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Rooted in Christ
Colossians 2:6-15
June 11, 2017, Jeff Germs

This is the sixth sermon in our study on Paul's letter to the Colossians. Have you noticed how much Jesus there is in this letter? It is about Jesus through and through. Two Sundays ago we looked at how Paul described Jesus as being supreme over everything. He said that all things were created by him and for him. We saw that Christ reconciled us to himself through his death and because of that he has made us right with God, blameless, not because of anything we have done to merit God's favour, but simply because he so loved the world. We saw that Jesus is the head of the church which is his body on earth, and as such he gives us his marching orders.

Last week we took a look at what Paul's motivation was. Why was he so passionate about the church, so much so that he would be willing to suffer the way he did? We looked at 2 Corinthians 11 at how Paul had suffered for the cause of Christ; whipped several times with thirty nine lashes, beaten, imprisoned several times, shipwrecked three times, stoned and left for dead, opposed from inside the church and outside. We saw that his motivation was to bring the church to maturity in Christ. That drove everything he did.

Paul's goal was that the church would be glued together by the love of Jesus. That is the same thing Jesus prayed for us in John 17, that we would be so united in love that the world would believe in Jesus because of our love for each other.

Before we read our passage today let's read the last couple verses from last week, from Colossians 2:4-5.

[2]

Colossians 2:4-5 (NLT)

⁴ I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. ⁵ For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.

That's how Paul ended the last section. Paul had a righteous jealousy for the church. He wanted to make sure that they were not chasing after things that were not of God and being deceived by nice sounding philosophies. He wanted to make sure their teaching was rooted in the truth of God's Word and depending on the power of Christ who indwelt them, and that their faith in Christ would be strong and growing.

Let's read through our text and then we'll circle back and walk through it.

[3]

Colossians 2:6-15 (NLT)

⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷ Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

[4]

⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

[5]

¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

[6]

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

There is way too much stuff to cover here in one sermon, but we will try to capture the big idea. He gives this away in verse 6.

[7]

⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.

Everything else he says in this passage flows from this directive.

just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.

We've talked about this many times. Jesus has called us to follow him. That is what a disciple is, a follower. We had seven kids baptized on Sunday. Most of them were kids who have been in the children's ministry with Leora and in Power House with Leora and Callista and Zach. They have been purposefully disciplined in those ministries about what it means to follow Jesus. And some of them are in the youth group now with Pastor Steve. I asked Beckett why he wanted to get baptized and he said, "Because I want people to know I am following Jesus." What a great answer.

just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.

It is so easy to get sidetracked from what we have been called to.

[8]

Jesus did not just save you from something. He saved you for something now.

I have life insurance so Ruthie will be taken care of in the event that I die. We have been paying the premium faithfully for many years. It's term insurance, which means that if I don't die before I'm seventy Ruthie gets nothing. If I die before then she is a rich woman. She assures me that she would rather have me alive. I hate paying it. Somehow it feels like we are throwing money away. We get no benefit from having it right now. Sometimes I think of what we could do with that extra money if we weren't paying that premium every month. Yet if I do die unexpectedly we will be very glad we had it, so there's some peace of mind because we have it, but that's it.

Too many of us view what Jesus did for us as a sort of eternal life insurance that only comes into effect when we die. It has no relevance to our lives right now, but we will sure be glad we had it when we die.

[9]

Jesus did not just save you from something. He saved you for something now.

⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.

When you received Jesus you were called to something. What does it mean to follow Jesus?

Let's go on.

[10]

⁷Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

There is some imagery here that is very typical of how Jesus teaches what our faith should look like. Paul takes that same imagery of something that is full of life and grows from the life we receive from the powerful life of Jesus in us. It is not dead religion. **"Let your roots grow down into him..."** The imagery is alive. It's powerful. It's growing.

Ruthie has been writing a blog for the church website based on the Colossians series. She wrote one for the passage from a couple weeks ago that expresses God's desire for us very well.

