

**TRUST MORE. FEAR LESS.**  
**Chadron Berean Church 2022 Vision**  
**Jeremiah 17:5-8**

For the past couple of years here at Chadron Berean Church, we've been operating under this perennial vision of a tree that has **deep roots** and **bears fruit**. A tree with deep roots and that bears fruit is a **healthy, balanced** tree. We've talked about how we want to be a balanced church by having deep roots in the Word of God, but we also want the fruit of it to be evident in our lives. We don't just want to study the Bible and know truth. We want it to produce something in us and in our lives – enjoyable fruits for God and those around us to enjoy. Quite often, churches are improperly balanced – either emphasizing application or knowledge. Jesus reprovved each kind of imbalanced church in Revelation. We've looked at that.

A healthy tree is a tree that brings **life and enjoyment**. There's something about a healthy, productive tree that takes my mind back to the garden of Eden, to the way things should be. It's a picture of peace, prosperity, life, enjoyment, and satisfaction. Imagine being lost in a desert wasteland like in the picture on the left.

The 100+ degree sun is beating down on you. Even the breeze feels like a hairdryer. But then like a mirage, in the middle of the wasteland, you come across this healthy fruit tree. The leaves provide shade and shelter from the sun, the trunk is your backrest, and your just sit down and eat some of that juicy, delicious fruit. How pleasant and refreshing in a hot, barren wasteland!



That's the picture that **Jeremiah** is going to paint for us today. The time period Jeremiah was living in was – figuratively speaking – a dried-up wasteland both spiritually and circumstantially. It was a “drought.” But Jeremiah is going to show us that trusting the Lord is critical to flourish in a time like that. And we are in a similar situation I'd say as we look at our culture and our world. It feel like we're in a drought spiritually, with everything that has been going on the past couple of years, and to be honest, droughts don't recognize changes in a new year calendar. I hate to burst bubbles, but there's not a lot of optimism going into a new year and every year has its hard times.

Someone posted a joke a couple days ago how going from one year to the next is like jumping out of a burning building, hitting the firefighter trampoline, and bouncing into the window of another burning building. I don't want to be that much of a downer, but let's be real. There will be hard times this year where we must trust the Lord. Don't trust the new year, trust the Lord, and let's learn from Jeremiah how **by trusting God, we can flourish even in a drought**. Jeremiah and some of the prophets were big fans of **object lessons** by the way so bringing oranges for everyone

just seemed right! But let me ask you before we read our text: *Where or in whom is your trust today? Who will you trust in, in 2022?* Because where you put your trust is a game-changer. Now let's read our text in **Jeremiah 17:5-8**. These few verses are like a wisdom psalm that might remind you of Psalm 1, only backwards.

*Thus says the Lord, “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes his flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant.*

*Blessed [happy] is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious [NIV, it has no worries] in a year of drought nor cease to yield its fruit.”*

So that's our key text for our appropriate annual vision for 2022: **having deep roots and bearing fruit by trusting more and fearing less**. We'll be reminding ourselves to trust God throughout the year. But that's quite the **contrast** isn't it? Who or what you put your trust in determines whether you're more like a dried-up bush in the desert or a flourishing tree planted by streams of water. **Where we place our trust has an incredibly practical affect on us:** Biblically speaking, **fruit** could be considered the **produce** or results or consequences of one's choices and actions. What our lives are characterized by is the fruit of something going on inside of us, in our roots.

- 🍊 **The “fruit” of trusting in yourself or mankind is: fear, anxiety, worry.**

- 🍊 **The “fruit” of trusting in the Lord is: stability, life, blessing, productivity.**

And we have to study this in the context to make it really sink in.

The **title** of the book comes from its **prophet** and **author, Jeremiah**. We know that because it says so! And this is a highly biographical and autobiographical book. Its contents are written by Jeremiah or about Jeremiah. This book actually tells us more about its own author than any other book. There are also several of his personal confessions, or **laments**, throughout the book (10:23-25; 11:18—12:6; 15:10-14, 15-21; 17:9-11, 14-18; 18:18-23; and 20:7-13, 14-18) where we get a glimpse of Jeremiah's heart and personality. It's not a chronological book, but more like **a collection of Jeremiah's works and words as a prophet** from his calling to his predictions fulfilled. It's filled with poetry, narrative, sermons, addresses, parables, object lessons.

