Rooted - Part One

Grow Deep, Live Strong

# Plant

## (Psalm 1.1-3)

Today, we’re beginning a new four-week series called ROOTED. My prayer is that each of you will find yourself rooted because the Bible says in Psalm chapter 1, verse three, that a person “rooted” in their faith shall be,

*“He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers” (Psalms 1:3).*

And so, today I want to talk you about being planted, growing deeper and living stronger, because healthy churches are something God cares very deeply about. In fact, much of the New Testament addresses the details of life in the context of the community of believers. And so, God’s desire is to see each believer, each individual member of the body of Christ, healthy, growing, and producing fruit for his kingdom.

In this series, I want to help answer the question how do we get there, how are we to be rooted and flourishing in a culture or an environment that is just so much less? This is important for us to understand because this is God’s heart for the Church. I truly believe in the body of Christ, the fellowship of believers, and much of my life over the past 20 years has been defined by my commitment to discipleship in the local church. I have seen those who are planted flourishing, because they’re blessed, they’re connected, they’re engaged, they’re making a difference, and their lives are fulfilled.

On the other hand, I’ve seen those who are struggling, who don’t really feel like they’re flourishing, and Jesus told a parable about what to do for those who find themselves in that situation. In Luke chapter 13, he told a story about a landowner who year after year had been looking for fruit on a fig tree. Verse seven tells us, that the landowner spoke to the tenant, the man who took care of the vineyard. He said,

*“For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down" (Luke 13:7-9).*

And so, in this parable the fig tree had been dormant, unproductive, unfruitful, and unfulfilled. The landowner had been watching and waiting patiently but recognized that after three years it was just taking up space and was a poor investment of resources. However, the manager saw the potential in it to grow, to flourish, to produce fruit and multiply. And so, he said, “Let me give it some attention, caring for it, digging around it, and fertilizing it for another year.”

I believe this is what God calls us to as the Church, it’s called discipleship, and the command is found in Matthew chapter 28. Jesus said,

*“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).*

And so, he’s saying not to just sow the seeds of the gospel, but when they have been planted, to care for them, fertilizing them so that they grow, are fruitful, and reproduce. Now, of course, you can’t, and you shouldn’t try to force someone to be a disciple, because there is great cost to following Jesus. But I doubt a single person here would say, “I’m winning in every area of my life.” And so, there is room for encouragement, a little cultivating here and there, some deeper discipling of the soil of our lives so that we may achieve our potential in the kingdom of God.

In fact, in Matthew chapter 13, Jesus told the parable of a farmer who was planting seeds, illustrating the fact that our hearts are the soil in which the seed of the gospel is sown. And in verse three, Jesus said,

*“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up” (Matthew 13:3-4).*

And so, he was illustrating spiritual truth in a way that was easy for us to understand. The seed was scattered, it had great potential to bear fruit for the kingdom of God, but obviously that seed never reached its potential because the soil was hardened, it didn’t receive the seed, and the birds ate it up. So, Jesus continued in verse five saying, and there was some that…

*“Fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, but because the soil was shallow, when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants” (Matthew 13:5-7).*

And so, some of those seeds sprouted, they popped up, they started to grow, but then things got difficult, and the concerns of life choked the potential out of that little plant. In other words, some people start to grow spiritually, but they can’t take the heat. Other people start to grow in their relationship God, they’re flourishing spiritually, but then the worries and struggles of life choke out their potential.

But there is still other seed, and in verse eight Jesus said,

*“(This) seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:8).*

And so, the potential of this seed was unleashed, because it fell on good soil. In other words, when we hear the Gospel, when we understand God’s Word, allowing it to take root in our lives, it’s that seed that fell on good soil. That seed will flourish, growing and building relationships, discovering opportunities to serve, and using its gifts in the context of the body of Christ.

This is what the psalmist was describing in chapter 92, saying,

*“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they’ll grow like a cedar… planted in the house of the Lord, they’ll flourish in the courts of our God. They’ll still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green..." (Psalm 92:12-14).*

And so, in these three verses, the Holy Spirit describes the value of being planted in the house of God, not just going to a destination, but recognizing that we are the Church. Because when we are rooted in the Church, it’s not only an identity we embrace, but it’s an opportunity for us to bear fruit as we connect with one another as a spiritual family.

