

I.N.I.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
August 28, 2011
Col. 2:6-15

In Christ Jesus, who is the Foundation of the Church, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This section of Colossians contains one of the most beautiful passages in this letter. It is the first two verses of this morning's sermon text. **AS YOU HAVE THEREFORE RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, SO WALK IN HIM, ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN HIM AND ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH, AS YOU HAVE BEEN TAUGHT, ABOUNDING IN IT WITH THANKSGIVING.** In these verses Paul is urging these new Christians to sink their roots deep into Christ and to continue to grow in Him.

Think for a moment about this image of roots in terms of your own life. Where have you "put down roots?" In your house/home? In your family/friends? In your job/school? In your community/neighborhood? In your church/synod? "Roots" brings to mind images of strength, solidity, a lasting heritage.

Our theme for this morning is **PUTTING DOWN ROOTS**. The Apostle Paul tells us that:

- 1) WE ARE ROOTED IN CHRIST JESUS**
- 2) BEWARE OF THE ENTANGLING, DEADLY WEEDS OF EMPTY PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN TRADITION**
- 3) CONTINUE TO LIVE AND GROW IN OUR VICTORIOUS SAVIOR**

One purpose of Paul's ministry was to lead people to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In his letter to the Corinthians he said, **FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANYTHING AMONG YOU EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED...WE SPEAK THE WISDOM OF GOD IN A MYSTERY, THE HIDDEN WISDOM WHICH GOD ORDAINED BEFORE THE AGES FOR OUR GLORY...**

Another purpose of Paul's ministry was to lead God's people, those who already had faith worked in their hearts, to a greater understanding of the Good News of their redemption through Jesus. In other words----to strengthen them in their faith. Two weeks ago we heard Paul speak of this "mystery" of the Gospel of Jesus. That hidden message of God's love he said **HAS BEEN REVEALED TO HIS SAINTS** and Paul has publicly proclaimed this Gospel to help the believers at Colossae escape from the false teachings that were being spread among them and to bring them stability of faith. In the verses just prior to this morning's text we read chapter 2:1-5... **FOR I WANT YOU TO KNOW WHAT A GREAT CONFLICT I HAVE FOR YOU AND THOSE IN LAODECIA, AND FOR AS MANY AS HAVE NOT SEEN MY FACE IN THE FLESH, THAT THEIR HEARTS MAY BE ENCOURAGED, BEING KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE, AND ATTAINING TO ALL RICHES OF THE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING, TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD, BOTH OF THE FATHER AND OF CHRIST, IN WHOM ARE HIDDEN ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. NOW THIS I SAY LEST ANYONE SHOULD DECEIVE YOU WITH PERSUASIVE WORDS. FOR THOUGH I AM ABSENT IN THE FLESH, YET I AM WITH YOU IN SPIRIT, REJOICING TO SEE YOUR GOOD ORDER AND THE STEADFASTNESS OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST.** Christians who are rooted in the Gospel are far better equipped to distinguish sound teaching from false teaching.

Paul gratefully acknowledges the fact that these people to whom he is writing have saving faith. He writes, **AS YOU HAVE THEREFORE RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD...** By saying that Jesus is the **Christ**, we acknowledge Him to be the Messiah whom God promised to send to save the world from sin. By calling Him **Jesus**, we confess that He is the one and only Savior,

who by His death and resurrection, has delivered us from the punishment of our sins. And by calling Him **Lord**, we are saying that He is our Ruler, our Master, the One to whom we owe honor, faithfulness, obedience and service. Now that you believe in Him, Paul says now **WALK IN HIM**.

With four brief phrases the Apostle expands on what he means by **WALK IN HIM**.

1) **BE ROOTED IN HIM**. When the Holy Spirit creates faith in the heart of an individual that person is rooted in Christ and His Word. The Christian is removed from this world, set apart for Christ and implanted in Jesus as his all-sufficient Savior. What is needed now is to be watered thoroughly with His Word, to draw strength and nourishment continuously from the Gospel of salvation so that our roots of faith sink ever deeper and deeper into Christ. The more firmly we are rooted in Christ, the less likely it is that we will be blown over by the storms of false teaching and the fierce winds of the troubles, trials, sorrows and disasters of life.

