

The Beattitudes

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 6:17-26

Sunday, February 13, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Intro. it is better to have a few good friends than many friends who are shallow.

Several years ago, when I was working at a summer camp in Ohio, a young man asked me for some advice about friends. He wasn't that popular in school, and it bothered him. I inquired about the friends that he did have, and he told me of a few. "Were they the sort of friends that accepted you just as you are?" I asked, and he said they were. I told him that it is hard to face rejection and not be very popular in middle school and high school but that having lots of friends is overrated. Better to have a few friends that were true friends than to have many shallow friends. At the end of camp his father thanked me for that advice. I hope it helped him. We're going to look at a couple of passages that have a similar message, but instead of comparing a few good friends to many shallow friends we look at investment in the ways of the world versus trust in the living God. The second route is always better, even if it is unpopular.

- It is better to trust the Lord
Jeremiah

In Jeremiah 17, the great prophet learned from the Lord that the idolatry of the people is beyond tolerance and that judgment draws nigh. He challenges the people to set aside business for one day and observe Sabbath but is scorned and ignored. After this experience of rejection against both prophet and the Almighty,

God speaks to Jeremiah and says that a man who trusts in people is cursed comparing him to a shrub in the desert, parched and dry. The man who trusts in the Lord will be like a tree planted by the river, who thrives even in the driest of seasons. Then comes the famous judgment by the Lord on human nature. The Lord said that the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. We have an amazing ability to rationalize and self-deceive. Trusting in people, including oneself, is dangerous compared to trusting in the Lord. But the key verse in this passage is the following one, in verse ten, in which He says, "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. That word translated "mind" is literally "kidneys" as the kidneys represented the deepest most secret part of people. The Lord knows us better than we know ourselves and knows that we do much better, to say the least, when we trust Him rather than what is popular.

Luke

Now let's keep what we learn from Jeremiah's encounter with the Lord in the back of our minds when we consider our Lord's statements in Luke 6, the Lucan counterpart to the Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Note verses twenty through twenty-three. Jesus said, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets". Here's how I think many people understand these verses: "I need to be poor and avoid any circumstance that is remotely comfortable. I cannot

have any financial security. I need to be unhappy and miserable at all times. I must never laugh. If I ever laugh, I must have my friends slap me in the face. I need everybody to hate me and if I'm not sufficiently unpopular I need to consistently insult people until they all hate my guts." The key to escaping this confused comprehension of the words of our Lord is the mention of reward. The same reward for the obedient that the Lord mentioned to Jeremiah at a time when trusting the Lord was so unpopular. This is about trusting in the Lord and following the Lord no matter when. We trust in the Lord and if we don't have enough money we still trust in the Lord. We trust in the Lord even when times are hard and hearts are breaking. We trust in the Lord even if it makes some people mad at us they way the religious leaders of His day were so often mad at Jesus. We commit to trusting in the Lord no matter what. I think that comes closer to His intent.

- Application: What trusting in the Lord looks like?

So for the application, we ask "what does trusting in the Lord look like?" I can infer a few applications from our passages for today, but they go nowhere close to a full response to the question, but this is what I noticed. First, is worship a priority? Do we understand that to gather for the purpose of giving honor to Christ is of paramount importance, even when so many people are like Jeremiah's generation, and prefer idols that make them their own gods of their own little lives and they don't have time for the trust God. Is worship a priority? Second, are business practices a spiritual issue for us? What I mean is that the Lord takes a personal interest in our efforts to be good and fair to people with whom we work. He expects us to serve Him by helping them. Finally, do we realize that even the best people can fail us, and we can fail each other. A leader who breaks someone's heart by a poor

showing or behavior may not really be a hypocrite, because even the best of us can fail each other. Finally, the Lord is more, and has more, and can give more than everybody in the world combined. He is worthy of our trust even if we stand alone.

- Conclusion

Finally, we need to remind ourselves that we serve a Lord who has no limits. We trust Him even if we stand alone because His mind is without limits. He knows all things and rewards His people. We can love the unlovable who do not or cannot love back when we know the love of a Lord who loves without limits.