

Root Matters

July 24, 2016

Colossians 2:6-15

This is an air plant. Air plants are popular because they are easy to grow. They get all of the water and nutrients they need through their specialized leaves. Air plants use their roots only for attaching themselves to rocks, trees, shrubs, and the ground. Air plants are warm-weather lovers that can thrive despite neglect. This minimal maintenance requirement is a major part of their popularity.

Christians are not air plants. We don't get our life from the air. We depend on our roots in the Messiah, Jesus.

Deepen your roots and build up your life.

I'm continuing our series on Paul's letter to the Colossians. How do we live the New Life (Continued)? The New Life continues, or it stops being new. The New Life continues with gratitude.

But, gratitude for what? We thank God for our change of address! The Messiah, Jesus—both cosmic and crucified—moved us. We live at the intersection of the cosmic and crucified Christ. We take his Good News into a desperate and dying world.

We can do that only with good roots. Christians are not air plants. The New Life (Continued) depends on our roots in Jesus. *"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord,"* Paul writes in verses six and seven, *"continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."*

Did you catch the "C" word in those verses? *"Continue to live your lives in him..."* The New Life (Continued) depends on our roots in Jesus.

Deepen your roots and build up your life.

We had a couple of pea plants in our garden. They grew with wild abandon. They were pretty and productive. They have come to the end of their useful life and been "retired" from the garden.

I worried about those plants every day. That extravagant growth lived on one little root. It took almost no effort to pull that root and kill the plant. These pea plants are images of our life in Jesus.

Deepen your roots and build up your life.

How do we stay "rooted and built up" in Jesus?

First, we study God's word. "*See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit...and not according to Christ.*" (Verse eight).

This passage from Colossians two is the foundation for the confirmation ministry of this church and every ELCA church. Confirmation education is a ministry of the church to our young people and their families. In that ministry, we help our young people drive their roots more deeply into Jesus as Lord and Savior. We do that so that no one will kidnap them into worldviews that take life and deny love.

It's hard to do that for our young people if Christian education is not a priority for the adults. You are the role models for our children and youth. Unless they see you making Christian education a weekly priority in your life, they will not see it as important in theirs. The greatest asset to a Christian education program is a whole bunch of adults who are committed to being rooted and built up in the faith. Will you do your part?

Please watch the bulletin and newsletter for adult education plans for this fall.

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Second, we remember our baptisms. "*[W]hen you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*" (Verse twelve). I imagine you wash off at least once a day. I invite you to take some time whenever water touches your head. Take some time to remember, "I am baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

It's important to water our faith garden regularly. That's what happens when we remember our baptisms. Martin Luther calls this "using our Baptism rightly." In his *Large Catechism*, he urges us to "draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us..." When sin, death and evil weigh us down, he urges us to shout, "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body."ⁱ

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Third, we live in the victory. "*[God] disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.*" We are just back from an amazing mission trip. We sang and served. We worshipped and worked. We made friends and shared fellowship. Why would we do any of that unless God wins?

We walk with one another through changes and challenges. We strengthen one another in face of illness and death. We encourage one another in trust and hope. We hold each other accountable for faith and life. We invite others to join us on this journey. Why would we do any of that unless God wins?

Deepen your roots and build up your life.

Next week we'll talk more about the shape of the victorious life.

Deepen your roots and build up your life. Let's pray...

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ⁱ Tappert edition, page 442.