

Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, February 16, 2025

“Rest Assured”

The Message

Today's sermon was hard to come by. The scriptures we heard today should have been easy to think of something to preach about.

And yet, as any pastor will tell you, sometimes it is difficult to determine where to go on any given Sunday morning.

As I pondered the scriptures and tried to figure out what God might want said, I remembered a poem by Marianne Williamson that I want to share.

I am actually going to read it twice, pausing in between to allow her words to sink in.

It goes like this:

Our deepest fear
is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear
is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light,
not our darkness,
that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves,
who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you *not* to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small
doesn't serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people
won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest
the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us;
it's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.

Silence

I'll read it one more time:

Our deepest fear
is not that we are inadequate.
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Jeremiah says that “blessed is one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They 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.”

Blessed are we who trust in God.

Like the tree planted by the water, we do not fear our own light.



We are children of God, and as such, diminishing ourselves – shrinking our own being such that we take up as little space in the world as possible – hides the glory of God that is within each of us.

The tree that Jeremiah describes isn't afraid to take up its space along the stream.

The tree knows that spreading its roots allows it to be nourished, to grow leaves, and to fulfill its purpose as part of God's creation.



And, like that tree, we must allow ourselves to rest in the nourishment of God's grace and love.

Jesus says "blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are you who hunger, blessed are you who weep, blessed are you when people hate you."

In other words, blessed are those of us who are frightened by our own light within.

Blessed are those of us who do not let our own light shine for fear that others will put our light out.

The tree planted by the stream is not anxious about what it is or where its water will come from.

There is a sense of peace and contentment, of trust and delight.

The tree trusts fully in that stream – in God's grace that allows it to bloom each season.

And so it should be for us.

But, both Jeremiah and Jesus caution us today, as well.

The tree does not fear or worry, but the tree also does not believe that it became the mighty tree it is of its own accord.

The tree would not be sturdy, lush, and green without the stream.

Jeremiah warns us of this. He tells us that "cursed is the one who trusts in man... and whose heart turns away from the Lord. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands."

And Jesus also gives a warning: "woe to you who are rich, woe to you who are well fed, woe to you who laugh, woe to you when everyone speaks well of you."

In other words, be careful not to become so arrogant that you might believe that you have come into riches, or fulfillment, or contentment of your own accord.

We should not cover our own light – the parts of us where God shines through.

But neither should we assume that light within us is ours and ours alone.

Likewise, the tree should not assume that it is lush and content on its own. Without the stream, the tree would be no more than a bush in the wastelands.

We are children of God. Diminishing the light of God within us does not serve the world.

We are nourished by God, like the tree is nourished by the stream.

For example, not too long ago – perhaps a couple weeks – I had been going through a streak of not sleeping well.

I lifted that to God one night and just asked that God might help me to sleep well so I could be the best version of myself when I woke up.

I woke the next morning having slept better than I'd slept in a long while.

I sprung from bed, excited to start my day.

I ate breakfast and showered, going through everything I hoped to accomplish that day.

I made tea and sat down to read and journal a bit, and as I did, I suddenly remembered my prayer from the night before.

While I was subconsciously grateful for the great sleep, I also woke assuming I had slept well because of something I had done.

I relaxed before bed, I journaled, I prayed, I stretched, I drank a cup of herbal tea – I allowed myself the proper wind down.

It was all *me*! I slept well on my own!

And then I remembered my prayer and realized that I could in no way assume that everything I'd done had been the reason for my good sleep.

Those were the same things I did every night before bed.

The difference was that I had taken “nourishment” from God. I had planted myself by God's stream, and asked God to nourish me.

And then I woke up and didn't thank God. I didn't even acknowledge the stream of nourishment that I'd so desperately planted myself next to the night before.

Woe to you who are rich. Cursed is the one who trusts in man.

I realized just how easy it is to assume I'm on my own, and that God is nowhere to be found, when all along, I have planted myself such that I can readily drink from that stream of nourishment that God provides.

Blessed are those of us who are poor in spirit – who hunger for the presence of God and don't necessarily notice when God is flowing right beneath us.

And blessed are those of us who are afraid to spread our roots, worried that by doing so, we might inconvenience others.

May you receive nourishment from God's stream, allowing your roots to stretch along the stream's bank and nourishing your spirit so that you are able to truly bloom.

May you make manifest the glory of God within you.

And, may you let your light shine, giving others permission to do the same.

Let us conclude with Marianne Williamson's poem one more time before we pray:

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Amen.

Let us pray:

Nourishing God, thank you for allowing us to plant ourselves next to your stream of living water. Help us overcome our fear and let our light shine, giving to others even a small portion of the nourishment you give to us. Remind us that we are your children, and as such, we were born to let our light shine in the world to serve others. Thank you for your regular reminders of your love for us. In your holy name we pray. Amen.