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Ephesians 3:17-19

Rooted

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Ephesians 3:17-19 The Inclusive Bible

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, will be able to grasp fully the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ’s love and, with all God’s holy ones, experience this love that surpasses all understanding, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In 2011 Chelsea Stern was the Music Minister here at Greenland Hills. As the church prepared for the opening of Glory Be Hall in February of that year, there was a church meeting about possible vision statements and relating that to a logo or theme for the church. I talked to Chelsea this week and I learned that she is the one who came up with the rooted, growing reaching theme. Chelsea went home after that church meeting and she said she “put some thought into it.” She had read an article that said three part statements were best for short vision statements. So she tried to narrow it down to three words. She said it reminded her of the Trinity as well: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Chelsea said she thought about sitting in Glory Be Hall and thinking about how lovely the trees looked. And the theme of rooted, growing, reaching came to her.

The rooted, growing, reaching logo was first used as the Glory Be Hall consecration and dedication service in February 2011. John Thornburg wrote a hymn for that worship using the rooted, growing, reaching theme. We sang that hymn at the beginning of our worship together today. I love John’s words, it is the love of God which provides the roots for living faith, for reaching new frontiers. Rooted in inclusive love, we’ll seek to learn and grow uniting knowledge, faith and prayer until they overflow. Made bold by love’s command we’ll work for justice, near and far, while walking hand in hand.

There is a wonderful root on the altar to help us to think about being rooted in the faith. If we are rooted we have the power to grasp the depth of God’s love and to know this love. Then we are filled with the fullness of God. How have you been rooted and grounded in the love of God?

How have you experienced fully the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ’s love? I think back to my own Sunday School teachers who hugged me and listened to me. I think of my neighbor Mr. Strobel who would give me candy when I knocked on his door. I think of my parents who loved me by helping to experience God’s love in church. Church was important in their lives and they made sure that I was at church so that it would be important in my life. I think it is funny to talk about the importance of being in church to people who are in church, but it is important to be in church. We experience God’s love in the fellowship of the church community. In this community we learn the love of Christ, both Christ’s love for us and what it means to love Christ in others, including our enemies.

I have images that have been seared into my mind from things that I learned in church. I remember a singles Sunday School class when I was in seminary at Highland Park UMC just down the road. The speaker shared about treating homeless folks as human beings, rolling down your window instead of making sure that your car doors are all locked. He talked about greeting the folks that he saw at the street corners day after day, learning their names, and developing a relationship with them. That is what it means to love Christ in others.

Who are the people who impacted your life, who helped shape and mold you in the person that you are today? One of those people in my life is the youth minister from my youth, Jim Kelley. I wanted to be in his presence, and others were drawn to him, embraced by his warmth and laughter. In his presence I felt loved and I knew God was real and that God loved me. His love helped me to see my own light.

Have you had someone in your life like that? Someone whose goodness drew you to them? When you are in their presence you know all is right with the world? Someone who brings out your best self?[[1]](#footnote-2)

My mom is that person for me. She reads every sermon that I share with you. She showed me how to be a loving parent, and inspires me to be the best mom that I can be. I want to show my kids love, and I hope that most days I do. God works through my mom because she is always there with a sympathetic listening ear and a word of advice. I have learned that it works better if I share what I am needing when I call. Mom, I need to complain. Mom, I don’t know what to do. Mom, tell me that you love me.

I have to do the same with God. We show love to God by having a relationship with God, talking to God, relying on God, and worshipping God. So, we need to share what is on our heart. God, I hurt. God, I don’t know what to do. God, I feel lost and alone. God, I am afraid. God, show me that you love me.

Our scripture shows us that we are strengthened inwardly, that Christ dwells within us, and that we are firmly founded and growing in the soil of love. This week I was visiting with a friend and she asked how it was with my soul. I said, “Well, I know God loves me but I sure do mess up a lot.” Being generous does not come easy to me. It does to my husband which is good because I need his example of generosity. A few weeks ago I got a card at chick-fil-a that gave you a free breakfast sandwich every week for a month. I couldn’t find it at the house and I really wanted my free breakfast sandwich so I asked my husband where the chick-fil-a card was and he said that he gave it to a homeless person. That was so generous, and I never ever would have thought of it. I often think of the vows we make when we join a United Methodist Church to faithfully participate in the church’s ministries with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness.

Jesus invites us to bring our broken selves to Jesus to find wholeness and healing because our lives are supposed to reveal God’s goodness. I want to live as Jesus would have me live, loving those who Jesus loves. And when I fail, I know that I will be strengthened by the witness of all of you. The company of believers that worship God together. As we share communion today I am reminded of how I am strengthened by all of those who have gone before and are now the communion of the saints. Their lives are a witness to us.

Mike Kilpatrick was on the Building Committee when Glory Be Hall was built and in my investigating I found something that he wrote about rooted, growing, reaching. About rooted Mike said, “I reflect upon the trees within our little campus, seemingly mature but still growing, and how they parallel our church. We are established, here to stay, anchored, able to withstand the occasional passing storm. Being well rooted assures our durability and sustainability. Our roots are the origin of our strength and our nourishment. They may be hidden form view but are deep, vast and well founded, providing support for all that grows above.”

As John Thornburg’s words remind us, “The love of God, both deep and wide, extending through the years, provides the roots for living faith; for reaching new frontiers. Thus rooted in inclusive love, we’ll seek to learn and grow; uniting knowledge, faith, and prayer until they overflow. And having grown in heart and mind, made bold by love’s command we’ll work for justice, near and far, while walking hand in hand.” Thanks be to God, Amen.

1. Questions taken from Rev. Karen Oliveto’s sermon: https://glidesf.wordpress.com/2016/08/29/let-your-light-shine-transcript-of-bishop-karen-olivetos-final-sermon-as-glides-senior-pastor/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)