[11]

"What Paul desired for them, and for us, is nothing short of a peek into God's heart, an understanding of his ways, his love, and its results. If we think of God's will as a tightrope, we'll walk in fear, thinking life is a constant test for survival. We'll be afraid of decisions, thinking that if we "get it wrong" we'll lose our footing on God's perfect will, and plunge to defeat, crippled for life and never able to return to those heights.

[12]

Jesus gave us 'a peek into God's heart' in John 15 where he describes his Father as a gardener and us as branches. His will, his heart for us, is to live attached to Jesus. That's what he wants! He wants us to live in his love, love others, and have his joy. We know this, because Jesus went on to say, "A master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me" (John 15:15). He gave us that peek into God's heart.

[13]

So maybe God's will is more like a garden, where we can get to 'know God better and better,' and our lives produce all kinds of good fruit (Colossians 1:10). As we spend time with him there, we find out more and more what he's like, what pleases him, and we become more like him.

[14]

A garden becomes beautiful and productive over time. Projects develop. Mistakes are redeemed. Ugly spots are made beautiful. People are nourished. Pruning happens, and this is painful, but it's done by a Gardener who loves us and wants us to flourish and be fruitful.

[15]

So, what ARE God's ways? And what are the results? Well, God has a burning desire to express his love, in a way that is effective. That's why he sent Jesus. He desires to connect with us. That's why Jesus said "I am the vine, you are the branches, remain in me (John 15:1-8).

[16]

He desires us to love each other in ways that bring life (John 15:1-17). He desires to make us into a beautiful, growing masterpiece showcasing and expressing his love and his purposes (Ephesians 2:10). And he desires that we would KNOW these things about him. That's why he communicated them to us (John 15:15). He WANTS us to understand his heart.

[17]

God desires for us a growing experience and understanding of him, his great news for us, what that looks like, and how it works out in real life. He wants to give us an understanding of his purposes, and the outworking of his amazing ways. He wants us to know him this way so we will see the world the way he does.

[18]

'Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better' (Colossians 1:10). He wants us to fully enter into life."¹

That's great imagery isn't it? Our life as a garden. Our Father in heaven wants to develop us into something alive and productive for his glory. There is hope there.

[19]

There is a false continuum on which most of us try to live out our faith. **[19a]** It's between living religiously by rules, or a system of belief, and sin management on one side, **[19b]** and on the other side living as if Jesus has no relevance to our daily life until the time we die. Then our eternal life insurance kicks in. On the one side we walk a tightrope, always expecting God is mad at us, and wondering when we have done enough. On the other side we don't care. We have very little thought of God, except maybe Sunday morning when we feel obligated to listen to a raging lunatic talk about an irrelevant god.

If we aren't living at either end of the spectrum we think, **[19c]** maybe it's somewhere at the middle point between the two extremes. It's not. It's something completely different. Jesus has called us to life with him. He has called us to grow with him. He's called to let him craft us into his masterpieces so he can live his life through us, so others would see Jesus.

[20]

⁷Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Living at either end of the spectrum or anywhere on it will leave us feeling less than fruitful. Jesus has called us to something else completely. When we do finally figure it out and surrender to Jesus and begin allowing him to teach us, our faith will grow strong and we will overflow with thankfulness. Our joy comes from living the life we were created to live. Until such time we will wonder what's wrong with our lives. We will be frustrated and fruitless.

It's so easy to get sidetracked from the call of Jesus to other things that seem more appealing at the time.

¹ <http://www.crbaptist.bc.ca/blog/a-peak-into-gods-heart>

Many years ago, before I was married, I raised Labrador Retrievers. Lady was the matriarch. I got her when I was seventeen. She was six weeks old. We were inseparable. I trained her to be a hunting dog. She was amazing. I taught her not to get distracted by rabbits and other fun things to chase when we were out for a walk or when we were hunting ducks or geese.

Now, that's a hard thing to teach a Labrador Retriever because they are bred to chase things. I could tell when we were out for a walk and she was heeling beside me and a rabbit ran in front of us, everything in her wanted to chase it. She would literally shake. She would look up at me longingly with her tongue hanging out asking if she could please leave me and chase the rabbit. I didn't even have to say anything. She could read my facial expressions and a shake or a nod of my head.

