

January 19, 2020

Rooted: Rooted In Jesus

Colossians 2:6-7; John 15:1-17

This morning we are continuing our series “Rooted”, and if you missed last week I strongly encourage you to go online and read or watch the sermon, as Tom provided some important context for this series along with sharing the story, journey and process that has led to this series.

In short though, for the past few years we have been listening and discerning who or what we sense God has uniquely called us to be and become at FPC. Through this process of discernment and listening we have come to this metaphor and picture of a tree and from that a mission statement of who we are as God is working in and through FPC.

That is, we are: “Rooted in Jesus, Growing in His Love, Branching out to Serve Others.”

Let’s all say that together. Rooted in Jesus, Growing in His Love, Branching Out to Serve Others.

For today and the next 5 weeks we will look at each of these 3 phrases on back-to-back Sundays, looking at: what the Bible says about our connection to Christ? Identifying how we grow as followers of Jesus and what that looks like? And how that connection and growth branches out to those around us?

And this is more than just a sermon series but is what we are living into now and we what we want to continue to grow into as God works and transforms us, growing us into His disciples.

We want to get to the root of the matter of who we are in Christ and who we are becoming as His followers as He works in and through us so that we are: “Rooted in Jesus, Growing in His love, Branching out to serve others.”

Our passage from John 15 this morning is pretty clear that at the root of it all is Jesus and abiding or remaining in Him. Being rooted in Jesus.

It begins with Jesus and His work of grace and salvation and our response to His invitation to abide (remain) and be rooted in him. Without that we can’t grow in His love, and we certainly can’t branch out to serve others.

Jesus says, “I am the true vine. I am the real vine and my Father is the vine grower (gardener).”

Jesus paints a very important picture here. In that what the root and trunk are to trees or vines, is what Jesus is to human life. That is the abundant life he has for us and the life everlasting found only in him.

“Abide(remain) in me, and I will abide(remain) in you” (verse4). Another way of understanding that is Jesus saying make your home with me or be rooted in me. This is his invitation and command.

Jesus continues and says: “Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”

At the core of our very being is this desire. A desire to have purpose, to be valued. We desire to produce and bear fruit. To be productive and have something to show. To experience, “the fruit of our labor.”

But Jesus is very clear: “if we are not rooted or connected to him, we cannot, we will not bear fruit.”

This morning I brought a branch with me. And this isn't just any branch. This my friends is a palisade peach branch. And we know what a Palisade peach tree and its branches are capable of. Delicious, mouthwatering, peaches.

But this branch is missing something. There is no fruit. And there is no fruit because it is not connected to the tree. In fact, it hasn't been for some time now. Really it is no different from any other branch. What made it unique and great before was the fruit that hung from it.

But what if....

What if we all worked together because you know “teamwork makes the dream work”? Is it possible for us to get some fruit to grow? Can we make this branch bear some delicious peaches? What if we just focus really hard?

No, of course not. That's ridiculous. Right? Nothing we can do can make this branch bear any fruit.

This is what Jesus is getting at. Everything we are and hope to become in Christ depends on this: Abiding in Him. Remaining in Him. Making our home with Him. Being rooted in Jesus.

So what does it mean to be rooted In Jesus? What does it mean to abide (remain) in Him?

To be rooted in Jesus is to receive and believe in Him and His Word. It is to trust all that God has for us in Jesus Christ and to know our identity rooted in Him as His beloved sons and daughter.

Being rooted in Jesus is both resting in Him and relying on Him. It is pursuing the will of God daily in our lives and staying in constant and continual contact with Him. It is diving into His Word and leaning on His promises. It is obedience to His commandments. To love God and to love one another.

Abiding (remaining) and being rooted in Jesus also involves an ongoing process. It is not a one and done deal, but we are to continue, to stay, to live, to remain in Him.

Just as Paul instructs us in Colossians 2:6-7:

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, [continue] to be rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Being rooted in Jesus is more than just right believing or right living but is experiencing a heart transformation that is unlike anything available in the world. It is a miraculous, mysterious indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a way of believing and a way of living, nurtured and fed by the life-giving connection/being rooted to Jesus Christ.

