

A Thriving Life In A Time Of Drought

by Sandeep Poonen

This sermon delves into the contrasting scenes depicted in Jeremiah chapters 14 and 17, highlighting the plea for mercy amidst drought and the consequences of turning away from God. It emphasizes the importance of deep-rooted trust in the Lord, even in times of spiritual drought, to bear fruit and stand out as a beacon of faith. The message urges believers to embrace humility, acknowledging their insignificance and boasting only in the Lord's righteousness.

Duration: 13:41

Scripture: Jeremiah 14:7, Jeremiah 14:11, Jeremiah 17:7, Matthew 5:3, Romans 3:27, Jeremiah 17:5

Topics: "Trust in God", "Humility in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

Jeremiah chapter 14 is a remarkable chapter. It's about the state of Israel in one of its worst conditions ever. And if we know the story of Jeremiah, he was the last prophet before Israel went into Babylon.

And it says in Jeremiah chapter 14 that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in regard to the drought. And there was a drought in in Israel, in Judah, and it says there in verse 2, Judah mourns and her gates languish. They sit on the ground in mourning and the cry of Jerusalem is ascended.

Go down to verse 7. Although our iniquities testify against us, this is the prayer of Israelites, O Lord, although our iniquities testify against us, O Lord, act for your name's sake. Truly our apostasies have been many. We have sinned against you.

O hope of Israel, verse 8, its savior in time of distress, why are you like a stranger in the land, or like a traveler who has pitched his tent for the night? Why are you like a man dismayed, like a mighty man who cannot save? This is the people of Israel pleading to God. Yet you are in our midst, O Lord, and we are called by your name. Do not forsake us.

Sounds like a remarkable plea for help. But see what the Lord says in verse 11, to Jeremiah, verse 11. So the Lord said to me, do not pray for the welfare of these people.

When they fast, I'm not going to listen to their cry. And when they offer burnt offerings and gained grain offering, I'm not going to accept them. Rather, I'm going to make an end to them by the sword, famine, and pestilence.

Go down to the end of the chapter, we can continue that in verse 21, Jeremiah 14. Here they're continuing to plead, these people, do not despise us for your own namesake, not for us, for your namesake. Do not disgrace the throne of your glory.

Remember and do not annul your covenant with us. Is it not you, verse 22, the middle of verse 22, is it not you, O Lord, our God, that therefore we hope in you? For you are the one who has done all these things. Keep going, it's verse 15, chapter 15 is when the conversation continues and the Lord says to Jeremiah, even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not be with those people, send them away.

Those are, verse 2, destined for death to death, those who are destined for the sword to the sword. Here are a group of people who are in the middle of a drought and they are pleading for God to help and God's response is, I'm done, I'm finished with these people. And if you remember, he calls out Moses.

Now Moses is interesting because Moses pleaded for the people and God said, I'm finished with these Israelites in the middle of the wilderness. And Moses said, no Lord, for your namesake, don't do that, all the enemies will laugh over you. And God said, okay, I will relent.

That was in Moses' time, you can read that, Exodus 33, 34. Many years later, Jeremiah and God said, just in case you're wondering, it's not that you're not as good as Moses, even if Moses were here, I'm not going to do this. So here's one picture that you see of a group of people.

The scene, if you were to paint this picture, is a scene of drought and you've got God's people pleading with God and God saying, I'm sorry, I don't even want to listen to you. There are reasons, that we can go into why God didn't listen to them. I hope it doesn't get to that condition at NCCF, I don't believe it is in that condition at NCCF.

But that's the end. The scene is drought, that's the background of drought and what we're looking at is that people pleading with God for mercy, acknowledging their sin and God saying, I'm not going to listen to you anymore, you're done, destined to the sword. Now please turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 17, just a couple of pages later.

These are familiar verses, Jeremiah 17, 7 and 8. Blessed 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 in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit. What's the picture painted here? Now most, almost all the time, whenever I've seen this picture painted, I think about a tree that is planted by the river and whose roots can reach the streams.

But it doesn't really say that exactly. It says that the tree is like, it's like a tree planted like the river. But if I notice where this tree is planted, it really is planted in a year of drought.

Here's a different kind of picture being drawn in the same external conditions of drought and you see that its leaves are green and it's bearing fruit all the time. These are two contrasting pictures within a few chapters of each other. People pleading for God to help them, pleading for God's mercy and God saying, I'm done with you.

Picture of drought. Another scene, same picture of drought. I hope you can picture this.

Drought, parched land, all holes in the ground. And what do you see when your scene changes? You see a thriving tree, green leaves and multitude of fruit. Dear brothers and sisters, which picture are we in a year of drought? We've been living in years of plenty for plenty of time.

