

Sermon Title: "Rooted"

Biblical Passage: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Passage Background and Summary

In many ways, this scripture seems to echo Psalm 1. In the scripture, the prophet Jeremiah draws a contrast between those who trust in humans and human institutions and those who trust in God using tree imagery. Those who trust in humans "shall be like a shrub in the desert." They live in the wilderness and uninhabited lands where it is dry and there is no life. In contrast, those "who trust in the Lord" "shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream." Whereas the shrub has no defense or protection from the heat of the desert, the tree planted by water remains green and continues to bear fruit, even amid a drought.

Sermon Points

This past year has been a time of great uncertainty. This time last year, we had no idea we would be in our final month of in-person worship services for the year. Pastor Warnock's prayer for us this year is that we be rooted and remain rooted in God. As such, the theme for this year is "Rooted: Keeping the Faith in A World of Flux." We see how Jeremiah puts it in his discussion of the two trees. For Pastor Warnock, these trees bring to mind the trees in his hometown of Savannah, GA. Some of them are hundreds of years old, and they bear witness to the history of the country. Their roots are deep down in the soil, and they are connected to each other. In the same way, our roots must be deeply connected to God as we hold onto God. There is a reservoir of living water that allows us to stay green even in a dry season.

May you be rooted in God! It is to be:

PLANTED: We can note that trees do not plant themselves. They have to be planted by someone or something, humans or God. In the same way, we must allow God to plant us. When people plant us, they can uproot us from the place in which we are planted; however, no one can uproot us when we've been planted by God. No human being can supplant what God has planted, close doors God has opened, or stop what God has ordained. When we trust God, we will be planted, our feet will be established, and God will hold us in the midst of the story.

POSITIONED: Not only are we planted, but we are positioned. To be planted by a stream is to be positioned near a source that supplies water, even in a dry season. God knows how to position us so that we can gather what we need to flourish. Like the Samaritan woman at the well, we can drink of the living water found in God. When God positions you, you will get what you need when you need it because you are in the presence of a living God. It's because you're planted by a stream of water that your roots go deep to a place that has positioned you for joy, blessings, and things greater than you could ever imagine. If you hook up to the holy, God will

position you for the promotion, job, a relationship that will bring life and joy and wholeness, and more. God has a way of fixing that which is broken and positioning you in the midst of life's heartaches and challenges.

PROTECTED: "It shall not hear when the heat comes." In other words, it is protected. Life can get hot sometimes. The enemy knows how to turn up the heat. We've been in this pandemic for about a year now, and it's hot. Even when the heat comes and when the sun beats upon the land, I don't have to fear because the Lord has covered me. God is my refuge and my strength. God is a very pleasant help in the time of trouble. I'm protected. That doesn't mean nothing bad will happen. It doesn't mean that cancer won't come. It doesn't mean that sickness won't attack my body. It just means that I'm protected and God has a hedge around me. So that even in the struggles and turmoil and amidst tragedy, God is working it out for God's good, and I'm covered By God's amazing grace. When heat comes, put your trust in God.

PRODUCTIVE: When you trust God, you shall be productive. Even in a pandemic, in your old age and advanced years, in a dry season, in a drought, in a tough situation, and when you're broke, you can continue to bear fruit, the fruit of the spirit. You can continue to bear fruit so that your life can be a blessing to others because you are planted with your roots going down next to a stream, covered by the grace of God which sustains us every season. I can be productive even in a dry and difficult situation when it feels like life has given me its worth. God can send forth water to preserve me. Even in the dry and broken places. Pastor Warnock's mother has plants, and sometimes when someone admires one of her plants, she'll break off a piece and give it to them and they can plant that which is broken and it can begin to produce new life. You may feel like life has broken you and that it's over, but when you feel like you've been destroyed, that's when God is getting ready to do something brand new. Even in the midst of broken places, God will give you another chance; make a way out of no way, and open doors that no one can shut. Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

Reflection Questions

1. Share a time when you felt like you were in a dry season?
2. What does it look like to trust in God rather than in humans?
3. How do you get and/or stay rooted in God?
4. Reflect on a time in which God positioned you. Where were you? What were you doing? What did it feel like?
5. What are some things God has protected you from?
6. Reflect on a time in which brokenness brought forth new life.