Simply put, being rooted in Jesus, is to continue daily trusting in Him and obeying His Word. It means stick with Him 😊

Knowing the what, how do we then stay rooted in Jesus? Abiding in Him?

All throughout John's gospel, John uses the same word over and over for abiding in Jesus and tells us how practically we are to abide and stay rooted in Him. Here are four ways we stay rooted in Jesus.

- 1) We stay rooted in Jesus by simply responding to His Word, His invitation. "Come and see." We discover Jesus is not a passive inviter but pursues us and gets after us with His love. He chose us first and awaits our response and would love for us to come and see. Come and abide in Him. So, we are rooted in Jesus just by responding to His invitation to abide and be rooted in Him
- 2) We stay rooted in Jesus by remembering His love and sacrifice for us. Just as we can't produce fruit on our own, we can't save ourselves from our sin. It is the work of Jesus at the cross. We remember this every time we celebrate communion. His body broken for us His blood shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. John 6:56 tells us we stay rooted in Jesus by remembering and joining in communion and fellowship with Him and His Church.
- 3) We stay rooted in Jesus by continuing in His Word. John 8:31-32- "If you continue(abide) in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
- 4) We stay rooted in Jesus by keeping His commandments. Specifically, loving God and loving One another as we see in our passage from John 15. We Love one another out of the deep resource of Jesus' love for us and by doing so we stay rooted in Him.

Are we abiding(remaining) in Him? Are we rooted in Jesus or something else? Because if we abide in Him and are rooted in Jesus then we will bear much fruit.

Jesus says in verse 5:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

We will bear much fruit! This is Jesus' guarantee to those who are rooted in Him. And the wonderful truth about this is it is God's work of bearing fruit in us and not our own doing.

Jesus is telling us to relax. Rest in Him. Take the pressure off of fruit bearing and doing it ourselves. God is in charge of the task so that our main focus and task is to simply "abide in Him." Be rooted in Jesus.

And I know this and yet I struggle at times in getting caught up in trying to make it happen. Thinking "If I do more of this or more of that then just maybe I can squeeze out some more fruit." I end up tasking myself with the work only God can do.

IF we don't keep our eyes on Jesus and focus on being rooted in Him, we can easily get distracted by the fruit of this world that feeds our flesh and pride making it all about us and our work and effort. And sure, that fruit may look shiny and wonderful on the outside but on the inside it's rotten and withered and will never fulfill and never satisfy.

And when we stop focusing on Jesus and when we stop continuing to stay rooted in Him, we start looking like this branch. Unconnected and unfruitful. Our roots end up tangled and attached to other things apart from Jesus and we take it upon ourselves to do our own fruit bearing. Fruit bearing rooted in something other than Jesus.

Our jobs, our status, our accomplishments, our achievements, our ministries, our Bible studies, Our self-centered kingdoms.

Or we can also get so focused on our outward appearance trying to maintain a holy façade while inside we haven't experienced heart transformation or the peace and rest or joy that comes from being rooted in Jesus because we are so busy trying to look like we have it all together. To bear fruit on our own. To do what only God can do.

But Jesus is clear: "apart from me you can do nothing!"

Of course, there are all sorts of things we try and do apart from Jesus. But the fruit that comes from that is not fruit of the Spirit. It doesn't last. It doesn't really matter. It leaves us unfulfilled and always longing. Over time it withers and fades away and leaves us empty and exhausted trying to maintain and keep up the façade, doing what only God can do.

All that is is fruit taped to a branch. It may look good on the outside but it's not real It is not the eternal, lasting, life giving. It is not the God glorifying fruit that only comes from being rooted in Jesus.

If we are rooted in Jesus, connected to Him we will bear much fruit. Beautiful life giving and life sustaining fruit of the spirit!

Another trap we can fall into even as we are rooted in Jesus is comparing ourselves to others. Comparing the fruit on our branch with the fruit on their branch.

