

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – June 16, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Did you ever play the child game where you take a flower and you begin to pluck off the petals to see if someone loves you with each pedal you pluck? You say, she loves me, she loves me not. She loves me, she loves me not until you get to the last pedal, and you sure hope, or at least I hope the last pedal would be... She loves me. Now, I talk to a lot of people, a lot of Christians who are playing again like that with God, something good happens to them, and they say, Well, God loves me. Something bad happens and they say, God loves me not... Or after doing something good, they say, Oh, God loves me, we're at... They're doing something. Not so good. They say, God loves me not.

Well, for anyone who ever plays any version of that game with God... I have a prayer for us, it's a prayer the apostle Paul prays in Ephesians 3, Verses 16 through 19. Here it is, I pray that according to the riches of His glory, God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through His spirit, and the Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. As you are being rooted and grounded in love, I pray that you may have the power to comprehend with all the same what is the breadth and length, and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. So that you may be filled with the fullness of God.

This is a wonderful prayer. It is a big prayer about which we could say so much, but in these few moments, I wanna reflect and two of Paul's phrases. Where he prays being rooted and grounded in love. That's God's love for us. And then second Paul prays to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. But first, this is a prayer that you and I sink our roots deep down into God's love for us, and a prayer that our lives be solidly built on God's love, rooted and grounded.

Paul mixes his metaphors. One is agriculture, one is architecture. Plants need to be rooted if they're ever going to grow and bear fruit and buildings, well, buildings need a foundation, they need to be firmly grounded in order to stand... I like what Paul is praying here, because for you and me to handle life, for us to grow and mature as loving people, we have to have our roots going down deep into God's love for us, and we have to be grounded in the assurance, in the certainty that God truly loves us and that we're precious to Him.

There came a day when I decided to stop playing the silly game that God loves me, God has me not, and I decided that I was going to stake my life on God's love for me, for you that is revealed in the cross. I decided that I would stake my life on God's love. As it is revealed in Jesus story, about a prodigal who returns home and the father puts the best robe on him, he puts the family's signet ring on his finger, he kills a fated calf and he throws a party to celebrate his son, come home.

That is the love of God for you and me, that I wanna sink my roots deep into, I want my life to be built on, to be rooted and grounded in God's love.

And then Paul takes us prayer up a notch, and he prays to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. That sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? I mean, to know something that can't be known. That is to know how much God loves us. To know the love of Christ that surpasses

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knowledge. I read this and I think of my dad, he was a great dad, and I always knew that my dad loved me, but I could not have known or understood what was in my father's heart until the day I held my infant son, and I began to know or look at a mother holding her baby, I mean, the baby feels the mother's love, the baby wants the mother's love, the baby wants to be held by mother, but a baby cannot really know, can not really understand the mother's love.

And so you get what Paul is praying here, that we might know the love of Christ, the surpasses knowledge, we can enjoy His love without ever fully knowing and understanding that love for us. This morning, I was on the world wide web reading an article in Forbes magazine, online dated, October 18, 2018. Where scientists now estimate, that there are two trillion galaxies in the known universe, as far as we can know, and our hometown Galaxy, the Milky Way, it has a diameter of 200 million light years, contains up to 400 billion stars like our sun, and that's just our one galaxy. And scientists are now estimating as far as they can know that there are two trillion galaxies in the known universe.

Now why do I say all this? Because stories like this help me when I begin to talk about God's love that we were talking about, a love that will always surpass our puny knowing. Scripture tells us God is love. It does not say God has a love. No, God is a love. That means that God can no more stop loving you, then he can stop being God, then he can stop being all powerful and all knowing. There's nothing you could do that could make God love you more than he already does. Nothing you could do, though. And make God love you any less.

I know we often try to live in such a way that God will love us rather than living, because God already does love us, there are no, he loves me, he loves me not games with God.

The prophet Isaiah is right when he says, of God, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways. God's love for you. Just as you are surpasses knowledge, I find that I can spend quite a bit of time these days thinking about my problems, thinking all that is wrong with the world, I want to think more about and be in wonder and astonishment of how God's love for us surpasses knowledge.

God loves you, God is quite smitten with you, why not take some time from your busy days to ponder how much God loves you? You might wanna pray and ponder Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:16 through 19, to pray that you and I that we might be rooted and grounded in God's love, and that we might know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way.

Thank you for listening. Until next time.

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