Rooted: A Lent Series

Psalm 25: 1-10

022121

[Read Psalm 25: 1-10, on screen] Ref. Ash Wed. and The Loop on Lent

I have a theory that a high percentage of those who say they love snow are not the ones who have to shovel it.

I generally have a problem with winter. [a bit of shallow pettiness]

1. It is uncomfortable
2. It messes up my preferred outside activities
3. It messes up my clean truck
4. It’s dark a lot more
5. It appears like everything is dying or dead and it can be a bit depressing especially when the cold is brutal

**Are there some of you who love winter more than summer?**

[raise hand or post in comments…maybe you can strike up a new friendship with other **cold-hearted**…I mean cold-loving people]

I came across an article while Jill was in the hospital that really helped me.

[Quote from Cultivate]

“This Lent is your deepening. This Lent is your gift.”

That little story has **impacted** my view of winter this year.

* I have tried to welcome winter as an opportunity to grow, rather than a few months to endure.

I have been **contemplating the trees** quite a bit.

* They look so brittle and barren…like they are dying or dead, but are they really dying or dead?
* **The 3rd graders** among us would say, “Of course they aren’t dead. They will blossom in the spring…”

**What if we took the confidence that we have in a tree’s yearly life cycle and compared it to our spiritual lives?**

I. Why care about tree roots at Lent?

* **Root activity in the winter is still a bit of a mystery to science.**

“Tree roots are ***inscrutable***.” Impossible to understand…interpret.

* We landed on **Mars** this week, but tree **roots stump us?** (pun)!



* [highlights in article] Michael Snyder, “What do Tree Roots Do in Winter”



* + **Psalm 25** asks God to teach us, (vv. 4,5,8,9) but God’s ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts (**Isaiah 55:8**)



* + - God’s ways are so far beyond ours.
    - We ourselves are complex and diverse creatures
    - Salvation comes in a moment, but knowing God, like any relationship, takes time
    - There probably isn’t a simple formula
  + As a result, the process of knowing God is a **lifelong** endeavor
    - None of us is very good at uninterrupted effort, we need seasons to help us expend great effort, then seasons to rest and synthesize what we’ve learned
    - We may not know all there is to know about roots, but they are essential to the life of the tree.
    - We will never know all of God, but the efforts in learning to know God are essential to the life of the Christian.
  + Lent is a time to dig into to knowing God more.
  + God is crazy about you and God is just waiting to work with you on this…
* **Roots are quieter in the cold earth** 
  + This time of year, we tend to slow down a bit
  + It’s cold and dark, kind of like the soil
  + We may have a bit more time on our hands
  + What if we didn’t fill it up with more screen time or foolishness, but instead tried a renewed focus on God?



* + Perhaps Lent could be framed as a season of quiet
  + A season to strengthen your roots
* **Roots have periods of activity even in the cold months**
  + It is during these cold months that root systems often expand in search of water and nutrients in advance of the spring bud break.
  + This is a perfect image for Lent.
  + Your roots can grow and expand for this season.
* **Root systems impact individual trees and ultimately the whole forest**
  + Healthy trees lead to healthy forests.
  + Unhealthy trees lead to unhealthy forests.
  + Your spiritual growth impacts you, but also impacts all of us
  + If we each decide to work on this, it will be good for our church and ultimately our world.

II. Why Spiritual Disciplines?

* “**Superficiality** is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.” -Richard Foster, **1978**



* If true in 1978, how much more in 2021?



* Classic Spiritual Disciplines or Practices call us to move **beyond surface living** into the depths.
* **Discipline** may be a negative for you. How about **practices**? Things we do to get better at our lives in Christ.
* Psalm 25 the [**Helen Keller**, “Light give me light…wordless cry of my soul…”]. We humans have a lot of wordless cries in our souls. We may not be able to articulate them, but they are real.
* There is a wordless cry to know God in each of us. **Psalm 25** helps us articulate it.
  + **Cry** -- There is a cry for God to teach, guide, show, instruct
  + **Trust** – “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.” NRSV BETTER. There is an overwhelming sense of trust in God with, for the Jewish understanding, the most important and essential component of life, the soul.



* + **Hope** -- There is a sense that only as this trustworthy God leads will we have hope.
  + **Grace** -- The Psalmist relies on the mercy of God. He feels unworthy yet trusts in God’s mercy and willingness to forgive and lead.
* How do we learn? Practice. We need periods of instruction. We need times when we bring our focus to these issues. We need to struggle

III. Before you decide you can’t do this…

* **Recognize that you must**
  + Christianity may have been watered down to a few words that we said at a church camp or an appointment in a pew once a month, but that is far from God’s plan



* + God calls and expects us to grow in the likeness of his Son.



* + To fail to do so or, worse yet, to refuse to try is to displease God.
* Let me **challenge** you today.
* [Bernie Balikian- My job is to push you so that you can do what you have always believed you could not do.]
* Many of us have **not tried** because we are **convinced**, we cannot.
* I want to ask you to join me and let’s try together
* **Overcoming 4 Obstacles**
* I’m not **super spiritual**, this isn’t for me
  + God intends spiritual growth for every believer
  + God has given the scriptures to every believer
  + His word, **plainly (Ps. 25)** invites us to ask God for growth
* I’m **too young/too old**
  + **Jesus** compared the Kingdom of God to little children
  + At what age do we start teaching our children that we love them???
  + The scriptures promise new vitality even when we are old
  + The Bible teaches a winsome renewal in coming to know God
* It’s **dull and boring**
  + What’s dull and boring is the grind of a joyless existence chasing the latest greatest thing
  + Knowing God is true liberation, true freedom
* It’s **too hard**
  + Any change is challenging
  + But most precious things come as a result of some struggle
  + Ask a new mom if childbirth was “too difficult…”
* Spiritual disciplines are designed to be practiced right in the midst of our ordinary lives: Washing dishes, picking up the kids, working our jobs, shoveling snow.
* Really busy?
  + Lent is for you.
* Tired of “frothy experiences” and shallow interests?
  + Lent is for you.
* Have you caught glimpses of spiritual strength and you long for it yourself?
  + Lent is for you.
* Frontal attack on your weaknesses leaving you even more enslaved?
  + Lent is for you.
* Have I named the “wordless cry of your soul” this morning?
  + Lent is for you.

IV. How is this going to work?

Each of the next 5 weeks, I will teach on a classic spiritual discipline/practice then we will take the ensuing week and work on it together.

* There will be an assignment.
* What are the disciplines/practices?
  + Prayer, Fasting, Simplicity, Solitude, Service, Submission, Celebration
* We will choose 5 of these and zero in
* And we’ll do it together

**Close:**

* For a tree to survive, it needs roots
* The difference between a tree that is survives and one that thrives is the activity of the roots in the winter.
* Lent is a season when the conditions are just right for our growth
* Want to know where we will start next week? Come back then and I’ll tell you!



**Prayer/Song**

**Benediction**: The eternal and majestic God of all creation is crazy about *you*. God has moved heaven and earth to *get to know you* better. As you leave this place today, remember that God in Jesus Christ is inviting you into a relationship. Amen.