- 🍊 **Content: A collection of Prophet Jeremiah's works and words.**

It's interesting to note that it is also **the longest book in the Bible in terms of words and verses**. It was likely compiled, or at least written by an **amanuensis**, which was sort of like a secretary or scribe for prophet. The amanuensis, **Baruch**, is mentioned **21 times** throughout the book.

- 🍊 **Ministry: General population of Jerusalem and Judah.**

Jeremiah mainly ministered to the city of **Jerusalem** and the surrounding area of **Judah**, known as the **southern kingdom**. In his day, Israel was divided. The 2 tribes of Benjamin and Judah made up Judah. The **northern kingdom**, called **Israel**, comprised of the other 10 tribes who were at this point already taken into captivity by **Assyria**. And Jeremiah is sometimes called **the 11<sup>th</sup> hour prophet** to the southern kingdom because during this time (approx. 600 B.C.) they were facing impending judgment for their unbelief. God was going to use the **Babylonians** to chastise them by taking them out of the land. If judgment strikes at midnight, it's the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, **the last hour**, that Jeremiah is called to preach a hard message of repentance to Judah who was guilty of worshipping false gods and for ignoring God's Law. **They were not trusting in the Lord but trusting in false gods and foreign alliances** to bless them and keep them dwelling in the land.

Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet in the **13<sup>th</sup> year of king Josiah**. King Josiah was the one who **reformed Israel** when the priest **Hilkiah** (possibly Jeremiah's father) **found the book of the Law** in the Temple. Israel, just before this, had become so lost spiritually that they didn't even know what the Law was! That would be like walking into a church where there are no Bibles, and no one knows what it says or even what it is anymore. When Josiah read the Law, he basically said, "*We're in big trouble for breaking God's covenant!*" and tore his robes and cleansed the land of idols, child sacrifice, and reinstated the Passover. He brings about a great **reformation, at least superficially**. I say superficially because people started keeping the ritual ceremonies but their hearts were still hard. They were content with **ritual, short of a real relationship with God**.

Kind of like today: If you ask some people if they're going to heaven or not, they say, "*Well, you know, I was raised in such and such church.*" Translation: "*I believe in the ritual. I was baptized. I was confirmed. I give money, etc.*" They don't actually have a biblical relationship with God. They haven't trusted in Christ alone for salvation, but more their religious upbringing and works.

Spiritual leaders in Jeremiah's day were preaching, "*Peace! Peace!*" when Jeremiah was told to say, "*there is no peace. You have a false peace.*" **Jeremiah 6:14** says, "*They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace.*" God removed His protection and peace from them, but they were preaching, "*Everything's fine! God would never do to us as He did with Israel! We have the temple in Judah!*" They had this phrase: "*The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!*" (Jer. 7). In other words, "*God would never allow the temple of His name to be destroyed!*"

But like one man said they were putting band-aids on an arterial bleed. Jeremiah is commanded to essentially say, "*There is no peace and judgment is coming for your spiritual **backsliding**.*" **Backsliding** occurs **16 times** in this book. Another favorite word is **return**. God was saying, "*If you don't change their minds and **return** to Me, I will allow the temple to be destroyed and you will be uprooted from the land to Babylon just like I warned you in My covenant with you.*" And this was a **hard message** for Jeremiah to preach because from the very first chapter you start to gather that Jeremiah is a somewhat **hesitant** and **tender-hearted** man. When the Lord called Jeremiah into ministry in **627 B.C.** at the **age of 20** (Jer. 1:5) God has to reassure him that He could use him and was going to put His words in Jeremiah's mouth. He told Jeremiah not to be afraid of

the people or to fear man, but to be faithful to preach the Word of God even if the people don't respond to it. This is why it's been called the book of **warnings and mournings**.

