

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Sunday, January 22, 2023
Scripture: Colossians 2:6-12

Sermon: Deep Roots

There was a man who took his new power chainsaw back to the store saying it didn't work. He had been sawing his oak tree for hours and it was doing a lousy job. The clerk took it outside, pulled the cord and fired up the saw. The customer gasped, "What's that noise?" Many times we try to live as Christians on our own power and in our own strength? ***Much of the time we live powerless lives because we don't focus on whose we are IN Christ and who we are because of Christ IN us.***

So how do we go about utilizing the power of God IN us and not be distracted by the ways of the world? The Apostle Paul has excellent advice for us in his letter to the Colossians.

Verses 6-7 say, *"And now, just as you accept Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. **Let your roots grow down into him.** Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness."*

Are you rooted in Christ? What does that mean? What are we doing to be rooted in Christ? A "**Root**" is the part of a plant or tree which attaches to the ground or to a support, typically underground, giving water and nourishment to the rest of the tree or plant. So we can say to be rooted in Christ is to be attached to Jesus Christ, drawing our nourishment from him as our source and our origin. We are created in his likeness and in his image, and we are to carry his Holy Spirit within us. So, to be rooted in him, we are to first acknowledge and recognize Jesus as our life-giving source.

As Christians we are in Christ and Christ is in us. This means that God is always with us, and that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. (Philippians 4:13)

Let's just take a look at the functions of roots to see why Paul used this metaphor. The strongest root is called a **tap root**, which is

the center root, the deepest root and the most important root. Secondary roots are called ***fibrous roots***. They greatly increase the root volume and give the tree a wide root structure. Both the tap root and the fibrous roots give the tree stability, enabling it to stand upright. When droughts come, trees and plants have a certain amount of reserve water and nutrients that are stored in the roots. This sustains the tree and plant for a while.

If Christians are to grow, we need more roots to support and to sustain us in our Christian growth. We need to go deeper in understanding, which takes more roots. We want to show more love, so we need deeper roots in God's love to understand the depth of it. When spiritual droughts come, our roots in Christ sustain us for some time. Our Christian roots are not seen, but the results of our roots are clearly visible to those around us.

When we are not rooted in Christ we will not last long in this world. We will be scorched and will wither because we have no nourishment. We will not find nourishment in the solutions to our problems offered by the world. Christ is our solution to being fed and standing strong in the heat of the world. When you are rooted in Christ, you can withstand the difficult times of life.

Paul prayed for the Colossians and Ephesians to allow the love of Christ to become their root system, and now we can also relate to his teaching. Paul uses the picture from nature to describe our relationship with Christ. Just as the roots of a tree are to sink down deep into the earth in search of nutrients and stability, so the love of Christ nourishes and stabilizes the believer.

Every person is in search of love, and when you are rooted in the love of God you have an endless supply of nourishment and love.

The Apostle Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians 3:17-19: *“that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may you have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge...”*

Paul prays for the Spirit to build us up and to grow us on the inside at the very core of our motivations and desires and our inner soul to be healthy at its roots. When we are rooted in the love of Christ

we can walk through a drought of earthly love and earthly storms, but still be unmoved, stable, fruitful and alive because of the deep love below the surface, the love of Christ.

Everyone endures the tears and trials of life. Believers don't escape the trials and difficulties of life. In fact, new pains are added to them in the form of spiritual attacks, persecutions, and the work of being a disciple of Jesus. In the face of such trials, a believer needs stability. We need God to make us firm in every windstorm of life. The love of Christ is good soil for the soul. The believer, deeply rooted in Christ's love, which is the soil, is made strong to endure every trial and drought and storm of life.

For Paul the love of Christ has **breadth** enough to include the whole world. The love of Christ has **length** for it is as long as eternity. The love of Christ has **height**, that we will be seated with Christ in heaven, and the love of Christ has **depth** for there is no sin too deep for him to rescue someone from. Christ's love for us surpasses our understanding. Paul envisions a people who begin to understand the love Jesus has for us and only then will growth and change begin.

There is another thing to consider about roots. Have you ever seen the Sequoia Redwood trees located in California. They are some of the biggest trees in the world. The **General Sherman** is, in fact, noted as the largest known living single stem tree on Earth! It is 275 feet tall, 25 feet in diameter, and is approximately 2,500 years old.

Something that huge must have an incredible root system that goes down deep in order to stand that tall. Not the case at all. The Sequoia Redwood trees have a unique system. There is no tap root to anchor them deep into the earth. The roots actually only go down 6-12 feet, and yet, these trees rarely fall over. They withstand strong winds, earthquakes, fires, storms and flooding.

The interesting thing about the Redwood tree is that their root system is intertwined with the other Redwood trees, literally holding each other up. The trees grow very close together and are dependent on each other. Only redwoods have the strength and ability to support other Redwoods. Did you catch that about this tree's root system? The Redwoods stay standing because their roots intertwine with the roots of the other Redwood trees. They are literally holding each other up.

The trees grow in close proximity to each other so they can share nutrients and physically support each other. Beneath the surface their roots look like one massive system. It's as if they are saying, "we are in this together, we are one. If you want to knock one of us down, you'll have to knock us all down." Their roots, interwoven, provide strength and support to each other and their strength is in their connection with each other.

We can learn from the Redwood trees that being connected to each other, as the Body of Christ, matters, because when we stand together, we help each other stand strong during the storms of life and we help each other grow and mature in our faith. It is important to be part of a Community of Faith for when you are in a community of faith, securely planted, your roots will begin to grow, and you will stand strong and tall together.

Even the Oak Tree's root system is interesting. Their roots grow up to 18-20 inches under the soil, but they may spread to occupy a space 4-7 times the width of the tree's crown or in other words 90 feet from the trunk of a large tree. Those spreading roots help the tree to stand strong in the midst of the storm.

So we can learn from our teachings of the Apostle Paul about how we are to mature in our faith. Growing deep with our roots, interweaving our roots with others and spreading out our roots to be healthy and strong for growth. As believers in Christ we need to have an understanding that it is only in Christ that we will find security, stability, strength, community, and love as we grow in our faith.

Colossians 2:6-7 says, "*...so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*"

We are to remember that our spiritual grounding and nourishment is found in Christ alone. It is Christ alone that will nourish our soul.

Remember, if we do not remain rooted in Christ, then we will not remain standing or stay secure or grow strong.

How do we remain rooted in Christ? In John 15 Jesus said that if we abide in his word, then we abide in him. Abiding in him means both reading his word, obeying him, worshiping him and being in a

community of faith. Maturity in Christ happens when you remain in him and grow in him.

Christians have to be rooted to grow. May all of us be rooted in God's love and rooted in Christ so that we can grow tall and strong knowing God's faithfulness.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 says, "*Blessed is the 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 the heat comes: its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.*"

The ultimate goal of a deep-rooted faith is to bear fruit for the Kingdom and bring glory to God with our lives. When you live out your faith, you'll draw others to God. People will notice something different in how you live your life and want to know more.

Therefore, if we want our lives to be powerful, let us be like a strong tree, deeply rooted in Christ, built up in Him, abounding in thanksgiving, overflowing with his joy, grounded in our faith and bearing fruit for God's Kingdom.