

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 16, 2025

Old Testament Reading; Jeremiah 17: 5-10

Responsive Reading: Psalm 1

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 15: 12-20

Gospel Reading: Luke 6: 17-26

**Sermon:**

**Where Goes Your Life**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: A self-fulfilling prophecy: “So it is written (on your heart), so it shall be done.”

I recently gave a sermon titled “It is What It is”, but is it what it is or is it what we choose it to be?

I could only wish that everyone hearing (or reading) this message could have been in our bible study group that met this last Tuesday. Our esteemed Reverend Doctor Don pointed out to us that the beatitudes were not addressed to the world as such but rather to the small world of believers in Jesus Christ.

Although he was working from the Matthew version we find the same message in our lesson from Luke.

When Luke says, “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”. He is not talking to the masses that have no food on the table have no roof over their heads, or weep because of their own stupid and/or sinful mistakes, Luke is talking to those who choose to follow Jesus. Luke tips his hat by saying “you” poor instead of “the” poor or “you” who weep instead of “those” who weep. Luke is addressing a particular group by using the word you. Also, after he talks about those who are hated etc., he specifies “For the Son of Man’s sake.” That is to say this group were like their honorable fathers that revered and endorsed the true prophets.

In contrast the verses 24 through 26 are the “woe to you” verses that addressed the worldly rich, full, and admired by spiritual reprobates, whose forefathers admired, even though they were FALSE prophets.

It is kind of like if you eat cod instead of lobster, so you can use the money you saved to feed your neighbors, you will be filled

with the blessings of Jesus Christ Himself. Oh yeah, that is the good stuff!

The problem comes when you question if there is a Jesus Christ to bless you. As Shakespeare said, “Aye, there is the rub!”.

Our Epistle lesson from Corinthians addresses this when Paul disputes those who do not believe in the resurrection of the body. Paul argues that if resurrection of the body is impossible then Christ could not have been raised from the dead. If Christ was not raised from the dead we are “pitiful idiots”. Either Christ was a liar or was mistaken when He said He would be raised. If He was either of these He could not be trusted and our faith in Him is futile. The clincher is that it is a fact that Christ rose from the grave and then ascended to Heaven. No question about it. Hundreds of witnesses were not wrong. If God can raise Christ He can raise us. End of debate.

Now the question is what do we do with it? Do we reject it? Do we believe it? Or, do we half believe it? Now the question that follows that question is, how will our belief affect our lives?

Both our lesson in Jeremiah and our Psalm reading extolls the advantage to being part of the Theocentric family (that is God centered family) and avoiding the toxic effects of being part of the non-believers.

In the old movie, The Ten Commandments, when the Pharaoh played by Yul Brynner issued a decree, an aid would strike the ground with his staff and say, “So it is written, so it shall be done,” I believe we do the same thing. If we write on our hearts that the world is a mess and there just is no hope for us, we will have a miserable life. On the other hand, if we put our unwavering faith in God and Jesus, then we know that everything will be alright then guess what. We got a good life ahead of us (as long as we are patient) and we will be rich, full and joyful in our “Stage One Heaven.”

I must confess that I tend to like Country Music with a sacred bent even more than I like Contemporary Christian. I kind of see it as Contemporary Christian is sort of “singing to the choir” while Country is hitting the believers and the “not yet’s”.

I named my message after a Kenny Chesney song, “There Goes My Life”. In this song a high school football player with chances for fame and fortune finds out his girl friend is pregnant and thinks his life is over and he might as well “Kiss it all goodbye”. Then as the song goes “a couple years of up all night and a few thousand diapers later that mistake he thought he made covers up the refrigerator. Oh yeah, he loves that little girl.” Now he sings as she goes up the stairs to bed, “There goes my life, there goes my future there goes my everything.” Later when she

heads off for college, he again sings that she is his life and indicates that she is his legacy.

Another song that speaks to this message is Gary Allan's song, "Every Storm Runs Out of Rain." Abbreviated this song says, "I saw you standing in the middle of the thunder and lightning. I know you're feeling like you just can't win, but you're trying. It's hard to keep on keepin' on, when you're being pushed around. Don't even know which way is up, you just keep spinning down, 'round, down.

Every storm runs, runs out of rain. Just like every dark night turns into day. Every heartache will fade away. Just like every storm runs, runs out of rain....

Just put your feet up to the edge, put your face in the wind. And when you fall back down, keep remembering....Just like every storm runs, runs out of rain. It's gonna run out of pain. It's gonna run out of sting. It's gonna leave you alone. It's gonna set you free. Set you free. Set you free."

So where goes your life? Are you going to go down and round and spinning on down, or do you believe that every storm runs out of rain? Are you going to believe as said in John 1:3 that All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being? What has come into being in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Will you believe that every storm runs out of rain and every dark night turns into day? Will you believe the FACT that Jesus rose from the dead so you can too? Will you believe that God's got this and that every day is a good day but some days are gooder? If so, let us spread our roots by the river and not fear when heat/misfortune comes our way. Hallelujah and Amen!