

## Colossians 2:6-15

### Deeply Rooted

This is an absolutely wonderful time of year in our part of the world. Whether or not you are someone who gardens, I can't think of anyone who doesn't appreciate the beauty of nature around us right now. Green grass, flowers of assorted varieties and colours, trees with green leaves that shelter and shade us. And just like us humans, animals seem to also enjoy the freedom of this season of growth and nurture. It feels like all things are fully alive in the summer. The bugs are also fully alive in the summer, some of which we can appreciate and others that we know have purpose but drive us wild.

There are those among us who are avid and master gardeners. I just dabble in gardening along with Ken. Gardening can teach us a lot. In a time in the world when we many people have access to fruits and vegetables year-round; we forget that not too long ago people did not have this variety. People gardened because they had to in order to feed themselves. They canned and stored so that they could enjoy some variety of food throughout the winter.

Last summer on our vacation, Ken and I ended up in the Lemington area of Southern Ontario. There we could hardly believe the acres and acres of land covered with glass greenhouses, places such as this giving us access to various foods at times in the year that we would not have traditionally had the choices. And with the growth of cities, many people do not or have not experienced what it means to grow anything.

Paul lived in an agrarian time. People were connected to the earth in ways that we are not any longer. We have heating and cooling systems to keep us comfortable, ways of growing food in huge quantities and varieties, and ways of keeping it fresh enough to transport. We are not living with the animals that are used to feed us as once was the case, so even there we have lost the ability to appreciate that life has been taken in order to feed us. So we forget what rootedness looks like. Or put another way, what it means to be rooted.

When I get into the garden or a planter, I can tell what has deep roots or is not thriving because the root system is just not deep or strong enough. We planted two rows of beets this year out of the same package. One row is thriving and the other, right next to it didn't even come up. We don't understand why. One row will feed us the other will not give us any nourishment. I have had flowers in the pots and flower beds that I could pull out with barely a tug and others right next to it, planted at the same time that I needed to dig out because the roots were so deeply and strongly embedded in the ground.

It is with these images and thoughts in mind, these reminders of what it means to be rooted, that we might now be able to appreciate what Paul means when he writes in

Colossians 2:6-7, “My counsel for you is simple and straightforward: Just go ahead with what you’ve been given. You received Christ Jesus, the Master; now *live* him. You’re deeply rooted in him. You’re well constructed upon him. You know your way around the faith.”<sup>1</sup>

Maybe a little history would also be helpful. Paul doesn’t know these people he is writing to, he just knows from his trusted source, a person who has lived and taught in this community of faith in Colossae, that people are being influenced by all kinds of teaching about Christ and faith that are above and beyond the basics. These people are complicating faith and making it rule bound. In Paul’s mind these other teachers are having undue influence over the lives of the those who are following Jesus, confusing them, making them think that Christ is not enough, teaching them that they need empty traditions of human beings and the empty superstitions of spirit beings.

So, Paul refutes all of that by saying, “Everything of God gets expressed in him [Jesus], so you can see and hear him clearly. You don’t need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, Christ is sufficient. Stay rooted in that. Don’t complicate the matter.

But there was so much misinformation going around that Paul had to continue to explain. You see there were also people who were saying that there was inside information that only a select few would be privileged to know. That secret information was not for everyone and only those who knew those things could develop certain practices...having this special knowledge or experience they could actually live fully into their faith, and Paul says “absolutely not” to all of it!

Paul says it this way,

<sup>11-15</sup> Entering into this fullness is not something you figure out or achieve. It’s not a matter of being circumcised or keeping a long list of laws. No, you’re already *in*—insiders—not through some secretive initiation rite but rather through what Christ has already gone through for you, destroying the power of sin. If it’s an initiation ritual you’re after, you’ve already been through it by submitting to baptism. Going under the water was a burial of your old life; coming up out of it was a resurrection, God raising you from the dead as he did Christ. When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ’s cross.

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture quotations are taken from, [The Message \(MSG\)](#). Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

He stripped all the spiritual tyrants in the universe of their sham authority at the Cross and marched them naked through the streets.<sup>3</sup>

Now you might be saying, what has that got to do with me? I don't have any of those things in my life. But I wonder if we have just replaced those old requirements with new ones. Paul is saying that Christ is sufficient, but how often do we think, if only, if only I had this or that my life would be complete. Though we may not realize we are even doing it, how often do we want to supplement Christ, because Christ isn't quite enough for us. Maybe we supplement Christ with having power or thinking that having power, wealth, influence or security is necessary to be okay. There are many who supplement their spirituality with other practices.

Now, none of this is harmful in and of itself. Having wealth and security, influence and power is not bad, rather, it is about what is central to your life because that will determine whether or not you are Christ-centered, rooted in Christ, or rooted in the things that make you feel like you have power, influence, wealth and security. When Christ is the center, then those other things are used to bring about a better world for everyone, not just for oneself. Also, seeking the knowledge of spirituality is not a bad thing, having guides in spirituality is not to be judged, but is the center for you Christ? What is your motivation for all the things you do to supplement your life in Christ?

Paul says that Christ is sufficient for you. Christ is enough to bring you a full and abundant life. I am not saying that food, housing, and safe community are not important, we all know it is. It is about what brings about wholeness in us. Some of us have all the resources we need and more. We are blessed with all the security we need. Though we can see by what is happening around the globe in terms of conflict that security is a rather tenuous thing that can be taken from us at any time. And if that does happen what will hold you together? What will give you hope, calm your fears, give you the ability to be present with and for others?

Even if it is not world challenges but personal challenges of health and well-being that come to the fore, where will you find your rootedness?

You may find that if you are rooted in Christ, you find your power in Christ, that you find a depth for living and for being present with others that would not otherwise be there. The other piece of this is, just as the Paul was writing to a community of faith in his own time, we find our strength in community as well. We are all influenced by culture and that can be wonderful, so much science and philosophy, has changed the way we understand the world. And I for one am grateful for professions that have changed our quality of life, yet we must continue to be rooted and grounded in Christ and being in a church can also ground us, keep us rooted.

Once again, what is the motivation for how we are influenced? Do we filter everything and how it is used through our faith and understanding of Jesus as lover of the world,

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

forgiver of sin, the one who, though nailed to a cross is also the one who nails our sin to the cross so that we do not need to bear it any longer? Do we see people and situations through the lens of Christ who through the Holy Spirit lives in all people?

And this is what Paul is talking about, if you can no longer see Christ in others, is it because too many things are layered upon our faith or have worldly things so influenced another that we can no longer see Christ in them? Is the image of God, of Christ, hidden?

Paul says, "You know your way around the faith. Now do what you've been taught. School's out; quit studying the subject and start *living* it! And let your living spill over into thanksgiving."

Living that spills over into thanksgiving. That really is one of the key markers of faith. Thanksgiving. Gratitude. You know you are living in Christ when your speech, when your actions, point toward Christ.

There are so many things that distract us from the root of our faith which is Christ our Lord. May we remember who gives us life, who loves us, and that as a community of faith we can live out our faith, supporting one another, teaching one another, and reaching out to be people who share the Good News of God's love without strings attached, without requiring that people jump through hoops, but just sharing the basics of faith, hope, love, and joy with the people of our own time as, just like a healthy and beautiful garden together we grow rooted deeply in the love of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.