In this parable in Matthew chapter 13, Jesus gives us four different scenarios of seed being planted. And he makes it very clear that the problems were not caused by the seed, the problems were not caused by the sower, but it depended on what kind of soil the seed fell onto. And so, it’s a matter of being rooted and this is so important, because we live in a world that is socially distant, isolated and disconnected. And my prayer is that each one of you would have a healthy, sustainable, successful and fruitful experience of faith as a result of being rooted in the Church.

I believe this is so important today because we are more connected than ever on social media, but more disconnected than ever because of social distancing. And so, a lot of people secretly feel like they are failing even though on the outside it looks like they’re winning. In other words, there is the appearance of being happy and blessed, but on the inside, only you know that you are feeling differently. And so, for us to know the contentment of being rooted, where we are satisfied and feel like we are truly successful, the first thing we want to look at is Psalm chapter one.

This is a good starting place, because it gives us a solid biblical definition of being blessed. Verse one says,

*“Blessed is the man or blessed is the woman…” (Psalms 1:1).*

And I want to stop there for a moment because this Psalm begins with a word that is how many of David’s psalms start, it’s the word “blessed” and it’s a Hebrew word which can also be translated “happy.” And so, this can be confusing because of our American materialized interpretation of “blessed.” In other words, to be wealthy, famous, successful and depressed is not a blessing. To be attractive, skinny, hungry and miserable is not a blessing.

But the Scripture says in verse one,

*“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers” (Psalms 1:1).*

As I reflected on this verse, I realized that he wasn’t talking so much about the walking, as he was about the counsel, or the way. And so, he’s talking about whose voice you are listening to, the voice that you value, because it’s that voice that gets to determine the direction of your life. In other words, your definition of blessed really depends on the counsel that you receive.

In fact, in Genesis chapter 3, Adam was hiding from God in the Garden because he had listened to the counsel of the serpent. In an attempt to get Adam to recognize the truth, God asked him,

*“Who told you that you were naked?” (Genesis 3:11).*

And so, he asked Adam, “Who’s counsel or what voice are you listening to?” And that’s an important question for all of us because if we determine our standard of blessed, our standard of happiness, by what someone else tells us, for example, by what the media tells us, will most likely bring discontent and leave you feeling like a failure. And so, in many ways, whose voice you value determines your happiness.

That’s why the psalmist said, “Blessed is the man or woman whose…

*“Delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalms 1:2).*

Did you notice the subtle difference? It doesn’t say, don’t hang out with people who smoke and drink. Or don’t have friends who don’t go to church. But it says, “Blessed is the man or woman who delights in the Word of God and on his Word, he meditates day and night.” And so, our blessing or our happiness is determined by the voices or the Word we listen to, because they set our definition of blessed. It’s the “counsel” that you choose to listen to that really determines whether this year is going to be blessed.

The man or woman that tunes in, delighting in the Word of God, verse three says,

*“They are like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers” (Psalms 1:3).*

Now, some of you immediately focused in on, “Whatever they do prospers” and by that definition if we judge our lives by current worldly standards your happiness really depends on who approves of what you are doing or how much stuff you have. But that is really alienating that phrase from the text, because the key to our happiness or our blessedness is found as we focus on God and his Word. And so, we can’t take a word like “blessed” or “prosper” out of the text and attach to it a material concept; taking an earthly standard and trying to apply it to a heavenly paradigm.

Unfortunately, many of us have been trying to do things to impress people who aren’t even paying attention. We’re waiting for the applause, but they’re not even watching, and it’s no wonder we get discouraged, because we measure our standard of “blessed” by the same stuff the world measures “blessed” by. But if we “delight in the law of the Lord” recognizing that the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight we can readily accept Jesus definition of “blessed”. But it’s really a paradigm shift, because Jesus defined it this way, he said,

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:6-7).*

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:8-9).*

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10).*

And so, Jesus says, “Blessed are those who are broken, those who realize the ways of this world are meaningless, and who recognize that what they really need is God in their lives.” That’s the biblical definition of blessed, but we attach cultural definitions to biblical terms, taking a word like blessed and twisting it to fit our own selfish desires. But God describes a blessed happiness, a success that comes from studying and knowing his Word.

