is not a fruitful place. It is not a place where humans can thrive.** I came back from this trip about the time we started this series on bearing fruit, and it has reminded me that God's intention for us is to thrive.

But I have had seasons in my spiritual life that felt more like this desert than thriving forest. And maybe you have been there too, when it felt like, "God, I'm not sure where you are. I just don't feel much. I still do the right things, I still look like a good Christian, I go to church, I try and pray, I read my Bible, I'm still tithing, I still invite people to church, and look at my life on the outside and everything is fine there too, I am doing well at my job, my family we have our struggles but we're doing well; but on the inside, beneath the surface, it just doesn't seem to be much there anymore. There isn't a real fruitfulness on the inside."

Some of you may be there right now. Some of you are there right now and you have been in this place for a long time. It's been years, maybe a decade. You see where David says,

“Return to me the joy of my salvation” but you stopped praying that a long time ago, b/c what’s the use of saying something over and over and bearing your heart out if nothing changes?

My question has been, “What’s the difference? At the most basic level, at the deepest level, past the easy Sunday school answers that say, “do this, do this, and believe this, and everything will be OK.” What is the difference between someone who bears fruit and someone who doesn’t? How can I become fruitful believer?

This is what I want to answer today: **At the most basic level, what does it take to be a fruitful Christian?**

Text: As Jeremiah delivers this message, Israel is in a place of prosperity.

Vs 5 Thus says the Lord:

*“Cursed is the man who trusts in man
and makes flesh his strength,
whose heart turns away from the Lord.*

*⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see any good come.*

*He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.*

*⁷ “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.*

*⁸ He 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.”*

Everyone wants the life of the tree planted by streams of water. We want the life that is blessed.

- Shrub verses a Tree: don’t be a shrub, but a tree
- The Shrub lives in a desert, a salt land, there is no life there, no vibrancy, its uninhabited, no other life around, no animals or other plants.
- “Not see any good come” A better translation is that it will not see good WHEN it comes. (not if, but when) God could be pouring out blessing after blessing on this type of person, and they don’t even know. **This should be sobering to us.** What this calls to my mind is...
 - A drug addict whose family is desperately doing everything they can to help him and yet...
 - *The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want.* Proverbs 13:25
 - **The shrub is incapable of seeing where God is at work.**
- Stark contrast to the tree
- **“Does not fear when heat comes”** All of us get bad news; all of us have things that happen to us that disappointing, we have setbacks, some of them major, but the person whose trust and hope is the Lord isn’t afraid.
- **“is not anxious in the year of drought”** more severe than heat. You are going to be dealing with this for a very long time, but this tree still bears fruit in a drought.
 - College Dinner
 - Wheelchair a part of all their lives, but just not the most significant part of their life, **it wasn’t the defining part of their lives,** and what that did was it left a whole lot of capacity to love and care about other people.

- IS THIS YOU? DO YOU FEEL LIKE THIS DESCRIBES YOUR LIFE?
- Why? The tree is planted by water. It has a water source that doesn't depend on something as circumstantial as rain. its roots stretch deep into the soil. What do you see in that picture? Water, and this place is thriving in a place that averages less than 4 inches of rainfall a year b/c it has a constant source of life.

So, what is the primary difference between the two trees? **The primary difference between the two trees is LOCATION. The location of your trust is the difference between a fruit bearing Christian and non-fruit bearing person.**

Point 1: the location of your trust determines your fruitfulness.

All the real estate agents at The Summit Church are like "Preach preacha!"

I want you to say this with me: I'll ask the question, you give me the answer; if a 19-year-old cheerleader can make you do this at a sporting event, I think I should be able to do this at church: all of our campuses are going to do this. I'll follow up with the CP's and if you don't do it, then your campus can't come to Christmas@ DPAC this year. OK, you ready?

What is the primary difference between the two trees is LOCATION. So, when you talk to someone in your small group this week who missed church this weekend, and they ask, what was the sermon about, you will look like you paid such good attention: Well, to sum it up, the sermon was about how the location of our trust determines our fruitfulness. What do you think about that Joe?

That's it, location, that is the primary difference, but there is one very, very big problem, and God, who in all of his love and mercy towards his people tells us what that problem is in the very next verse:

Text #2:

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

This is the passage that if you have been at church for any length of time, if you have been involved in high school or college ministries, this passage is used a lot. In my study of Jeremiah 17, this is the one verse that popped up all over the place.

But God put this verse in this chapter for an intentional reason. The historical context matters for us. God does not want us to make the same mistake.

If you had stopped the average Israelite on the street in this day, and put these two trees out there to him or to her, and said which one are you, which one do you think Israel is, they would have said the fruitful one. For the reasons I gave earlier, they would have thought they were fruitful, and yet, they had forgotten the words of Solomon in Proverbs 14:12 ***"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death"***

Humans have an amazing capacity for self-deception and self-justification.

Point 2: There is no way that you can determine on your own whether or not you are a fruit bearing follower of Jesus.

As one commentator puts it, **"One way our minds are crooked is that we have an infinite number of ways of justifying any action we'd like to take—for instance, action that avoids trusting in God and puts us in control of safeguarding our destinies. Our minds are wretched in so far as there's no way we can cure our minds of their malaise. Further, because the**

only instrument we have for understanding our own minds is our own minds, we have no way out of the vicious circle. Even when we want to know the truth at one level, at another level we don't want to know, and we find ways of hiding the truth from ourselves."¹

Haven't you seen this in other people: bro, you are making terrible decisions. Everyone sees it but you. It's like the piece of lettuce caught in someone's teeth, and they no clue, and they keep smiling and talking, and it's like I can't even understand or pay attention to your b/c you have this huge piece of lettuce stuck in your tooth.

