

## “Healthy Roots” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 3 – June 29, 2025

- I. **Galatians 5:24-25** – <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.
- II. **Fruit is great, but it’s only as good as the roots that make it possible.**
  - a. One time Jesus told a parable about a fig tree that was not producing fruit (Luke 13:6-9), and its owner wanted to cut it down... but the vinedresser asked for a little more time to bear fruit... as he wanted to fertilize the roots.
  - b. The roots of any plant are critical to the overall health of the plant, along with the fruit it produces.
    - i. I read some interesting facts about plants from a science writer named Hope Jahren... especially how a tiny seed begins by putting down roots.
    - ii. Of course, the first root is on a mission to find water, however, the first job is to anchor.
      1. When those roots begin to extend in that specific spot... that plant will never have the luxury of moving somewhere else... somewhere warmer or cooler, somewhere with more water, or somewhere less dangerous.
      2. Whether it faces frost or drought, insects or plant eating animals, or wind and extreme weather – it is planted for life.
      3. Yet, if the seed takes root, it can go down 30, 60, or 120 feet deep... it can split bedrock... it can pump gallons of water every day for hundreds of years, and far more efficiently than any manmade pump that’s been invented.
      4. In fact, if the root takes root, then the plant becomes all but indestructible – as she writes, “Tear apart everything aboveground—everything—and most plants can still grow rebelliously back from just one intact root. More than once. More than twice.”<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Our faith, once it has been established by the Holy Spirit, is like a great anchor in Jesus Christ.
    - i. All kinds of trials may come, and with that the struggle of sinful behaviors and desires that are a part of the flesh... but God provides the nourishment for healthy roots.
    - ii. Ultimately, the roots grow to help us “keep in step with the Spirit.”
- III. **Our reading** in Galatians provides a big contrast in the flesh... and the Fruit.
  - a. The struggles that we face are common to the world around us, and Paul writes a long list of the “desires of the flesh.”
    - i. In many ways, these are trials and troubles that would impact any plant as it faces disease, pests, and drought – if it is rooted deeply to a good source of nutrition and water, it is able to overcome.

- b. I suppose I could preach a sermon on every single item on this list of the desires of the flesh, but I realize my time is limited to a few... but keep in mind that Paul is saying that the flesh is seeking things that oppose love – oppose loving our neighbor... they are selfish desires.
- c. A big focus of this list is division... “enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy”... which are all ways that we just don’t get along with each other.
  - i. Enmity is hostility and hatred toward another; strife is disputes and arguing; rivalries are about selfish ambition; and dissensions is a word based on apostasy... but it means disunity and division based on selfishness.
    - 1. Looking at our “walk by the Spirit” (v 16), where do we fall short in these areas?
    - 2. Although we might immediately be inclined to say, “Oh, I get along with everyone... and I don’t see any trouble in our congregation,” the truth is there is no shortage of these things in our minds and actions.
    - 3. Church is a funny place because we ask people to serve and support the ministry of God, and yet we get incredibly possessive and territorial!
      - a. Sometimes people are willing to serve, but any new ideas, or any thoughts that someone might take over our responsibilities, and we aren’t loving and friendly anymore... making serving in our area uncomfortable.
    - 4. Sometimes we don’t say anything about the people or the ministry... but internally we harbor resentments, envy, and negative thoughts.
      - a. Hear the warning of Scripture – if you let these things grow and come out of you, then you “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (v 21)
      - b. This means that those who go about life practicing these things without repenting... are rejecting Christ and His work on the cross to forgive them.
- d. Another big focus of the works of the flesh are based on sexual immorality.
  - i. Again, I could preach multiple sermons on this topic, but we all know that sexual immorality and sin is absolutely overflowing in our world.
  - ii. Here again, we know that God’s Word clearly says that any sexual intimacy outside of being married... and marriage is strictly one man and one woman... but only in that very specific place are we to express God’s gift of intimacy... and that’s a high bar!
  - iii. I can’t tell you how many people will rationalize and justify their situations to make whatever they are doing okay... usually they explain that they “love” each other, therefore it must be okay.

1. However, real love is what Christ has done on the cross, and then He tells us that we also love by taking up that cross and following Him without looking back.
  2. Love is not living together before marriage... or same-sex marriage... or pornography... or lust... or any other sexual activities that the world promotes and endorses... but real love is faith in Christ, knowing that He calls us to something better.
  3. Again, the Bible is clear on these issues over and over again... those who practice these things without repentance will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- e. In that very stern warning is also a great promise... that we who are in the faith by God's grace are able to "walk in step with the Spirit."

IV. **Our Savior Jesus makes our walk possible.**

- a. He enables us to run the race with strength and courage, as we look to Him, "the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross." (Hebrews 12:2)
- b. You see, Jesus began the work of our salvation by going to the cross in our behalf... He willingly died to pay for our sins of division and rivalry... our sins of sexual immorality... our lack of love for those around us.
  - i. Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, loved us so much that He couldn't bear to be separated eternally from us... so He took all of that upon Himself.
- c. As we are rooted in Christ through our faith, we will naturally grow fruit... the Fruit of the Spirit.
  - i. However, make no mistake, the root of our faith longs for nourishment and water that grows this fruit.
  - ii. The only true way to nourish this root of faith is the by the Means of Grace... The Word of God, the Lord's Supper, and Baptism.
    1. The bottom line is that the Word of God is attached and underlying the Lord's Supper and Baptism, so we are essentially fed by the Word in every way we need to have healthy roots... and healthy fruit.
- d. In my own journey through God's Word, I can say that God opened my eyes repeatedly to the power of His grace, and the life of love that He calls me to live.
  - i. Yes, there were times when the Word cut to the heart – as it says in Hebrews 4:12, "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart," and in John 16:8, "And when He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

- ii. And with that conviction came a stronger desire to love like God does – to live out the Word of God rather than just consuming and hearing it... You might say my roots of faith grow stronger as the Word of God continues to nourish and water them.
- e. God's living Word roots us deep in Christ and keeps us anchored in His grace and truth.
  - i. By His Spirit, these strong roots of faith will naturally bear the fruit of real love that blesses others and glorifies God.
  - ii. Let's keep feeding these roots with His Word so we grow together in harmony and walk with the Spirit every day. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Adapted from Hope Jahren, *Lab Girl* (Kopf, 2016), pages 45-46