

February 13, 2022

**“Don't Be a Shrub”  
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

*Scripture Readings*

*Jeremiah 17:5-8*

*Thus says the Lord:*

*Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals  
and make mere flesh their strength,  
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.*

*They shall be like a shrub in the desert,  
and shall not see when relief comes.*

*They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,  
in an uninhabited salt land.*

*Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,  
whose trust is the Lord.*

*They shall be like a tree planted by water,  
sending out its roots by the stream.*

*It shall not fear when heat comes,  
and its leaves shall stay green;  
in the year of drought it is not anxious,  
and it does not cease to bear fruit.*

*Luke 6:17-23*

*He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.*

*Then he looked up at his disciples and said:*

*“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*“Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.*

*“Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.*

*“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you[a] on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.*

## **Sermon “Don't Be a Shrub”**

I would like you all to think I have a great theological and academic mind and in my spare time I just sit around reading the bible in its original Greek and Hebrew, but in reality, I often seek mindless narratives with predictable plots.

So it is with my choice of recorded books, my favorite author being Nora Roberts, I have over 100 of her stories, and at this point, I could probably write them myself. In her latest book, there is a young woman who doesn't know that she has inherited immense and untapped power and is the only one potentially strong enough to defeat her grandfather who is an evil demi-god bent on taking over the world.

She is unaware of her power because in an effort to keep her safe her Mother never let her know she had any, and she often criticized her and put her down in an effort to keep her from standing out from others so she would remain hidden from her nefarious grandfather.

But to keep her from shining, her mother inadvertently crushes her spirit and turns her into a fearful, anxious adult who cowers with her own lack of confidence.

So on my way to and from work, I'm listening to this coming of age story about awakening the power within us, a story of transformation as this young lady becomes self-aware of her own power and brilliance while at the same time I have this Jeremiah scripture bouncing around in my head and my heart as well as the song we are going to sing next on an endless loop in my mind.

In this mix it dawns on me that because she is cut off from her own power this heroine lives like a shrub, she lives in the parched places of the wilderness of her own fear and disconnection, in an uninhabited salt land like Jeremiah references. . . and she is thirsty.

You see I think we are all born with power, we are born tapped into that stream like a young sapling planted by the water. Our roots reach and grow toward the living water because we are rooted in our Creator, into love, and into joy.

We are born connected to that energy that binds us to everything and those roots send Spirit coursing through our veins and it gives us the very sustenance that we need to thrive, to become tall and strong, to bear fruit and not be anxious and fearful in times of drought.

This is what I think God intended for us but something went incredibly wrong or we just haven't evolved into what God wants for us yet, because even though we are born loving, connected, joyful and happy creatures it doesn't take long before the world teaches us it's ways and we start to pick up the worldly habits of hate, judgment, self-doubt, defensiveness, fear, and disconnection.

Jeremiah would say we can become those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, and that our hearts may turn away from the Lord.

For me, and I think for most of us, our spiritual journeys are often about recovering that power that is already within us, it is about letting go of the things this world has put on us, has taught us, and getting back to those original feelings of connectedness, rootedness, strength, wholeness, and power.

When I say power I don't mean the power to slay evil demi-gods, but I do mean the power to heal both ourselves and our world— just by letting the living water flow through us again, letting Spirit reclaim us and relying on God to guide us rather than trusting just mere mortals.

Jesus shows us what true power looks like in the New Testament passage, true, divine power comes down and stands on a level place with us, to look us in the eye and tell us that even if we are poor, hungry, and hurting God is with us and we are blessed.

True power seeks to share that power, to heal those that need healing, which is most of us, and to touch those that are weeping and tell them it will be okay, “I see you and I care, you are blessed.” True power seeks out those that have been excluded, reviled, and put down and tells them “I see you and I care and you are blessed”.

Jesus shared that power with us, Jesus showed us that we are to care about the poor, the hungry, the hurting, and weeping, and excluded ones. That we are to go to them and let them know of a God that can heal their hurt and troubled spirits.

But we can only do this if we make sure we are like that tree standing by the water, that our roots are pulling the living water into ourselves and that we draw the nutrients from the strengthening soil of our community and that we are fed by the light of the spirit of God so much so that we can stand firm against injustice, inequity, intolerance and insult in good times and in bad and learn to love ourselves and each other again. As God wills it so it may it be. AMEN

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AMEN*

— REV. SUSAN DRAKE



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