Once in a while if we were in a place where there was lots of room to run and it was safe I would give her a nod of approval and off she would go chasing the rabbit. She would never be able to catch it, but it was a good fun distraction for her.

In our walk with Jesus, we can get distracted from him as well. We can get distracted by all kinds of things.

[21]

⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

Remember what we said about the Gnostics a few Sundays ago? They were some, probably, well meaning false teachers who were teaching the believers in Colosse that there was a secret, or mystery knowledge that they needed to receive. Their philosophies were mixed in with Judaism and pagan temple worship. The root of these philosophies were demonic in nature.

There are all kinds of philosophies out there today that sound very nice, but they are rooted in the demonic, and they are dangerous. New Age philosophies, Eastern Mysticism, anything that takes our eyes off Jesus is the plan of Satan. He is the great deceiver. He is disguised as an angel of light. He will use all kinds of nice sounding philosophies to get our eyes off Jesus.

The key to spotting a fake is to get to know Jesus so well that when we hear something that sounds a bit off we will know it.

I'm not sure this is true anymore since we don't use paper money, but I've heard that back in the day, bank tellers who worked with money all day long could tell when they came across a counterfeit not because they studied the counterfeit bill, but because they knew what the real thing felt like and looked like because they spent most of their days handling real bills.

It's the same way with our relationship with Jesus. We get to know Jesus by spending time with him in his Word, in prayer, and with other Jesus-followers. Become rooted in him. Let him capture your heart. The more time we spend with him, the more likely we will be able to spot a counterfeit. Make no mistake, any philosophy, or religion that denies the deity of Jesus is from Satan. Here is the truth.

[22]

⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.

Any philosophy, religion, or faith that denies this is not of God, and if it is not of God, there is only one other alternative. It is demonic.

The Gnostics were trying to tell the Jesus-followers in Colosse that they needed to go through some kind of initiation rites to get some sort of higher spiritual knowledge. They were saying that Jesus was not enough. Here is the truth to combat those lies.

[23]

10 So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

Your union with Christ completes you - completely. The Apostle John said the same thing.

[24]

1 John 2:21-26 (NLT)

21 So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies. 22 And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. 23 Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

[25]

24 So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. 25 And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us. 26 I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray.

There are so many teachings out there that have a nice sounding spiritual or religious ring to them. If we do not spend time getting to know Jesus in his Word we will not be able to recognize a counterfeit. You may have people knocking on your door trying to tell you about their religion. What they say sounds sort of right, but not, at the same time, and you can't really put your finger on what's wrong with it. Any philosophy or religion that denies the deity of Jesus is not from God, as a matter of fact, it is from demonic sources.

Some teaching even sounds Christian, but it is filled with self-effort that denies the power of Jesus. We talked about that a bit last week. That is sin management. It traps people into a treadmill type of life. It gets us nowhere. We rush around trying to be good, making sure we are continually doing the right thing so God is happy with us, and not doing the wrong thing so he won't be mad at us. We should, of course, do the right thing and not do the wrong thing, but that kind of life is a by-product of Jesus living in us, not so God won't be mad at us.

That is essentially how the pagan religions in the ancient world lived. They lived in fear of the gods. They believed in a plurality of gods. They believed human beings were slaves of the gods, who were capricious and unpredictable. They had to try to guess the right thing to do or not to do. They lived in continual fear not knowing if they ever got it right. They never knew, so they even went as far as sacrificing their children to the gods in hopes that just maybe that would be enough to appease their wrath.

[26]

¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

[27]

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

Jesus completely finished his work on the cross. He defeated sin and Satan and death. This is the Good News. He has completely forgiven you. Every charge against you has been atoned for by Jesus' death on the cross. By his resurrection he has made you alive.

There are many people who carry guilt and shame around that Jesus has already paid for. The last words Jesus said before he died were, **“It is finished.”** He meant it. If you have received the forgiveness of God based on Jesus' death, you no longer have to live in shame. You are completely and unequivocally forgiven.

