



Vision #10

Rooted in the life of Jesus

w/c 3 March 2024

"Our life is all grounded and rooted in love, and without love we may not live."

Julian of Norwich

Read Matthew 7:21–29

In Matthew's record of what we now know as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus concludes with a series of comparisons where generally one alternative is good, the other bad. We see terms such as narrow/wide, sheep/wolf, wise/foolish etc. However, in verses 21 to 23 we take a slightly different tack – one where there's apparently good and bad on each side: it's more a case of not just this and yet, not just that.

It all starts with knowing God, but that relationship – if genuine – will change us and cause us to act in new and different ways, much as James noted when he wrote that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). For Matthew here, it's about both doing the will of the Father *and* knowing Jesus. How do we ensure that both these strands flow through our lives?

We can see verses 24 to 27 as a take on rootedness – it's one of the many images used by the bible writers to draw a picture of our continual connection with God. In this case it's not tree-roots we're to think of but rather the foundations of a building embedded into the rock beneath.

There are though many other illustrations and analogies to which we can turn in considering our connection with Jesus. It might be a hen and her chicks (Matthew 23:37); an eagle protecting their young (Deuteronomy 32:11); a tree by a stream (Psalm 1:3), even the image of walking in the light (1 John 1:7). And, perhaps most intimately, the image of us forming the body and Christ the head (Colossians 1:18) and Ephesians 4:15–16). How do you feel about / react to each one?

Read Colossians 1:9–14

We saw from the opening verses of the Matthew passage that our rootedness has a purpose; it is to empower us to do stuff. As verse 10 here says to *"bear fruit"*. In Psalm 1, the tree *"yields its fruit in season"*. In a parallel passage in Jeremiah (17:7-8), the tree *"never fails to bear fruit"*. In his gospel, John (14:12) has Jesus put an eye-watering limit on the scale of what we might achieve. How do we turn our connection with Christ to its purpose?

The opening of this passage further reminds us that such outcomes rely on a continuing connection so that we can be *"strengthened with all power"*. We're back to the imagery of the vine in John 15 that we looked at a few weeks ago. We do not bear fruit by ourselves but through our engagement in him. How do we keep connected?

Verse 13 gives us an image of salvation – it's as though we're living in a different country. In writing to the Corinthians (2 Cor 5:20) Paul makes it clear that he sees a change of citizenship involved; we're still living in the old country, so must act as ambassadors for our new one. Christians often have concerns about being caught up again in the ways of that old country. Dietrich Bonhoeffer thought about that in this way: *"Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God's will."* How do we take those steps?

"To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul."

Simone Weil