● **Personality: Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet to a wayward people.**

Even though Jeremiah preached judgment, he would also weep over it. And that's a good thing: unless you weep over judgment, you aren't fit to preach on it or else you'll be a noisy gong and clanging cymbal. Jeremiah wept over the coming judgment and the hard hearts (17:9-10) of the people who refused to return to the Lord for **forty years of ministry**. Jeremiah never found his sweet spot in ministry because as soon as the good king, **Josiah**, died in battle, **Jeremiah was hated, mocked, plotted against, persecuted, and imprisoned** because they didn't like his message. They say he experienced more opposition than any other prophet (15:10, 17; 18:18; 20:10; 11:18 to 12:6; 26; 36). The hatred for him was driven by his message to repent but also to **unconditionally surrender to Babylon**. Since their being conquered was certain, he encouraged complete surrender with the hope of sparing as much life as possible and so that they would at least thrive in Babylon and their children could be replanted in the land someday.

Jeremiah added a **touch of hope** in his messages. Hope of **future restoration**. A common phrase of God in Jeremiah is, "*yet I will not make a complete end*" (Jer. 4:27). Judgment is coming and Jerusalem will be destroyed, yet God will save a remnant for future restoration, just like Israel today. Even today there is a hope laid out for their future restoration in the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

● **Conviction: Jeremiah stayed tight to God's Word when it wasn't popular.**

But wouldn't you say we need more men of conviction like Jeremiah today? He was a **truth-telling, yet tender man** we can all learn from to minister in **our own professing, but godless society**. He delivered the whole message that God had given him to proclaim, but not arrogantly, and didn't give up even when ministry wasn't successful and or things were hard (Jer. 20:9).

It's in this historical context that Jeremiah applies the **striking contrasting imagery** of the scorched shrub and the flourishing tree. Figuratively speaking, he calls the time period they're in, a **drought** – a dry period, **spiritually and circumstantially**. The reason for it is they were not trusting in the Lord but were trusting in foreign gods and foreign alliances with other nations. Little tiny Judah at the time was sandwiched between a **3-cornered international crisis**. They were like the putty in between the superpowers of **Egypt, Assyria and Babylon** struggling for world dominion. Rather than leaning on God and keeping His law, they had a pro-Egyptian and pro-Assyrian parties vying for allegiance. Everyone had their favorite superpower. When **Assyria** was strong, they cuddled up to Assyria. If **Egypt** was strong, they cuddled up to Egypt. After **Babylon** dominated, anytime they thought the power looked like it was shifting back to Egypt, they (Jehoiakim or Zedekiah) rebelled against Babylon and paid dearly for it. So leaning on foreign nations was like leaning on a broken reed. If they had just trusted in the Lord like God said, they would've been the head of the nations and not the tail (Deut. 28:13).

Because they didn't trust the Lord, their experience was an uninhabited wasteland, rather than living in a land of milk and honey. Warren Wiersbe said it best: "*Unbelief turns life into a parched wasteland; faith makes it a fruitful orchard.*"<sup>iii</sup> How many can relate to that?

### 🍊 **The Contrasts Teaching:**

**To flourish in a dry period, one must properly place their trust in God.**

See, even though this little psalm of Jeremiah is written to Judah, it is also written to be universal in its scope just like Psalm 1. **Where we place our trust is crucial because it will greatly affect our experience of life.** If we're going to continue to **emulate a healthy, balanced, fruit-bearing tree, it's going to require trusting God in the difficult times of drought.** And we are in a time of drought with everything going on the past couple of years.

Just like Judah, our land is filled with **immorality** and increasingly hostile against the truth. How many of you feel like Lot, sick of living in a shamelessly immoral society (2 Pet. 2:7). Evil's good and good, evil. The summer of 2020 might have been the hardest to watch as cultural Marxism promoted burning and looting with a false definition of social justice.