We all have things in our histories that we are not proud of. Is there anyone here who has absolutely no regrets? Is there *nothing* you would do differently? There is nobody here who does not wish they had handled some things differently with certain people in their lives. We have relationships that are broken because of some stray words that came out our mouths in the heat of the moment and we have tried to make it right, but to no avail. The hurt has been done. There are mistakes we have made, things we have done that have dishonoured the name of Jesus. There are unhealthy and downright sinful thoughts we have had about others. None of us has come through life to this point unscathed by sin.

Satan would like us to believe that we need to continually live in shame. 24/7 he is accusing us trying to get us to believe that we have to pay for our wrong again and again until the day we die. That is a lie. Jesus finished the work. There may be someone we need to ask forgiveness for something we have done, but if we have done our part, shame does not belong to us. Jesus took care of that on the cross two thousand years ago.

¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

That is the Good News we need to live by. He has called us to live in perfect freedom and joy. That is why it is called Good News.

[28]

The Bible says, **“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”** (Romans 3:23 NLT). That is so true. Satan would have us dwell on that truth. But that is only half the truth. What Jesus wants us to dwell on is the next verse in

[29]

Romans 3, **"Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins"** (Romans 3:24 NLT).

If we dwell on the fact that we fall short, other than to own that truth for ourselves, we will not grow. We will shrivel up on the inside, when God has called us to live in the abundant life of Jesus. We are like a garden that God, the Gardener, wants to nurture, care for, feed and water, pull the weeds that choke the life out of us, pick the rocks that distract us, till the soil and make us soft so we will live productive fruitful lives that point to Jesus. It is his life in us that will cause us to grow.

[30]

⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Everyone here is at a different place in our spiritual growth. None of us has arrived at the place where we no longer need to grow. Some of you are brand new baby followers of Jesus. You have just met Jesus and you are all excited about what this new faith you have is and you are eager to grow. Never stop growing. Keep that fire burning to get to know more of the life Jesus has called you to.

Maybe there are some of you who feel stuck. Maybe you have been coming to church all your life. You understand intellectually the things we talk about on Sunday morning, but for some reason it falls on heart that is hard, or burned, or hurt in some way and you do not know what to do about it. You feel dead inside. Cry out to Jesus. Ask him to renew your faith. Get quiet with him. Go for a walk in the forest or by the sea and ask the Holy Spirit to wake you up.

There may be some of you here who have done all the right things. You are good Christians. You are here every Sunday. You faithfully tithe of your income so the Lord's work can go on. You stay away from doing the wrong things and make sure you do the right things. But, the life of Jesus in you is not alive. You do all the right things, but you don't sense the presence and power of Jesus. You may need to stop striving to measure up. That kind of life is a treadmill. There is nothing you can do to make God love you anymore, and there is nothing you can do to make him love you less. He completely loves you. You do not have to earn his love or approval. It that is how you are living you will never be satisfied.

As someone astutely described it, the wheel is turning, but the hamster is dead.

Wherever you are on your walk with Jesus, **⁷Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.**



Growing in Grace: Making Real What We Already Know
Rooted in Christ
Colossians 2:6-15
Week of June 11, 2017

Objective of this study: That we would allow grow a little more rooted in Jesus so his life flows through us.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 - 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Jeremiah 17:5-8** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything jump out at you?**

Welcome

Beets or carrots?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Recap what Paul has said up to this point (Colossians 1:1-2:5).
3. Read Colossians 2:6-15.
4. Find all the various imagery in this passage (there is a lot).
 1. How do these images relate to faith, growth and life in Christ?
 2. Which speaks to you the most and why?
5. Summarize the heart of this passage. What is Paul calling us to?

Work

1. Describe how your life with Jesus is like a garden. Make sure everyone who cares to has a chance to share.
2. Are there some shifts in your thinking that God is calling you to?
3. What was useful to you from this study?
4. What helped grow your "roots" deeper into Jesus?
5. Take some time to share how you have grown in the past year.