

Sermon 34, Rooted and Grounded in Love, Ephesians 3:17b

Proposition: The love of Christ must be your root and foundation.

- I. Love as Root and Foundation in Human Life
- II. Love as Root and Foundation in the Christian Life, vv. 17b-19a
 - A. “We Love because He first loved us,” 1 John 4:19
 - B. Love is the taproot that draws nourishment from Christ
 - C. Love is the foundation upon which the church is built
 - D. Love is the only way to know Christ’s Love, vv. 17b-19a

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we know that the greatest of these is love. We understand that the two great commandments are to love God and love neighbor. We know that love is pretty important, and that we need to be loving. But our text today tells us something else about love. Love, says the apostle, is our root and foundation. We are rooted and founded in love. And brothers and sisters, I want us to think about that reality together this evening. What does it mean to be rooted and founded in love? Obviously, there are two metaphors here — a metaphor of a tree and another metaphor of a building. Both together highlight the place that love has in the Christian life. Your Christian life must grow up out of the soil of love. The whole Christian church as a great temple for God is founded on the bedrock of love. This is important. No matter how well we think we know it, it bears a closer look. Raise your hand if you think you loved God and your neighbor perfectly this week. Well, that was easy. No one here loves perfectly. And all of us need to attend afresh to the proclamation that we are rooted and founded in love.

I. Love as Root and Foundation in Human Life

Even aside from the reality that love is the root and ground of the Christian life, we need to realize that love is the root and ground of human life in general. A child is conceived only through love. A child grows only through love. An unloved human being will hardly grow and will never live a normal life, for love is the root and foundation of human life. This has been one of my favorite themes to think about lately, because it demonstrates the God who is love and who has left His fingerprints all over His creation. God is love, and God has made us to love. The root from which we grow is our parents’ love. The bedrock on which our lives are built is the love we have experienced from the moment of conception until the present time.

II. Love as Root and Foundation in the Christian Life, vv. 17b-19a

But love is also the root and foundation of the Christian life.

A. “We Love because He first loved us,” 1 John 4:19

We can be Christians only because He first loved us. God’s love created the universe. God’s love created the human race. God’s love determined to send His Son to die for our sins, and God’s love came to us and made our hearts live so that we could understand His glorious saving work. Our whole Christian life is rooted and founded in God’s love for us, as Ephesians 1 so clearly celebrates. In love He decided to save us! In love He predestined us. In love He has rooted and grounded us.

What does this mean for us? It means that we must love others first, before they are lovely. How do you approach your neighbors? Do you regard them as suspect, as likely to draw you away from Christ, as being the kind of people you probably won’t want to know? Or do you sincerely wish them the best and make every effort to let them know that you love them? For example, have you learned your neighbors’ names? Have you invited them into your home? How regularly? Don’t wait for them to make the first move; you make it. That is part of what being rooted and founded in love means.

Same with your children. What do you do to show them that you love them? Yes, you provide for them. Yes, you give them many things. But do you seek to love them?

With your spouse — do you love first, or do you wait to be loved? With the sinners out in the world, the people who are hostile to Christian morality and the Christian message — when you encounter one, is your primary goal to love him, to confront him and tell him that he’s wrong, or simply to avoid him? Brothers and sisters, to be rooted and grounded in love is a reality that ought to shape our daily lives. It should be obvious to everyone who knows you that you are rooted and grounded in love. And it will be, so long as you constantly remember that He first loved us.

B. Love is the taproot that draws nourishment from Christ

Let’s talk about being rooted in Christ. What does that mean? It means spending time with Him because you love Him. We know that it’s necessary to believe in God and to trust Jesus as the one who died for our sins. But Christianity is about far more than that. It is essentially the teaching that God wants a personal love relationship with you and has acted in Christ to get it. You are rooted in Christ like a tree is rooted in the ground. Love is your root. It is the way you reach out and draw nourishment from your risen Lord.

How do you do that? All I can say is “By doing it.” How do you love your neighbor? How do you love your children? How do you love your spouse? Even so must you love Christ. You love by doing what pleases your beloved — in this case, keeping His commandments. You love by spending time together. You love by enjoying your beloved, by resting in your beloved. To love is fundamentally a personal experience, one I cannot explain farther than to say that we all know what it is. If you do not know what it is, then you are no longer human. The natural life is rooted and grounded in love. And so is the Christian life.

When was the last time you told Jesus that you love Him? When was the last time you did something and consciously thought to yourself, “I’m doing this because I love my Lord”? Do

you have and exercise the love for Jesus that you need in order to be nourished in your Christian life?

C. Love is the foundation upon which the church is built

But not only is love the taproot by which we draw nourishment from Christ. It is also the foundation upon which the church is built. This church can only exist as long as we love each other. The whole church can only exist as long as we love each other. And prior to our love comes the love of God, which loved the church into being. Do you rejoice in that love of God? And do you manifest it to others in the church? How?

Name for yourself three tangible things you did this week that showed that you are part of an organism founded on love. Things like “I sent a card to a Christian sister. I wrote a check to the church. I prayed for my elders. I picked up the signs for the church. I read a theology book so that I could help someone who’s struggling in his faith.” Have you done any of those things this week? If not, then you are moving this church off its foundation.

Brothers and sisters, we need to love God. We cannot afford to abandon our foundation. If we are known for anything other than God’s love, we may have already left the foundation.

D. Love is the only way to know Christ’s Love, vv. 17b-19a

How do you get to know the love of Christ? The habit of the soul that allows you to receive love is the same habit that allows you to give it. We call that habit simply “love.” You can know Christ’s love only through loving Him back. That’s what this prayer in Ephesians 3 says. To know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, you must be rooted and grounded in love. It’s that simple.

Love is a connector, something that binds you together with the person you love. Love is unselfish because it wants what is best for the other person, and what is best for the other person is love. We were made for love.

You cannot receive Christ’s love by mistrust, or hatred, or indifference, or even just by faith. You must be rooted and grounded in love to receive it.

Throughout this sermon, I think that I have been straining to express the inexpressible. I do not love enough to preach at length on being rooted and grounded in love. Love is an action, not an oration. Love is a commandment, not a doctrine. We love by doing. I trust that you have shown your love for Christ by listening to this sermon just now, as I have, however feebly, tried to show my love for Him by preaching it. But the real test of whether we are rooted and grounded in love will be what we do when the benediction is over and we return to everyday life. Will we show love? Will our rooting and founding in love be obvious? Or will our lives be marked by hostility, suspicion, mistrust, envy, sarcasm, lust, and self-will? Jesus loves me. This I know. Brothers and sisters, that is the most profound song in our hymnal. Is it the one that our lives sing? Amen.