It's like I'm rooted in Jesus and experiencing His transformation in my life. And I'm humbled and in awe of the fruit I am bearing because of what He is doing. But then something catches my eyes. A bountiful, beautiful fruit bearing branch 3 limbs over.

"Wow look at that. That is a lot of fruit. I've never seen fruit like that. I would love to have fruit like that. I wonder what they are doing that I'm not doing?"

We convince ourselves they must have a better formula and strategy. If I just do what they are doing then I can look like them. We compare and look past the fruit bearing God is doing in our lives and the good work He is doing, and we want more. In doing so we begin bearing the fruit of this world: envy, jealousy, lust, resentment, and so on.

We fail to see how God is already at work in our lives and wants to do something unique through us, as He is working and bearing unique fruit in that other person's life. We can't take how God is bearing fruit in someone else's life and transplant it to our lives in hopes of the same results.

It would be like putting a Banana on a peach tree. It doesn't match up. It doesn't work.

We need to relax and stay focused on being rooted in Jesus, abiding in Him and leave the fruit bearing to God. God who desires to bear much fruit in our lives. Unique to us and Him working in our lives. Fruit that brings glory to Him.

Stay rooted in Jesus and God will bear fruit in us. And as we bear fruit or if we find ourselves get caught up in trying to do it on our own or when we compare or get too far from the vine from the tree ... He prunes us. He prunes us to be closer to Him and to bear more fruit.

Jesus says: *Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.*

Being rooted in Jesus, and bearing fruit also involves pruning. Pruning with the purpose of bearing more fruit.

And pruning isn't always pleasant. It doesn't feel great. But it is important and necessary for us to stay rooted in Jesus and to be even more fruitful. This is part of the good work God is doing in us and through us.

Philippians 1:6

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Even Jesus' went through this as His deep pruning was the cross. And all those who follow Him and are rooted in him will encounter and go through pruning. I find helpful and encouraging what Dale Bruner says about this:

The Lord's own deepest pruning was the cross; faithful disciples, too, it is promised again and again in the gospels, will have their crosses or pruning's. But in three days the harvest of the empty grave and the reality of Life followed Jesus' Cross. Something comparably miraculous and fruitful waits on the other side of every faithful disciple's pruning's and crosses. THIS IS THE GOSPEL! (Commentary on John, Bruner, 880)

This is the good news. And all these words from Jesus are meant to encourage us and bring us joy. Jesus tells us this:

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

It is not for us to stress over about bearing fruit or figuring out who is connected and not connected.

These are supposed to be words of Joy. Words of comfort and invitation to the life-giving nature of being connected. Being rooted in Jesus and the reality that nothing will stop God bringing Glory to himself. God in His grace through Jesus Christ chose us. Chose us to bear fruit, to be His disciples and to bring him Glory.

You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. (John 15:16)

So, as we are rooted in Jesus and continue to abide in Him through His love and our loving one another we will bear much fruit and God will give us whatever we ask.

To be clear though this isn't a formula to pray a certain way to get what we want. I know because I may have tried

Dear God, In the name of Jesus please give me a boy 😊 And four times I was blessed with a girl and four beautiful daughters.

As we stay rooted in Jesus our hearts and mind are transformed in Christ. To be Christ minded and to year for the things He yearns for. And we pray for the things of God. For His kingdom come, His will to be done. Our wants and our desires become His wants and desires. And it pleases God and brings glory to God to answer those prayers and bear even more fruit.

My heart's desire for myself, for our students, our families, our Church is to be rooted in Jesus. To accept and continue in His invitation to abide and be rooted in Him that we will trust in His fruit bearing work and necessary but loving pruning in our lives. And more than anything may our prayers echo David's prayer in Psalm 27.

The one thing I ask of the LORD— the thing I seek most— is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life.

One thing I pray and focus on is to be close to God. To walk with Him. To be rooted in Jesus. So that we will grow in His love and branch out to serve others!