

March 3, 2019 Living, Rooted, Strengthened, Saying Thank YOU! Colossians 2:6-23

Dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, each one of the words in the title of this message is what we would call in English Class a verbal form. Verbs as you may remember from school days are action words. They describe what we do. These particular verbals are all taken from the 6<sup>th</sup> verse of what today we call Colossians chapter 2. Colossians is one of Paul's letters. He did not write it in verses. The Monks who hand copied the Scriptures in the dark ages broke the documents of the Bible down, for the first time into chapters and verses so that they and we might have a system of finding particular parts of a whole document with ease.

Verse 6 says, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in HIM, rooted and built up in HIM, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." I am tempted to say, and here we are. It is what we do each time we come together when we worship, when we share a common meal, and especially when we come together to worship and celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We bring this verse to life and we share in the experience.

Jesus said to those who gathered to hear HIM teach, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It has come to you. And what we do as we worship and work together is precisely that: we participate in Kingdom life. And everything has changed. To be sure we are not all at precisely the same place in the journey, but we are participating in the Kingdom of Heaven and everything has changed.

You see there was a time when we were trying very hard to build our own "kingdoms". Life was entirely about ourselves. What we wanted and wanted to be was in charge of our lives. Building our kingdom. At some point we came to Jesus, and some of you have been at this longer than me. We care about others. Life is less about us. We care about children in Kenya. We care about people who are homeless. We care about people who have trouble buying groceries, so we support the local Food Bank in a number of ways. Recently we gave a gift of fuel money to the Hospice in Madoc, heating fuel for half the year. Why? Because as Jesus disciples we have been called by God to care about others and to love them like family. We are involved in the Kingdom of Heaven because we follow the King. That is who Jesus is. And was. And ever will be!

What we do this morning, singing praise, praying, reading the word, listening to the teaching ministry, making an offering, participating in the sacrament, surrounded by others who are as committed as we are to sharing in this in an assembly is a visible sign, the most visible sign there is in fact, that we are living in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, right here on Mill street in Stirling, and at all the addresses that apply to your homes and mine. This is what living in Jesus looks like. This is what living in Jesus does. These activities are the activities of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are not just taking care of ourselves here, we are serving Jesus and those whom HE has led us to share life with.

You may recall the country singer Minnie Pearl on the broadcast "Hee-Haw" and long before that on the Grand Ole Opry. She would say, "I'm just so proud to be here!" I am. You should be. We are doing "living in Jesus" here. We are doing living in Jesus as we walk downtown or go to by groceries, or do our banking. It is part of who we are becoming. Likenesses of Christ Jesus.

ST. Paul calls the Colossians and reminds us that we are to be rooted and built up in HIM, that is rooted and built up in Christ. That is why we stick with the church. It is not always easy and it never is perfect. I'm not perfect. I wish I was but I know I am not. I need to be more deeply rooted in Jesus. I need to be built up in Jesus. I need to be surrounded by people who want to serve the King and be in the Kingdom. Every sermon I assemble, for you on the one hand, and for me on the other. I learn, as I prepare. Jesus is still working on me as the old Gospel chorus says. I need the assembly of faith folk around me. It is here that I see myself in the seed bed developing deeper roots, and growing that I might be fruitful in service. That is what we are being built up for, to help others outside this circle, and to draw some into the Kingdom.

Here we are strengthened in faith. We strengthened in faith as we sing with others who want to hear the old, old story because they know it is true. I sleep under a quilt every night that was stitched together and prayed over before it was given to me, by the Quilts for Cancer Group at St. Columba Presbyterian Church back in June of 2015. I never go to bed that I am not reminded, I am sleeping under the prayers of the saints. That phrase, "the saints", simply means people who believe in Jesus. Faith as described in the Bible from cover to cover is a shared experience. Those dear quilters faith, strengthens my faith. Your faith strengthens my faith. Being with you is in exercise in the midst of which I am strengthened in the faith I was taught, first of all by precept and example by Millie Brown. I was a teenager at the time. We have all come such a long way. We have all been strengthened by the faith of others in the midst of our journey.

And Paul says about this Kingdom living, it overflows in thanksgiving. Think for a moment about the yeast which is the influence of the Kingdom of God on rest of our society. Why do we have a weekend dedicated to the concept of giving thanks to God? You know the story of the Pilgrims to the new world celebrating a harvest that was plentiful enough that they knew they would make it through the winter. Farmers who came to North America where they would be free to celebrate their Christian faith as they chose. Now the western world at very least celebrates Thanksgiving. And yet you know as well as I, in too few homes is thanks actually given to God for HIS grace and HIS giving the world a singular savior in Jesus. We do. We are called to be like a cup overflowing in thankfulness to God.

Shortly we will celebrate at the Table. In the coming weeks we will remember the passion of Jesus Christ. Never accept the idea that I do this to make you feel guilty. I do this so that we might overflow in thankfulness for the forgiveness of our sins, which we have already

received. We are living, in the Kingdom of Heaven....because we have recognized the King. "All hail King Jesus. All hail Emmanuel."

Let us pray;

Lord Jesus only you could touch us with the power of the wonderful Kingdom of God. Only you could open the door and invite us to enter, to live, to put down roots, and be built up in faith, strengthened to serve you and yours. Touch us yet again with the saving power of the Gospel. In your precious name we ask, even as we express our gratitude. Amen