Rooted, Built, Established

Rev. Kyle Cuperwich

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Year C, Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
Colossians 2:6-15
Grace Episcopal Church, Pemberton, NJ and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Lumberton, NJ

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him.” This is the main argument in Paul’s letter to the Colossians.

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But what does this mean? What does it mean to “live your lives in him?” How do we go about doing that? For starters, what Paul is challenging the Colossians to continue to walk in the tradition that was given to them, the teaching that was passed down to them. And not only should they talk about this tradition, but they must live it out; “walk the walk” and not only “talk the talk.” And what is this tradition that was passed down? It can be summed up using the mystery of faith that we proclaim in our Eucharistic prayer. We proclaim that Christ has died, that Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world. We proclaim that Christ is risen, that Christ defeated death and rose to new life on that first Easter morning. We proclaim that Christ will come again, that Christ will come back to judge the world and make all things right as they should be.

So, how do we live our lives in Christ? How do we live out the tradition that was passed to us? Paul outlines three ways of doing so: staying rooted in Jesus, being built up in Jesus, and being established in the faith. Being rooted means standing firm like a living tree, connecting our roots to Jesus as the source of our spiritual nourishment. Being built up means living our lives on a secure foundation and not blowing away with the winds that come with every new fad or teaching. Being established means having a level of confidence in what God is up to. It’s saying, “God, I don’t have all the answers, but I know what you have done, what you are doing, and what you will do through Christ.” Again, this confidence is summed up using the words of our Eucharistic prayer, where we confidently proclaim that Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Doing these three things should inform and transform our way of thinking about our self and our world. They should transform us into Christlikeness.

There are human ways of thinking and traditions in this world that can keep us from walking our faith and living our lives in him. These ways of thinking can include extreme patriotism, where our identity as an American becomes more important than our identity as a follower of Christ. It can include materialism, where how much we own, and the accumulation of stuff become more important than following Jesus. It can include political ideology, where our identity as Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal takes precedence over our identity in Christ. If we root and build and establish our entire being in things such as these, we will not grow spiritually or into Christlikeness.

We may even find ourselves separated form God.

This week, Paul challenges the Colossians, and challenges us, to walk in Christ and be rooted, built, and established in him above anything else in this world. Amen.