

All Things New

Week 5: Deeply Rooted and Built Up

Colossians 2:6-10

We've got these trees in a wooded area behind our house. They're really tall and thin and when we first moved in, I noticed a couple of them were leaning. I went over to one and literally pulled it out of the ground. Pushed another one over. They're about *that big* around and maybe 20 feet tall, but when I look at the roots of this tree, it's just a little ball. There's nothing to them, which is why just a little bit of pressure will push them over.

In that same wooded area, we have this beautiful sycamore tree. It towers above everything else in our yard. And you can see some scars on the tree and tell that it's been through some stuff. There's a bracket that someone probably screwed into it years ago that's still there, out of reach, and the tree has started growing around it. If you look up, you can tell where a branch or two has broken off. But whatever it's been through, it's still growing strong. It's been able to weather the storms.

And you know why. It's because it's got deep roots that gives it the nourishment it needs to grow strong. The deep roots anchor it into the ground so that when a storm blows through, it holds on. We've sat in our living room at times watching this giant tree sway in the wind, but it still stands tall.

I've thought about those two trees a lot while studying our passage for this week. And I've spent some time reflecting on my own life. There have definitely been seasons when my faith has been like that first tree. It looks like it's growing, but there's not a lot of depth to it, so it doesn't take much to push it over.

What I desire is to be more like that sycamore tree. I want my faith to be deeply rooted in the Lord. I want him to nourish and strengthen me so I can stand tall in the face of anything that comes at me. And I might get some scars along the way, but with those deep roots, my faith will still be able to grow strong and bear fruit.

What about you? Which tree represents your life and faith right now? Would you say it's strong and deeply rooted in the Lord? Able to withstand pressures pushed against it? Or does your faith feel a little weak right now? Like it wouldn't take much for it to topple over? Maybe it's still a seed lying dormant in the ground? It's there, but it's not really doing anything.

We're all at various stages of this growth, and that's okay, but how do we become like that tree that's deeply rooted and growing strong? That tree that has some scars and has been through some stuff, but is still standing? I imagine most of us want that kind of strength and endurance to be a defining quality in our life, but how do we find it?

Well, the good news for those of us who desire that kind of life and faith is that the Lord desires it for us, too. It's ultimately what He wants to grow in us and He's given us everything we need

to develop a faith like that. And the Apostle Paul gives us some insight for this in our text today. Let's look at it together. Colossians 2, starting in verse 6...(READ Col. 2:6-7)

Paul has just spent the first 34 verses of this letter reminding the Colossians of who they are in Christ and how they have all they need in Him. He's reminded them...and us...that, in Christ, we are holy, faithful, loving, growing, powerful, adopted, rescued, reconciled, and blameless. This is our new identity in Christ.

And now, after 34 verses detailing what Jesus has done in us, Paul gives his first command in verse 6. He says, "Just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him." What does that mean? There are two phrases in verse 6 that I want to spend just a little bit of time on to help us understand what Paul is saying. The first one is "Christ Jesus as Lord."

Now, whether you've been in church for a while, or this is your first time, you've probably heard or seen this phrase somewhere. But, what does it mean that Jesus is Lord? It's a pretty loaded concept, but in general, the word "lord" refers to someone who has sovereign authority. Supreme and ultimate power. And, it's not necessarily a Christian word. If you've watched a period piece set in England, you've probably heard the owner of an estate called the "Lord of the Manor." It's the person with authority. It all belongs to him.

And so, when the Bible refers to Jesus as Lord, it's saying that he has sovereign authority over all things. He is in control and has been given supreme and ultimate power over heaven and earth. That's true, regardless of what we do with it. It's why Paul says in Philippians 2 that, one day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus *is* Lord.

But, when we receive Jesus as *our* Lord, it means that we are giving him sovereign authority in our life, too. We're inviting him to rule and reign over us. And, what I've found to be true for most of us is that the *concept* of Jesus as Lord in our life is easy to understand. That's not the challenge. The challenge is actually living it out!

In the baptism, when we confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we're giving him those job titles in our life. We're handing over the responsibilities to him. And, giving him the job of Savior is easy for most of us. We know our sin and what we need saved from. We know that we can't do it on our own and we need him. But Lord? Leader? Ultimate authority in my life? Most of us want to retain that position for ourselves, right?! We want a Savior, but we're like, "Ah, Jesus, the job of lord is already taken. Thanks for applying, though."

Which is why that next phrase is so important. Paul says, "Continue to live your lives in him." In Christ. Continue to live and walk with Christ as your Lord. Submitting and surrendering to Him. This is an ongoing process that the Holy Spirit is doing in us. It's slowly, and sometimes painfully, pulling ourselves off the throne of our lives so that Jesus can take his rightful place.

That's what it means to receive Christ as Lord and to live our lives in him. We are daily dying to ourselves so that Christ may live in us. So that our actions and attitude can catch up to our new

identity and standing with God that Paul spent the first 34 verses reminding us about. In other words, **Living “in Christ” is the process of becoming who you already are through Christ.** As you remove yourself from the throne of your life and allow Jesus to have more influence and authority in you, your life starts catching up with your new identity and position with God. That’s what it means to receive Jesus as Lord and to live your life in him.

