February 2nd Sunday School Lesson
“Trees by the Water” – Jeremiah 17:7-8

Jeremiah 17:5-8

“\textbf{This is what the LORD says: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He 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.”}"

In the technology driven world in which we live have you ever stopped to think how dependent we are on devices, and how much trust and confidence we put into them? Let’s look at a typical morning "snapshot." As you sleep you trust that the heating system will keep you warm or the air conditioning will keep you cool, the alarm clock will wake you up and the minute you are awake, the Internet will report the latest weather and news from all around the globe. You check your bank balance online and pay a few bills before ordering flowers for your Aunt Mary who lives 6 states away with guaranteed same day delivery. You check your iPad for email and send an article to your printer in the other room. You trust that the shower tap will deliver a hot shower before you venture into the kitchen where your automatic coffee brewer will deliver a cup of caffeine to get you going and your microwave can deliver a hot breakfast with just the punch of a few buttons. Some of you may have a remote car starter that cranks the engine before you jump into your car and hit the button that opens your garage door. Perhaps you have a GPS system that can guide you to unfamiliar territory as you, the driver of the automobile, trusts the traffic lights to stop the onslaught of traffic in the intersections while riding in a car in which you trust the four tires to carry you safely down a highway at 70 miles an hour.

Just like clockwork, all runs smoothly in your morning and you are whistling a happy tune. That is unless there has been an act of nature, such as a hurricane or an ice storm during the night, that knocks out the power. What would your morning look like then? What issues would you face? There may be a very different picture, and it is unlikely that you would be whistling—at least not a happy tune.

Long before the age of technology, the prophet Jeremiah, in chapter 17, presents two very different snapshots of life. One picture is one who trusts in man (v. 5-6) and who has turned his heart from God. The other is of the one who trusts in God. (v.7-8).

Note how he describes with similes the two lives. In what ways or circumstances today would one be considered to be living the life of a "bush in the wastelands"? Have there been times in your life when you were like such a shrub? What was life like then? Where did you put your trust and confidence during those times? What adjectives would you use to describe these times? Who are the mortals that one trusts in today’s world? Is it possible for a church of today or a people of God to "put trust in man" rather than in God? How so?
In verse 6, what do you think Jeremiah means when he says "they will not see prosperity" when it comes?  

On the other hand, how does Jeremiah describe one who trusts God? (v. 7-8) What other adjectives would you use to describe such a life? Jeremiah implies that life conditions may not be perfect when one trusts the Lord. What words in the passage indicate this? (v.8) What life events might be represented by the prophets description of "heat" or "the year of drought"? (v.8)  


What similarities do you see to the passage in today's study? What wisdom does it offer for your life? 

The visual image of the tree with branches and roots is a good one. What might the roots represent in our lives? The branches? The fruit? The stream? What do you think Jeremiah meant by "sending out roots"? How do we "send out roots" today? Have you ever known someone who is a great example of one who fully trusts in God? Describe this person. What are examples of the "fruit" that their lives produced? How do they respond to intense life events?  

Conversely, I once had an acquaintance who suffered from severe depression and addiction to call crying on the phone and tell me that my life was so good because I had "a husband, a nice house, children, etc." I quickly reminded her that these could all disappear in the blink of an eye and that, while they were indeed blessings, even they were temporal and that my only confident source of joy was from the indwelling spirit of Christ within. I so wanted her to "get it"—to see her real blessings and to find that "stream" that Jeremiah spoke of. Sadly, she never did but moved to another town, died in her sleep with pills in her belly and a drink by her side. Perhaps you know people like this. Which words from Jeremiah might offer hope to such a person?  

Read Jesus' words as recorded in John 15:1-17. What implications do his words have for trusting God rather than man? What practical steps do you need to take in your life to be one who trusts God rather than trusting man?