

## **Before the reading...**

Today's reading is part of a letter sent about 30 years after Jesus death and resurrection  
It was written to a group of people in Colossae, who had come to know the risen Christ  
And desired to follow the way....in the early church people did not call themselves "Christians"  
But followers of the Way.

The Colossians were struggling with the best way to live out their faith.

There were so many different teachings, so many different ideas.

They were confused by Jewish believers who said they must be circumcised

They were worried that they were following the wrong way when some "pious" believers

Taught that following Christ was about special knowledge, secret rites, chants

And by those who taught that faith was like a ladder, by which you earned closeness to God.

Beginning with reminding this group of the truth of who Christ is and the wonder of God's grace

Paul continued to write to clear up confusion about how to follow in all their living.

Listen for God's word through Paul to the early church and for us today.....

July 24, 2016

**Rooted**  
Colossians 2:6-19

Rev. Jan Hazlett

We gather today as a group to worship God together  
Part of worship is to listen to ancient words and for the Holy Spirit to breathe them into our lives.  
Every time we open scripture, we must listen not just for the words themselves,  
But also for their interpretation for our lives,  
Before Jesus died he told his disciples that God would send the Holy Spirit to teach, to reveal God, to  
guide disciples in living the way of the kingdom of God.  
Open for what is applicable and what was bound to a particular time or place.  
So today, we have turned to Paul's letter to the Colossians  
And advice for the best way to live in faith and how our living helps us to grow in faith.  
In particular I want to visit verse 6 and 7, let's read it together....  
"So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord,  
Continue to live your lives in him,  
Rooted and built up in him,  
strengthened in the faith as you were taught  
And overflowing with thankfulness."

**So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord.....**

With this simple phrase believers are reminded that faith begins with God  
And with God's gift of grace and faith.  
Although we "do" belief, we cannot believe unless Christ is revealed to us,  
There is choice, that is to live according to the truth that we have received.  
we use the word "lord" in Church and religious circles a lot,  
but we don't use the word in our everyday lives often....and often it has a negative meaning as in  
"lord it over" someone else. But in this context it has positive connotation of caring.  
That we have a Lord, reminds "Christians" that we do not just accept a set of beliefs,  
But that we have received Christ himself as one we trust to care for us and to lead us  
so we as individuals and as a group have a relationship with Christ.  
Since in Christ all things are held together, the whole community of faith lies **within** Christ  
As Christians we as a group and individuals accept Christ's way for our lives,  
And commit to follow in all we say and do.  
We are not able on our own to do this,  
But this is made possible because Christ is in us, and we are all part of the body of Christ,  
As we live out this reality, God can reveal Christ to others through us  
We live this way not because we have been conquered by Christ and live under Jesus dictatorship,  
But out of thanksgiving that God who is so great has done great things in Christ for us...

**Continue to live your lives in him, we have a choice:**

we are to continue to choose to follow the way of Christ.  
To do this we need to know and **remember** what we have been taught  
And through our choices live according what we have been taught.  
But this is not just a following of rules,  
We are to seek Christ's way amid all the choices we encounter in life.  
We are to wisely choose where we put ourselves, what influences we allow in our lives.  
There are times when the choices are more obvious, we should not lie, or steal, or commit murder,  
But there are other times, when we need to "discern" to actively seek to know God's will for us.  
We need to be aware of what is influencing our words and actions...  
To be aware of whether we are letting God or something/someone else lead us.  
To do this we need to honestly answer questions like:

“Are we responding to a desire in us rather than God’s desire for us?”

“Are we justifying our actions to save face, or acting on our own insecurity or fear?”

But also to be aware of those who would influence us,

There will always be those who think they have a better way,

Who try to earn a close relationship with God through following angels, human thought or self denial.

These people may actually look “more pious” than we feel we are...it can be tempting.

We have no need of special teaching, special practices, special ways of eating or observing special festivals.

We are to choose to follow the way of Christ, and to be in relationship with Christ and each other.

Jesus told his disciples, that our piety will be seen in our love and forgiveness not in super acts of piety.

In the strength of the Holy Spirit we are able to make choices that allow us to live in him.

**Similarly we are to live our lives rooted and built up in Christ, strengthened in the faith as we were taught.**

We know on some level what it means for a plant to be rooted....

Roots give stability, through roots a plant gets what it needs to grow and to be strong.

A tree without roots is no longer a tree, but a log.

The implication for faith is clear.....

Over this past week, I have become aware of a new game called Pokeman Go....

It is a game you play with your smart phone and by travelling to different locations.

So many people were playing it this past week that on several occasions, the server went down.

This meant players were no longer connected to the game.

Although people can still use their phone, go to places they knew were pokestops

But without the live feed the actions remain empty, they are no longer part of the game.

The connection with others and with the source of the game is essential....

This metaphor points to the same truth as the rooted image...

A Christian life is lived in relationship with Christ,

without the connection to Christ we cannot be followers.....

We can visit places where people have encountered Christ,

we can do what Christians should do and refrain from doing what we should not

But without the connection, it makes no sense.....

**We are to be rooted in Christ.**

On one level this image makes sense.....but on another it is absurd!

We can no more grow physical roots than a tree can walk....

So what does being **Rooted in Christ** actually look like in our lives?

One of the best ways to be connected is through prayer....

I would wager many of you have just turned to another channel in your heads.....

Perhaps with a sigh or words like “I really don’t know how to pray well,” “my prayers are ineffective”

If this is you, bear with me.....

Prayer is not about having it right nor is it about impressing God with our fancy words,

Or about impressive volume of prayers, or by our lists of answered prayers.....

Prayer is about intentionally reaching out to Christ who has reached out to us, as we are, with our thoughts and words

When the disciples were impressed with the way Jesus prayed, they felt their prayers were lacking.

they compared their experience of prayer to what they thought was his experience of prayer

So they asked him how to pray....if there were secret words or postures, this would have been the time,

I am quite sure that the disciples would have loved to have impressed others with their prayers.

But Jesus said to keep it simple....to speak to God honestly using our own words.

He gave them a simple example, that we now call the Lord’s prayer..

It contains no extensive vocabulary, no complicated formula, if we believed it was about the words,

We would all be praying in Aramaic today.

Simple thoughts, addressing God as holy, our needs and our desire to live according to God's way.

We are rooted and built up **in Christ** as we pray.

Although there are many ways that we remain rooted in Christ, I will highlight just one besides prayer

The body of Christ

As Christians, our identity is shaped by those around us, so by communities to whom we belong.

Jesus taught community is important through his words and actions

“where two or three are gathered together, Christ will be with them”

We grow our roots into Christ by living in community with other Christians,

By learning about Christ from scripture and experience of others,

By learning about Christian life as we live it together, learning about love and forgiveness

We learn to pray through the prayers of others and by praying,

We learn the right way by making mistakes and being shown a better way.

Christ is known through others,

We are all part of one Body, the church, of which Christ is the head.

We draw strength from Christ as we encounter Christ in prayer and in community.

As we seek God's way together we move forward together,

As we are strengthened we will be more able to live our lives in response to the grace that God has given us.

Our lives and life together will show evidence of this as we seek to do justice, show kindness,

As we walk humbly in God's presence.

The truth that Paul is pointing us to, is that Christ is enough for us, not just to believe,

But in Christ we find what we need to live the way of the kingdom.

In Christ alone we learn the way that leads to life, and in Christ alone we can live it.....

IN us, through us and if need be in spite of us may God's kingdom come and God's will be done,

In our community, in us as it is in heaven. Amen