And this is foundational to discovering a life and faith that is deeply rooted, growing strong, and overflowing with thankfulness. Daily submitting and surrendering to Jesus, daily taking up our cross to follow him, this is what deepens the roots of our faith and makes us strong.

And in verse 8, Paul continues to warn us about those who come along and try to get us to believe that we need more than Jesus to find this kind of life. He says **...(READ Col. 2:8)**

I find a couple of things interesting about this verse. First, the phrase “no one” is singular, meaning Paul’s got a specific person in mind. He’s calling someone out without naming names and telling the church, don’t be deceived by this guy! And by saying “don’t let him take you captive,” Paul is comparing this to a war. He sees this as a spiritual battle and he’s like, “This guy wants to pull you up and drag you away into spiritual captivity!”

I think it shines a different light on the importance of being deeply rooted in Christ. When we are, we won’t be deceived by people proclaiming a different Jesus than the Gospels teach. We won’t be fooled by philosophies that sound good, but pull people away from the truth of God’s Word. We won’t be led astray by people with a messiah complex luring us to put our faith in them. With deep roots and a strong faith, we’ll be able to spot their hollow deception and stand strong against it.

There’s this trail near where we live that I started running last year. It’s inside of Fairfax State Park across from the beach. The first few times I went out on it, it wasn’t marked and I got so lost. We even got lost on it with our family and the Schunk’s when we were out geocaching one night. That was fun. It was pitch black and we were still wandering in those woods trying to find our way back to the car.

But, about 50 yards into the Big Oak trail, you come across the Big Oak that the trail is named after...and it’s BIG! I think someone said it’s the second largest oak tree in Monroe Co? It might even predate Indiana becoming a state. It’s quite an impressive tree. Worth going out to see.

But, if you continue on up Big Oak trail and take a right on Homestead, and then follow Quarry down to the lake, you’ll come upon another tree that’s pretty massive in its own right.

I think it’s a maple tree that stands really tall about 20 yards off the trail. You can’t miss it. Heading down, the tree looks strong and vibrant. Full of life. But running back up after getting to the lake, and seeing it from the other side, you’ll notice that the tree is actually hollow. It’s rotting out at the base and it probably won’t be long until it comes toppling down.

In a way, I think this is the contrast Paul is making. A life in Christ grows deep roots and strong branches. It's solid. But, there are philosophies and ideologies in this world that look good and seem strong, but they're hollow and deceptive. They give the appearance of strength and substance, but they're rotting on the inside.

Paul is warning them, and us, not to get fooled by these philosophies that feed into our fear. That have grown out of our sinful nature and are more humanistic than Theistic. Are more dependent on ourselves than the Lord. These philosophies and worldviews might sound good, but they're hollow and deceptive and lead to a life of shallow roots and weak branches.

And then Paul closes this section by reminding us again about the strength and substance of Jesus. That he is sufficient for all we need and supreme over all things....(READ vs. 9-10)

This is just a continuation of Paul's argument up until now. We have everything we need in Christ. All that we are looking for and desire can be found in him. In other words, there are no more revelations of God or from God **greater** than what we see in Jesus. Everything and everyone else will bow to him.

So, what does that mean for us? Well, if Jesus is the head and authority over all things, then we can trust our lives, our families, our communities and nation and world, we can trust him with it. It's all under his control. If the fullness of God is in Christ, and Christ is IN us, then we can walk with the quiet confidence that we are not in control...and we don't have to be. We don't have to fight and claw for power. We don't have to look to anything or anyone else to be our lord or savior because we have all we need in Jesus.

And, our influence in this world, it'll be felt in the way we are growing and maturing in Christ. When people see our faith lived out in the way we love one another and those around us, even those we disagree with...when they see the deep roots of our faith give us strength to not only withstand the storms of life, but to overflow with gratitude and joy in the midst of them...when people see how we only bow to one Lord and rise above the little-L lords everyone else is following and clamoring for...they'll be drawn to what we have in Christ, because it's something so different from the world we live in and it's something that, deep down, they desire in their life, too.

And it's a life that can only be found when we are deeply rooted and growing strong in the Lord. Living in Him and becoming who he's already made us to be.

We've talked about a few different trees this morning, and I'm wondering which one best describes you today? Are you deeply rooted in Christ with strong branches of faith growing in your life, bearing fruit of joy and gratitude for you and others to enjoy? Are you able to weather the storms in life and stand tall?

Or, would you say your roots are pretty shallow? You get worked up over simple things. Easily angered. Feel like you're running from one thing to the next, one relationship to the next, one

job or hobby to the next trying to find more in your life? Are you constantly anxious about things out of your control?

Or maybe your life feels pretty empty right now. A little hollow. You've bought into some of the lies and deceptions of this world that sound good, but they've only led to pain in your life. And you feel like it could all come crashing down at any time.

The difference comes down to Jesus. Who is he in your life? Do you hold him at a distance where he's safe? Is he just another add-on to everything else you have going on? Or, is He your Lord? Does He have sovereign authority in your life and are you living in Him?

The truth is, only one of those ways leads to a life and a faith that is deeply rooted and built up. And, if you're ready to start walking on it, Jesus has already made a way for you. His life, death, and resurrection has paved the way for you to be adopted into his family. Forgiven, rescued, and redeemed. Blameless before God. This can be your new identity in Christ.

Prayer/Response