

Col. 2:6-15; Psalm 1; Growing in Christ I. Rooted in Him II. Established in the Faith III. Abounding in Thanksgiving

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the text we just read will be the focus of our family visits this year- Our family visits are a time for the elders to meet with you- to hear of how God has been working in your life over the last year. One of the questions you may be asked will deal with your maturity- how have you grown as a Christian in this past year. There is no such thing as a stagnant Christian, either you are growing towards Him in maturity; or you are growing apart from Him. Throughout our passage the image of the tree comes to the fore. Just as there are three main parts of the tree- the roots, the trunk and the branches with their fruit- so also our sermon this morning has 3 points. Each point refers to a different part of the tree- yet it is one tree. So it is in the Christian life, the various aspects of our calling- our walk in Christ as v. 5 says- speaks to a different part in this growth- but each part is also inseparably linked to the other. What are the branches without the root? So today we see that Jesus Christ enables us to grow up in Him towards a mature faith.

I. Rooted in Him

Our text is found in v. 6-7- were we start by acknowledging- we have received Christ. Just as you have already been given Christ- we have as poor beggars been given the greatest riches placed in our hands. We have received Christ! He has been graciously given to us- this foundational benefit is the beginning of our experience of God's grace. We receive Jesus Christ and His righteousness- He coming to live within us- making His home in our midst! This receiving Christ is not so much speaking of what happened in Bethlehem 2000 years ago- rather this receiving speaking of the reception of Him by faith. If Christ is your Lord- if you belong to Him- you have received everything. The interesting dynamic here is that the way in which we receive Christ is by being possessed by Him! Now this reception of Christ is made known to us by the Word of God. As the church in Colossi received Christ by way of the preaching of Paul, so as a church we too receive Christ when His person and work is proclaimed in our midst. As

Faith comes by hearing- and hearing by the Word proclaimed- we also have received Christ. There is a truth in doctrine that is placed in your hands- a wonderful tradition- the full doctrine of God that we all receive week after week. As v. 7 echoes, you were rooted in Him. Again the focus of this word- you have been rooted- is on the past fact of this event. You were rooted- once and for all- this truth is an established fact. You were fixed and thoroughly grounded in Him. Paul is not telling them what to do- but rather explaining what has happened. A Christian is one who has his foundation fixed in Christ. You were planted in Him, this happened to you once for all- but it also has an enduring effect upon you. We could say that Paul is referencing new birth- being born again by the Spirit and Word. In Christ, you are a new creation, the old has gone- the new has come! You are a new creature- as Jesus dwells in you hand you dwell in Him! You are complete- made new- firmly rooted and dug down deep! Just as a tree needs a solid foundation, so a Christians' solid foundation is in that we are rooted in Christ! Our foundation runs deep in Him! You have this! Just as when you are planting a new tree- once its roots are properly set- it has all it needs for growth an life! A tree cannot plant itself. Like a tree planted by streams of water, so a Christian is planted and rooted in Christ! Since this is true- you will grow! Since you have received Christ, now walk in Him as v. 6 says. Or as Peter says, crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word. But also, crave the solid food and seek to be mature. Long also for the deeper truths! God graciously has planted you-rooted you in Christ. You have received Him by the Word proclaimed.

II. Established in the Faith

But as every tree must, this being rooted is not the end of the story. You also are built up in Him. This is a passive word- describing what is done to you. Like a building that starts on a good foundation, and then is built up until the project is complete- we are being built up in Christ! This is God's work in you- building us up in the faith. As Acts 20 says, the Word of God is able to build you up! Also -as v. 7 continues- established. We often speak of established trees- those that are no longer saplings but are thick and solid. God establishes His people in the truth- makes them firm and steadfast. Like a solid oak

that adds ring upon ring- year after year. A solid core that cannot be broken- no rottenness year, only a solid tree! God causes us to continue to live in Him! We could call this sanctification- growing in grace and knowledge of the truth! Gods work again within us by the Word- so that we might be mature as 1:28 says. You have received Him- first point- and now you are living in Him. He causes us to be grown up- God uses the means of grace- the preaching and the sacraments- to cause His little trees to become solid like a mighty cedar! God uses means to do this- as we heard from Acts 20- the Word is used to build us up! Or the image of Psalm 1- planted by the water of the word. So if you want to see growth- if you want to be solid and mature Christian- you will place yourself under the preaching and the sacraments! The Word and sacraments are like the rain and sunshine to our Spiritual growth. The reason this maturity is so important- so pressing- is because as v. 8 says- there are deceitful teaching that want to take you captive. There are as v. 4 says- people who want to delude you with their arguments. Rather, God wants you be firm in the faith as v. 5 says- a solid tree with deep roots. If you travel to Florida after a hurricane you will find that most palm trees have been toppled. Their roots are shallow- and the wind easily tips them over. This is a good picture of an immature Christian. One who has refused to drink long at the stream of God's word is easily tossed to and froe by various winds of false doctrine. Their faith is easily unsettled, because they have not remained in Him! God uses the means of grace to prepare you- to establish His people and to prepare them for trials! So the trunk of a Christian must be strong- being built up and established in the faith!

III. Abounding in Thanksgiving

But there is yet one more part of the tree- the branches with their leaves and fruit. As v. 7 concludes, abounding in thanksgiving. So far in v. 7 we have seen again and again- it is Jesus Christ who roots us, builds us and establishes us into Himself. Now we come to the overflowing, excelling and plentiful thanksgiving. This is an active verb- something we are called to do! Be branches that are heavy with fruit- produce your fruit in due season. Or as Phil. 1:26 says, so that your rejoicing may be more

abundant in Christ. The cause for this rejoicing should be clear- as the opening of Col. is called a hymn to the pre-eminence of Christ. He is the image of the Father, the first born of all creation. Christ is the head of all things- and before all things- who holds all things together as v. 1:17 says. It is this Christ in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily as 2:9 says- who is the head and rule over all! In Him we are made alive- 2:13- having our sins forgiven and the legal demands of the law having been nailed to the cross- He triumphing over all! That is why we overflow with thanksgiving! There is no one and nothing like Jesus Christ our Lord! You have received the greatest and most precious gift imaginable! The good news is that salvation has been purchased and secured by Christ- and is now being applied to His people. Or as 1:6 says- this gospel which has come to you is bearing fruit and growing! Children, how can you tell if a tree is healthy and living? Look for leaves and fruit- right? Well- a Christian will be heavy laden with the fruit of thanksgiving- overflowing with the wine of gratitude! It is in this way that we show the Christian life- proving both our life and displaying the greatness of our God! Our worship will be known as a place of joy and gladness. And our lives filled with joyful service! Loving God and our neighbor. Looking for opportunities to show and share my fruit. We are knit together in love- serving the body of Christ as 2:19 says- being knit together and growing with a growth that comes from God. Gratitude is one of the main signs that we are living in Christ! So let us abound in thanksgiving- that this church would be a place where lots of gratitude can be seen, heard and experienced!

To conclude, as we read from Psalm 1- the blessed man is like a tree that is planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season- whose leaf does not wither. That is who we are in Jesus Christ- an ever green, ever bearing tree! Having been rooted and established in Him, we can not stand firm against false teaching and be ever abounding in thanksgiving! Jesus Christ enables us to grow up in Him towards a mature faith- so let us use His appointed means as we live our new life in Him!