In the year of drought, which picture are we going to be? I'm not saying you're going to be in a year of drought where you're completely loving the world. That's for another sermon for another group of people, not this church. But among our church, I hope we won't be like the foolish virgins in the year of drought when we look and we find that we don't have any oil in our flasks because our lives have been so driven by external conditions and external circumstances.

Our lives have become so soft because of the comfort we've lived in for years that in the year of drought, we find that all we're doing is pleading for God, sitting in the fetal position, sackcloth and ashes, saying, God, please help me, please help me. And God says, I'm done. I'm done with you.

After you went to a church like NCCF, after you heard the kind of messages, after you heard it over and over again, these truths, that's one potential end of the story in scripture. Another end of the story is in the year of drought, the world is experiencing drought and the world comes and suddenly bumps into somebody from NCCF and what do they see? A tree that is green and bearing fruit in every season. I know which tree I want to be.

I know which picture I want to be. I need to be a tree that has really got its roots deep, that in the year of drought, its roots have gone so deep into the love of God that it doesn't matter what's happening on the outside. It's gone so deep, so deep into the love of God that it has a fountain of eternal life that is always feeding it.

Because a drought is definitely going to come. No doubt about it. The only question is when.

Some of us may be experiencing some levels of drought in our lives. I'm talking about external circumstances. We never need to have a drought with our relationship with God, but when external circumstances come, are we going to be like a tree planted with our roots so deep and there is an endless fountain of water feeding our trees? Then our tree will have leaves that are always green.

That means our doctrine will be good and the fruit which means that our life will be bearing fruit. Then let the non-christian come to this church. In the year of drought, that's when the christian will stand out.

That's when the true church is going to stand out in the year of drought. Dear family, if we're experiencing drought, this is the time when you have to go to God and say, God I want to be like this tree. I won't let go of you until you bless me.

Not with money, not with cars, not with wealth. Lord, with this tree-like life which has leaves that are always green. I want to live this kind of life.

This is the life that is available for us. Dear brothers, if I were to preach my first sermon, if you were to be bringing your intro sermon, first time everybody's going to hear you, especially your disciples. You're going to have to think carefully of how your introduction is going to go.

Suppose you had to speak in front of a great audience and this was your big shining moment and you had to stand before a group of people and say, I'm going to start off and I want to introduce myself and you have a limited time to capture their attention. What will you say? I know what Jesus said when he spoke the greatest sermon on the mount. You know what he said? Blessed are the poor in spirit.

And that is what the poor in spirit are. The poor in spirit are those who rate themselves as insignificant. That's what the Amplified Bible says.

Matthew 5 verse 3. Blessed, happy, happy. Dear brothers and sisters, do we want to live a happy life in 2019? Here's the secret. This is the very first thing that Jesus introduced a sermon with.

He blew open the gates to his ministry by saying, happy are you if you will rate yourself as insignificant, poor in spirit and trust in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. Who says, I've got nothing. This is a year of drought in every external circumstance.

I rate myself as nothing. I'm insignificant. But I trust in you Lord.

My trust is in you. Let me end with Romans chapter 3. This word has come to me powerfully in 2019. This word has hit me like a hammer.

It's cut me like a sword. Jeremiah chapter 3 verse 27. If we want to enter this kingdom of God, if we want to live this life of faith, if we want to live this Christian life, we must have faith.

It's a non-negotiable. But here's the one thing that cannot be there with people who are living according to faith. Romans chapter 3 verse 27.

Where then is boasting? It is excluded in the law of faith. You're a family of God. There can be absolutely nothing that we can boast about.

And some of us may boast about external circumstances, about things that have happened in our life, on our wealth, or all kinds of things. And God says, in any area where you boast, there's a curse over your life. Because you trust in your flesh.

That's Jeremiah 17 verse 5. Cursed is the man who trusts in himself, who has some kind of boast in something about themselves. Cursed is that such a person. But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord.

And when we become Christians, when we have the law of faith operating, we have to be radical to become a zero. To rate ourselves. Give yourself a rating.

What rating do you give yourself? Pretty good Christian, conquering certain sins, kind to your neighbors, good mother, provider of raising good children. What is the rating you give yourself after being a Christian for many years? Blessed are those who rate yourself as insignificant. Theirs is the kingdom of God.

I pray that boasting will be excluded. I know that the reason why I have fallen in 2019 is because I boasted in some small area. And the reason that I will continue to fall in 2019, whenever I do fall, is because I can go back to God and God said, I boasted.

I boasted about how good a Christian I was. I boasted that I had my quiet time in the morning, so that gave me enough strength to get through in the afternoon trials. Boasting is excluded.

Whose trust is only in the Lord. Whose righteousness is Christ and Christ alone. 30 years from now, after I have lived an amazing Christian life, what is going to be my boast? It must be in the Lord.

I pray dear brothers and sisters that 2019 will be a year where we will be trees planted, even in a drought, but whose roots go really deep, whose leaves are green, whose fruit is in every day of the year. May God help us.

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