- CT's challenging me: Do you see how you come across?
Me: "I'm passionate" Cory: "No, you come across like a jerk and lack grace and compassion."

If you can see this in others, don't you think you do the same thing? **Is that just other people, is that just them over there, or do you think that there are also things about you that you just don't see.** Me, you, all of us, we are blind to our sin.

One way that one of my favorite authors, Paul David Tripp puts it is: **"You are blind to your blindness."**

Let me be even more blunt, but I'm going to do my best to say this with love: Most days, you are your own worst enemy. **The biggest problem you have in your life is you; it is the lies that you tell yourself and you then believe, and turn around a convince yourself that you are living in the truth.** The heart is deceitful above all things, who can understand it? **This is an insurmountable problem...to take on by yourself.**

Let's look at the very next verse, verse 10:

¹⁰ **"I the Lord search the heart and test the mind,**

to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Point 3: The bad news and the good news is that what we don't know and can't know, God knows.²

We can't read or trust our hearts, we can't know ourselves, but God does. That phrase "and test the mind," the literal translation is "test the kidneys" which disgusting. This is a Hebrew idiom meaning that God knows the deepest and most secret parts of who you are. There is nothing in our lives hidden from him, he knows all of it.

We live in God's care. He warns us not to trust our own hearts, to trust own strength, but it is only so we will trust him instead.

Church, this is not just a declaration of truth, it's an invitation to relationship. It is an invitation to get out of the desert that you are living in and be replanted by streams of water where your life will never cease to bear fruit, where your leaves will always be green.

Jeremiah brought an invitation to the people of Israel, but we know that most people did not respond well to Jeremiah's message. They rejected God's invitation and some actually spoke out against Jeremiah and contradicted his message. We do one person though that responded to this invitation though, and it was Jeremiah himself.

A Few verses later, we have a prayer that Jeremiah prays and he opens it by saying in verse 14:

Vs. 14 Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.

¹ Goldingay, John. *Jeremiah for Everyone*. Page 95

² Ibid.

Jeremiah delivers this message and then, in a personal moment cries out for help. He sees the trees, he knows which he wants to be, he sees the problem in his own heart, he sees God as the proper, right and good solution, and he cries out to the only one who can really help: The Lord.

You see where his trust is though, right? It is in the Lord: If you heal me, I'm healed. If you save me, I'm definitely saved. His trust is the Lord: for you are my praise.

Point 4: When you cry out to God for help, he ALWAYS answers yes.

There are some prayers that God always answers with a yes and this is one of them. Help me know you more: YES! Expose my idolatry so I can worship you more fully: YES! Father, reveal my shortcomings as a husband and dad so I lead my family to better worship you: YES! Lord, forgive me my sins, I have no excuse but I throw myself on the grace of the cross: YES! God, let me be the fruitful tree, mold me, replant me so my roots can go deep into the gospel, and so that I will not fear nor be anxious when heat and drought show up, make me fruitful so I can display your glory: YES!

Romans 10:9 *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"*

John 1:12 *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"*

James 4:6 *"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." No disclaimers, not fine print, just truth.* If you humble yourself, he will pour out his grace on you.

If you call on anything else, or anyone else, if you rely on yourself, you will be the shrub stranded in spiritual wasteland, not even able to see the good when it comes. You'll wonder why nothing ever changes for you. You will blame others and you'll blame circumstance, but you'll never take a good, hard,

and honest look at your own life. **That is not what God wants for you!!!**

Let me close with 3 things. If you want to change, I want to go from the desert to the stream of water, I want to send you to three places that are intersections with God's grace:

1. **You need to be replanted.** Just like a tree can't replant itself, you can't replant yourself either. Some for the first time, you aren't a Christian yet. All of us, no matter how long we have walked with God, when we see our sin and idolatry need to be replanted. Chose this verse b/c of my wife. She came and said, "You've got a lot going for you, you've been successful, but..." To be replanted, you must **Get on your face before God and cry out:** Change me! Psalm 139: 23-24 *Search me, O God, and know my heart!*

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

You don't know your heart, he knows it and he will tell you and show if you really ask.

(If you do that, one thing that God will bring godly people, which leads me to point 2)

2. **You need some godly friends who will** (walk alongside you and) **say the hard but loving things to you.** You need to find a few people and say to them, "Listen, I need your help. Will you please speak into my life, tell me when I'm not believing the truth, be gut level honest with me, tell me the things I don't want to hear." And then listen to them and believe them. (don't be too picky about who this is either...)

a. BB and the 3 things.

b. Rupert and me.

You need some friends like that.

3. When you begin to see things in your life, when your sin, pain, idolatry, hurt is on the table in all its nastiness, ask yourself this question: **How does Jesus change me in this situation?** How does Jesus's perfect life, how does his death on the cross for your sins, and his resurrection which brings new life change me, how should it change my thinking, how should it change how feel, how should it change my relationship with God, with others, with this world, with myself?

Paul David Tripp: **Nothing about me that can revealed that is not already covered by the blood of Jesus.** That is why I can be so honest.

What would your life be like if you lived in this type honesty and vulnerability before God and before others? You would be **free**. You would be more free than you have ever been in your whole life. You would start growing in your faith in ways that you could never imagine. You'd bear the fruit of repentance, of the spirit and of evangelism in such a degree that if I were to tell you now you would not even believe me.

What would happen to our church if most of us started living like this?
