

Thursday 4 March 2021

Today is Thursday the 4 March, in the second week of Lent.

Bifrost Arts sing, 'O God, Will You Restore Us?'

Today's reading is from the Prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 17:5-10

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.

The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?
I the Lord test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

These words of Jeremiah seem to be about where you place your trust. Those who put their trust in “flesh” – in human beings – are setting themselves up for disappointment, and for finding themselves in the wilderness, like someone roaming an empty desert. Is that image – of roaming in an empty desert – a vivid one for you? Have you experienced a time when you felt like that? Do you feel like that now, perhaps during the pandemic?

But those who place their trust in the Lord, Jeremiah says, will be like a well-watered plant – lush and green and fruitful. Can you think of a time when you felt something like that? – well-watered, strong and bearing fruit?

Listen again to the passage now. Although the language is perhaps a bit severe and the contrasts rather stark, is there anything in there that speaks to you, that connects with your own experience?

Jeremiah says the heart is “devious” and “perverse” – perhaps a harsh way of saying I can be deceived and led astray by my own desires, but that the answer is to subject them to the searching gaze of God, who knows me better than I know myself. Speak to that God now, who is present here as you pray. What do you have to say to God about your own desires, about your experience of dryness and fruitfulness, about where you want to place your trust?

You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace,



that is enough for me.