

### Jeremiah 17:5-10/Luke 6:17-26

**Jeremiah 17:7, “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him”.**

Jeremiah is prophesying to the Jews, to believers and not unbelievers. So, saying, **“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him”** should have motivated some but at the same time discouraged or insulted some. However, verses 1-4 of Jeremiah 17 provides the needed background to understand the words of Jeremiah in verses 5ff. Verse 1 of Jeremiah 17, says, **“Judah’s sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars”**. People in that era to ensure the permanence of the message, they engraved it on stone with an iron stylus. So, in verses 1-4, Jeremiah metaphorically implies that the sins of Judah/Israel were permanent in the eyes of God. Jews by then were habitual sinners. In such a context, it was normal to sin and abnormal to be righteous. So, in verses 5-10 he was warning those sinning of the consequences that were awaiting them, **“cursed is the person who trust in another person”**. However, verse 7 is key because in that same community there were some who were still righteous and Jeremiah encouraged them, **“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”**

But what had caused Judah to sin to the extent of being labeled habitual sinners by Jeremiah? During that time, Israel had lost all the battles and was convinced that Yahweh/God was not strong enough to protect them against the pagan gods. So, they started having treaties with foreign pagan nations such as Assyria who were superpowers to find protection. But Jeremiah is making this prophecy when Assyria was weakening and the Egypt gaining power. During Jeremiah’s prophecy in chapter 17, Judah/Israel was ruled by Joachim was a vassal king of Egypt. In other words, Judah by then was a “de facto” province of Egypt. Politically this strengthens diplomatic relations between Egypt and Judah and Judah in the process Judah/Israel gained protection. So, politically, Joachim was correct but being a vassal state of a pagan nation had serious religious consequences to Judah/Israel because it then implied that Jews had to abandon their God and

worship the gods of Egypt. Being Black history month, allow me to be a bit political. Those who have experienced colonization may empathetically understand the situation of the Jews during the time of Jeremiah. Colonization was not only a political crime, but it was also a religious crime because the colonized were forced to abandon their gods and embrace the gods of the colonizers. But not only that, but colonization was also a social crime, because the colonized were forced socialize like the colonizer. But not only that, but colonization was also an economic crime, because the colonized were forced to define economics with the lenses of the colonizer. This is the context in which Jeremiah is prophesizing. A context in which Judah had lost everything Yahweism/Godly and adopted pagan everything pagan. They had lost trust/confidence in God and trusted pagan human kings. Jeremiah then comes with a warning, **“Cursed is a person who trust in another person”** but **“blessed is a person who trust in the Lord”**.

I would think that Jeremiah should have been motivated by Psalm 1: 1-3, **“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.**

Jeremiah is not ignorantly discouraging people from trusting in each other, because communities are built on trust. **It is not a sin to trust in people, but it is a sin to invest your faith in another person and drive your dearest hope from them, i.e., to give that person the place in your heart that rightfully belongs to God.** Jeremiah was not also implying that those who trust in the Lord will not experience adversities but even in the face of challenges their relationship with God keeps them from despair, for them challenges are just but a passing phase, they are like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season. In other words, Jeremiah is saying whether challenges or not, our lives should be motivated by trust in God. It is good to be loved by people, but it is better to be loved by God. It good to love people but is better to love God, it is good to trust people but is better to trust God, it good to be trusted by people but it is

**better to be trusted by God. I hope this is enough inspiration to those who will be chosen today as new leaders of our Parish.**

What is it that drives our actions and passion? This is the problem which is addressed by Jesus in Luke 6: 17-26, sermon on the plain, known in Matthew as sermon on the mount, technically described by modern New Testament scholars as the antithesis but technically believed to be a super thesis by postmodern New Testament scholars. **Jesus is not encouraging people to be poor; he is discouraging them from being motivated by the standards of the unbelievers, they should not focus on finding solace and approval from other people but from God i.e. you better be poor in the eyes of people and rich in the eyes of God because in your poverty, you are like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season. Whatever negative condition you are facing is not permanent, the season of fruits is coming. A good relationship with God keeps you from despair even during challenges.**

May the good God bless you, Amen.