2) Together with being rooted we are also being **BUILT UP**. The roots go down, the plant with its branches, leaves, flowers and fruit goes up. Jesus is that firm foundation upon which we are to build our faith life. We as Christians draw from the power and love that Christ gives us in His Word. Our thoughts, words and actions, all spring from that source of love that Christ gives us.

3) By sinking our faith deep into Christ and by being built up and growing we become **ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH**. That is strengthened and confirmed, convinced that no new doctrines or philosophies can help us and that no attacks and onslaughts of life can destroy us.

4) For all of these blessings of being planted, rooted, built up and established we will **ABOUND, OVERFLOW WITH THANKSGIVING TO GOD**.

It is always important to remember that this is not something that we can accomplish. God plants us in Christ through the Holy Spirit's work in His Word. He roots us and builds us up in His Gospel. He establishes and strengthens us with His Gospel in Word and Sacraments, He produces the fruits of faith that the Christian plant brings forth. Our success in clinging to Christ does not depend on our determination, on our goodness, nor on our intentions. The surety of our place rooted in Christ and in His kingdom comes only from Him and His Word.

II:

Does that mean then that there is no danger for us Christian plants? Not at all! Paul in the very next verse warns, **BEWARE LEST ANYONE CHEAT YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND EMPTY DECEIT, ACCORDING TO THE TRADITION OF MEN, ACCORDING TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD, AND NOT ACCORDING TO CHRIST**. Literally the word for **CHEAT** means to "capture," or "take captive." These false teachers were trying to capture the hearts and souls of the Colossian Christians with their deceptive and empty philosophies. Keeping with the picture of the plant we have phrased it in our second point, **BEWARE OF THE ENTANGLING, DEADLY WEEDS OF EMPTY PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN TRADITION**.

When weeds wrap themselves around the plant they can weigh it down or even pull it down. When weeds are allowed to grow up around the plant they can take away the nourishment and water that the plant needs and the plant may die. The weeds can choke out all the life in the plant. So it is with false teaching. As we mentioned in our previous sermons these false teachers were presenting what they called a more complete form of Christianity based on human wisdom, philosophy and Old Testament Jewish rituals. But following that would only lead them away from Christ, take them captive in the clutches of the **LIAR** Satan and lead them into his kingdom and rule.

Today, we too have **worldly philosophies** that attack us. Examples: Man is the measure of all things. Our public education teaches that we all came about by an evolutionary process without any god involved and therefore we are accountable to no one but ourselves. We are told we deserve the

good life, the American dream and therefore must keep up with the Jones' and earn more to be ahead of the Smith's. Materialism! Live for this life, don't concern yourself with the next life.

In our politically correct society nothing is taboo, no one should be told "this is wrong" or "this is right." Whatever you think is fine. Therefore, today we are bombarded and besieged to accept homosexuality and gay marriage as an acceptable, alternative lifestyle; abortion as a woman's right; unscriptural divorce as a natural consequence to a bad marriage; living together before marriage as a proper way to see if you are compatible; pornography as sexual openness; disobedience to the government and those in authority as freedom of expression; gambling as recreation and innocent fun; cheating in school as a means to graduation and the desire to be No. 1 over your neighbor as praiseworthy and a well balanced sense of self-esteem.

Today we are also attacked by **empty, deceitful religious philosophies**. Examples: Christ is a perfect example for us to follow therefore, if we try hard enough we can enter eternal life by our deeds, by being **like Jesus**. If we have done wrong we must do more good things to make things right with God....we need to pray to dead believers for their help in our travels, in our sorrows and misfortunes...there is a place in between heaven and hell where we first go to work off our sins or have other relatives pray us out...all religions are good and they all lead to God...it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere in your belief...God is love so almost everybody will be going to heaven--only the very, very bad and evil in this world are condemned...you can't take God's Word literally and factually, especially in the historical sections that speak of creation, miracles and the life of Jesus...we must use non-sexist language when speaking of God or even speak of God as a she. These are only a few of the empty, deceitful religious philosophies that are found **within** Christian churches. There are hundreds more false religious philosophies and human traditions within other non-Christian religions.

