

“Rooted in Christ”

2008 09 28 Sermon

Readings

Jer 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. (6) 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. (7) Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. (8) 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.

Col 2:1-9 *For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face. (2) I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, (3) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (4) I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments. (5) For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ. (6) As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, (7) rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (8) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. (9) For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,*

Mat 13:1-9 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. (2) Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. (3) " And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. (4) And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. (5) Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. (6) But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. (7) Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. (8) Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (9) Let anyone with ears listen!"

Mat 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; (21) yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.

“Rooted in Christ”

Alasdair Coles 28th September 2008

1 Introduction

- We have been looking at Tree of Life: now we focus on its roots
- We will consider: What does “rooted in Christ mean”? How can we tell if we are rooted enough? If not, what can we do about it?

First we should note that becoming *rooted in Christ* is

- **For disciples**, those who have already received Christ, not for seekers
- **A resource for hard times**: time of drought in Jeremiah, to protect against the scorching sun in Matthew (=trouble or persecution according to Matthew 13:20-1)
.....To protect against false teachers in Colossians

2 The biology of roots

Picture your favourite tree... 3 points...

1. Roots are hidden and unattended Suspect you did not see the roots

Now take glass elevator underground to see the roots... they take on difference forms depending upon the challenges of varied environments....

2. Roots absorb water & nutrients: in arid environments, they descend deeply... record 60 m (Arizona), often deeper than height of tree

3 Roots anchor the plant:

“stilt roots” of the mangrove, anchor roots of the strangler fig.

- power: crack foundations

3 Translating the metaphor of “roots” to spiritual life

3.1 *So where is Christ (to be rooted into)?*

- Bible
- Prayer
- Community

In church, but also much wider: Christ is amongst prostitutes, refugees, dog races, boardrooms, pharmaceuticals, in films, books,

3.2 *What are our spiritual roots (to extend into Christ)?*

Patterns of behaviour, routine, prejudice, tradition, inheritance that lead us into ways of reading the Bible, style of praying and take us into this or that community....

4 How to audit rootfulness?

How can you tell if you are well rooted in Christ?

Take time, go on retreat, talk to a friend or pastor and ask yourself...

- Do you feel spiritually thirsty? Or hungry? Or satiated.... Or anorexic, deluded that you are full when you are wasting away?
- In the year of drought / hard times – Jeremiah – are you free from anxiety, full of energy and continuing to be productive.... close to living water, and continue to bear fruit? *or*
- When trouble or persecution comes – Matthew – do we wither and fall away or do we hold fast?

Can we honestly say with the hymnwriter: we have an unwavering mind, no more tossed with every wind... firmly grounded on thee?

Most will need some sort of rehabilitation.....

5 Rehabilitation of our roots

5.1 *First: pay attention.. remember our roots are hidden and unattended*

take time to consider how we pray, read the bible...

May need help: soul friend, spiritual director, member of clergy

Join a group in / out of church: Alpha, film group, Franciscan Third Order

5.2 *Second: be dynamic*

Take up your microscope! Go close up to roots of your favourite tree...

The part of the root that does the work of absorbing water and nutrients are the **root hairs**: these are fragile, vulnerable and short-lived; dying after a few days and being replaced.

I propose that your spiritual life need to be as dynamic...

Try new service (lucky at St Andrew's... informal service this evening)... try new version of the Bible... consider a theology course.... Enter a new community

“Sing a new song”

5.3 *A personal note*

I was imprisoned by idea that had to have quiet time every morning with particular bible notes. I got bored.. I was liberated and came alive again when I was advised to try reading bible for one hour a week: Months later I was bored again ... so my spirital director recommended photocopying the Gospels and highlighting where jesus expressed emotion... now I am trying the New Zealand Daily Offices on podcast...

6 A prayer

From the hymn:

Rooted, grounded may we be,

Fixed in thy stability.

Henceforth may we firmly stand,

Build no longer on the sand;

But defy temptation's shock,

Firmly founded on the rock.