That’s what he told Joshua in chapter 1,

*“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8).*

But many of us look for prosperity and success from the stuff of the world, we look for happiness that comes from the stuff of the world, but there’s got to be a paradigm shift. A change of thinking from one way to another, because it’s the Word versus the world. You see, one is eternal and the other temporal, one brings life and one brings death. One seeks the approval of others, but we want the approval of God, and so it’s his Word that we need to hear. “Well done good and faithful servant.” It’s his Word that we need to hear.

You see, Jesus knew the voice of his Father, he did the will of his Father, but he knew it at a deeper level, because he was failing even as he was fulfilling his purpose. He was a failure in the eyes of the world even as he was being fruitful in his kingdom. And this is important to understand, because I meet a lot of people who feel like they’re failing, but they don’t recognize how much fruit they’re bearing.

Jesus mentioned this in John chapter 12, he said,

*“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24).*

Jesus said, the moment a seed falls to the ground and dies, it starts doing what it was created to do. But it’s not until that moment, when it’s broken and hidden, that it begins to change form, coming to the greatest realization of its potential and producing that which was always in it.

It was in that moment, when God was bringing about the salvation of the world, when Jesus had been crushed, when he was hidden in obscurity, buried in a tomb, when the people of this world didn’t get him, what was inside of him blossomed in glory. But no one could understand it, they couldn’t see what was in him, no one knew who he was. Even the Pharisees, the religious people of his day, couldn’t understand what he came to do. Now, you would’ve thought they would get it, because they studied the Scriptures, but they had an external worldly view of God’s kingdom. And so, they couldn’t understand because they were looking for something that could be seen.

In fact, one time they asked Jesus, “When would the kingdom of God come?” And Jesus replied,

*"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is…" (Luke 17:20-21).*

But Jesus said in verse 21,

*“The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).*

And so, if the kingdom of God is within you, everything out there won’t satisfy you. In other words, if I spend all of my time looking out there, I will just become frustrated, because there is a certain way that God wired me, it’s within me, and all I can do is be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season (Psalms 1:3). And so, I can only bear my fruit, and in the same way, it’s your fruit, it’s your thing, it’s your job, it’s your position, and so you just need to yield your fruit. But some of you aren’t producing anything because you haven’t been planted anywhere.

And so, you’ve got to be planted, growing deep roots, so that you can yield fruit in the proper season. The fruit is already in you,

*“The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).*

And some of us just need to go home and be a mom or dad, be a husband or wife, son or daughter, because the temptation is to give up too soon. You see, if we don’t wait for its season and we judge the fruit to early, we think we’re not being fruitful, but the Bible says,

*“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6).*

But we’re impatient, we want to know how old, how long, and then we become frustrated because we see others bearing fruit we like. But it’s a different fruit and it’s a different season. And each one of us have been created for a purpose, each one of us yields our fruit in its season, but when we’re impatient, examining our fruit, handling it, how can we know what God is going to do in the fulness of time? You see, when we judge our fruit to soon, in the process it could break loose from the branch and then we interrupt the source of its power.

Jesus said in John chapter 15, *"I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last” (John 15:16).*

And so, God wants to encourage you in this season to know that he’s working. Even when you feel like you are being crushed and breaking apart, he’s working because that’s exactly what a seed does before it grows. And so, he wants you to be patient, remaining planted, growing roots deep and strong, because you’re only responsible to produce what’s in you. You may feel like you’re not good enough, maybe you can’t do enough, but God wants to encourage you to be planted by streams of water, bringing forth your fruit in season and yielding the fruit which he put in you.

The kingdom of God is within you, and so we’ve got to get this, because anything the world gives, they can take away, but if it comes from God, if it comes from within, it’s something that the world can’t take away. That’s why Jesus taught his disciples to pray,

*“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10).*

And so, that’s our prayer, to get heaven right here, because the kingdom is within you. And all God wants is for you to yield your fruit in season, because you’ve been planted, and your roots are growing deep.

God chose you to go and bear fruit, and so church is not just a place that you go, it’s a place where you matter, and you make a difference because that’s what God created you to do.

*“You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works…” (Ephesians 2:10).*

And my prayer is that you realize that your life is a seed which has great potential, but you’ve got to be rooted so that you will flourish and not wither. God’s will is that your roots are deep and your faith is strong because you’ve been planted in the house of the Lord. Let’s pray together.