In contrast to all of this empty, useless, deceptive philosophy the Apostle directs our attention to the all-sufficient, victorious Lord and Savior. We read in verses 9-10, **FOR IN HIM DWELLS ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY; AND YOU ARE COMPLETE IN HIM, WHO IS THE HEAD OF ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER**. Very simply, yet very powerfully this passage of Scripture tells us that Jesus is both God and man in one person. It tells us that all of the characteristics that belong to God dwell in Christ, not only as the Son of God, but also as the Son of Man. When Jesus took on human nature, the fullness of the Godhead was actually contained within His person and within His body. This is an inconceivable truth, which can only be believed, not understood.

Paul also declares in this verse that contrary to the false teachers in Colossae, man is complete in Christ. Christ has given to mankind all that he needs for life and salvation. Every spiritual need is satisfied.

III:

Paul goes on in vs. 11-12 **IN HIM YOU WERE ALSO CIRCUMCISED WITH THE CIRCUMCISION MADE WITHOUT HANDS, BY PUTTING OFF THE BODY OF THE SINS OF THE FLESH, BY THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST, BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM, IN WHICH YOU ALSO WERE RAISED WITH HIM THROUGH FAITH IN THE WORKING OF GOD, WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD**. How does the fullness of Christ come to mankind? It comes through the circumcision done by Christ. Obviously, this is not a physical thing, done with hands, but a spiritual one---Cutting away the sinful flesh from around the heart. In Romans 6, Paul shows how in baptism a person is connected to Christ--as Christ died to sin, so in baptism we die to sin, sin is put off and as Christ rose from the dead, so in baptism a resurrection to a new life takes place.

Paul concludes this section with vs. 13-15 **AND YOU, BEING DEAD IN YOUR TRESPASSES AND THE UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH, HE HAS MADE ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES, HAVING WIPE OUT THE HANDWRITING OF REQUIREMENTS THAT WAS AGAINST US, WHICH WAS CONTRARY TO US. AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS. HAVING DISARMED PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, HE MADE A PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF THEM, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM IN IT.**

Paul expands on the thoughts of the previous verses. In their natural spiritual state, the Colossians as well as all human beings, were morally and spiritually dead. Their thoughts, desires, words and actions were completely opposed to God's will. They were spiritually impotent and totally unable to help themselves. But God's amazing grace did not leave them in their lost and helpless state.

Meditate on this, ponder over this, reflect on this great and unimaginable truth, **HE HAS MADE US---you and me--ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN (us) ALL TRESPASSES.**

How? God through Christ wiped out the Law with all of its **THOU SHALT'S** and **THOU SHALT NOT'S**. He wiped out the ceremonial laws that required this sacrifice and that sacrifice, this festival and that festival. These were against us because they demanded a perfect, loving obedience which we could never achieve. It stood as our accuser, showing us our **SINS**. But in Christ, God has canceled that written code. He took away the curse of the Law because of sin and nailed it to the cross. When Christ died, the Law as man's accuser also died. The historical purpose of the Mosaic law also was fulfilled. It pointed to Christ. On the cross, Christ paid the punishment that we sinners deserved because of our breaking God's law, the curse of everlasting death.

But there is more. Not only did Christ offer His life as our perfect Sacrifice, thereby destroying sin's curse over us, He conquered all of our enemies by rising back to life. The picture Paul uses in vs. 15 is that of the parades conquering kings put on after having defeated their enemies. The conquered king and his captured soldiers were lead around the city in chains. Humbled and defeated they were publicly made a spectacle of before the people. This Jesus did of Satan and of all of our spiritual enemies when He descended into hell to proclaim His victory as the **RISEN AND VICTORIOUS LORD** and **KING**. This He did as He publicly Arose and showed Himself alive to His disciples and others. This He did as He publicly Ascended into heaven to rule over all things for the welfare of His Church. This is a parade in which every believer participates through faith in Jesus.

May the Holy Spirit lead us to continue to live and to grow in our Savior and in His Word as we put down deeper and ever stronger roots of faith in God's promises as found in His Son and in His Word.

**How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?
Amen.**