Like Judah, we too live in a land of **idol worship**. Our money says *in God we trust*, but I think we trust more in our money. We worship the self-promoting gods of money, possessions, fame, success, power, pleasure. Safety can even be a god today. Anything we love or trust or put before God is an idol and must be put back in its proper place. We all have to do that from time to time.

On top of that, **covid** has added to the desert experience. It's bad enough that it is a real thing. But then they exaggerated it and have used it to lord people. They shut the world down over it. It's been a frustrating, head-spinning couple of years. It's hard to live in the days we're living in. We're not in Kansas anymore. It's easy for our lives be characterized by **anxiety** and paralyzing **fear** (17:8) and if they are, according to Jeremiah, it might be telling of where our trust is. The fruit of trusting God is just the opposite of that: steadiness, life, productivity.

### 🍊 **Defining "fruit": The resulting produce of what we're trusting in.**

Galatians talks a lot about this. **The fruit of the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, self-control) is the resulting produce of faith-resting in Christ** (trusting Christ). Legalism and religious works are the opposite of trust and feed the flesh, puts pressure on you to perform and to measure everyone else by, producing things like dissensions, anger, jealousy, factions. Anxiety and fear become motivators because you never quite measure up. But trusting Christ, believing the good news that He died for you and you can never be good enough and living a life dependent on Him (Jn. 15:5; Gal. 2:20) – will produce the fruit of the Spirit. It's not your fruit, but the Spirit's as you trust in Him. And that fruit blesses everyone around you too.

### 🍊 **Nothing pleases God more than trust.**

God is so pleased with our trust in Christ that it is the condition for salvation and the condition required for our sanctification. We are saved by grace through trusting in Christ (Gal. 2:16) and we live the Christian life by grace trusting Him to work in us and through us (Gal. 2:20; 3:3). **The Christian life is a trusting life.** This is **why I want to emphasis trust** this year: **deep roots and bearing fruit requires trusting more and fearing less.** We must place our trust in the proper place so that “*we don’t fear when the heat comes*” and “*don’t worry in a year of drought.*”

**🍊CBC’S 2022 VISION**  
**Trust more. Fear less.<sup>iii</sup>**

*Do you want to make the world a better place?* Trust more. Fear less. There wasn’t any fear before the Fall and won’t be any fear in heaven or the new earth. Give people a glimpse of the world to come. *Where is your trust today? Who is your trust in?* It’s a dry, unproductive, and lonely existence (cf. Ps. 1:4) for the person who trusts in himself or man. Good ole’ J. Vernon McGee didn’t have much to say on Jeremiah 17, but he said this: “*Sometimes we think we can depend on certain men or on certain political parties to work out the problems of the world. You and I are cursed people if we put our trust in men and what men can do. This is the day to trust God.*”<sup>iv</sup>

Someone who trusts the Lord will flourish in the desert, experiencing greater stability, confidence, and freedom from fear or anxiety. That’s the **personal experience of Jeremiah**. It’s his testimony. He was living through a national drought and life was hard for him. Yet ultimately, he trusted Yahweh God. He focused on God’s promises, not the problems. And his personal testimony is that God can make you like a tree rooted by the streams of living water that bears fruit in season.

There’s a tree on my drive home that illustrates this well. It’s not planted in a desirable place. In fact, it’s planted on the side of a cliff. It looks like it would blow over in a one westerly gust but its healthier than a lot of trees around because it’s properly rooted.

***Are your roots in the Lord? Are you ready to trust more and fear less in 2022?***

Communion is about trust as well. It reminds us to trust in what Christ has done for us on the cross, paying for our sin and also to remind us to walk that trust-walk with Him. To live out our salvation by His grace. If we’ve backslidden or started idolizing anything, putting anything before the things of God, this is the time where we put it back in its place and push that reset button. And the new year is a good time to do that, to say, “*Lord, forgive me for idols and backsliding. I want a closer walk with you this year than I’ve ever had before.*”

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<sup>i</sup> Constable’s Notes, <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/jeremiah.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2003), 1228.

<sup>iii</sup> Bryan Clark, *The Land of Ott*.

<sup>iv</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Radio, 1982), 381.