

ROOTED IN CHRIST : THE FAITH WE HAVE RECEIVED

Count your blessings; put your first focus there. Our biggest blessings are the ones we simply receive like gifts, like the gift of life itself.

Our Ascension fall worship theme is “Rooted in Christ.” Today we’re focusing on the word “received” and the greatest received blessing of all, the gospel of Jesus Christ.



Our theme Bible passage for this Rooted in Christ series is Colossians 2:6-7. Listen how Scripture emphasizes that our Christian faith is a gift, a blessing, a gospel not of our own making but one we have received.

- “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him.” – You see, Christ comes to us and we receive him.
- We are to be “Rooted and built up in him, established in the faith, just as you were taught.” – The Christian faith is a received faith, not something we figure out or make up on our own, not something we tailor individually as we see fit.
- The gospel is something that must be taught to us. Yes, sometimes it is more caught than taught, as we like to say, but it is still something coming to us from outside us.

This means if you “distance yourself” from the gospel, you’re probably not going to catch it. But this is something you want to catch.

This also means if you “distance yourself” from ongoing worship, the hearing of the gospel proclaimed, and your fresh receiving on a regular basis of the gospel promise, you might easily find your rootedness in Christ weakening or find yourself even falling away.

There is only one Jesus. There is only one gospel.

- The gospel is not “ours” specifically; it is God’s; but we too have been given it.
- We didn’t deserve it either, but we were given it anyway because of the grace of God. Thanks be to God!

The Apostle Paul wrote about this frequently in the letters of the New Testament. Listen to the passion and burden of heart he had about it.

- From Galatians 1, “*I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*”
- In 1 Corinthians he writes, “*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance.*” Notice the word he uses? “Received.”

- Listen to his heart ache as he writes this to some believers who were beginning to drift from the true gospel, *“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.*
- And it’s not all about him either. Listen to how the passage continues. *“But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!”*
- In Romans 3, we hear the sacred high and holy place of the gospel, the origin and power of the one true gospel. Scripture says, *“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.”*

If you ever find yourself needing to do some “church shopping” as they say, the Apostle Paul himself would tell you that the first question you have to ask is this, “Is the gospel being proclaimed there? ... the true and saving gospel of Jesus Christ?”

- If it is not the actual gospel that is being proclaimed, even if it is an attractive place, move on, keep looking.
- The Lutheran Confessions tell us the same thing. Where is the church to be found? *“Where the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered.”*
- Rest assured that the proclamation of the true and saving gospel of Jesus Christ is the first priority here at Ascension in our worship, preaching, and teaching.

This, then, is the blessing above all other blessings that we have been given:

- The saving gospel of Jesus Christ, the forgiving gospel of Jesus Christ, the empowering gospel of Jesus Christ
- This gospel that overcomes; this gospel that endures.
- This free and undeserved gift of a gospel that we can only receive and receive only by faith.

On this team we are all playing receiver – you, we pastors, all of us – receivers of the gospel.

- Yes, there’s also a lot more to the game after you receive it.
- Once you catch the ball, yes, the game plan is that you’re supposed to do something with it.
- Not only are we to be rooted in Christ, we are also to be built up in Christ and established in the faith – standing tall, branching out, extending the love and blessings of God outward to this hurting world and those in it who are so in need.
- But to think you can just do all that branching out in a fully effective and God-pleasing way without also being rooted in Christ is like if a tree tried to stand tall without any roots.
- It would be like running the play, but without the ball.

Count your blessings, that’s the way to start each day. The first blessing to count is the blessing you have received in Christ Jesus. Amen.