

# Roots and Wings

The other day, as I prepared to preach, this proverb came to mind: “Our job as parents is to give our kids roots to grow and wings to fly.” These words evoked some very powerful thoughts and images for me.

Scripture often refers to a child as a “seed”. For example, God promised that a “seed”, or descendant, of Abraham would bless all the tribes of the earth (Genesis 22:18). The ordinary seed is designed and programmed by its heavenly maker to sprout roots that will dig deep into the soil upon which it is sown. Under the right circumstances, these roots will support the growth of a stock that will break through the soil and reach for the sky. Branches and leaves will form on the stock and fruit will develop.

Like any seed, a child instinctively needs soil that he/she can sink roots into. A child’s family provides that soil. It is in the family that a child receives his/her identity. The child is given a family name and is socialized in the family. The child learns one or more languages, is educated and learns all the societal customs and social graces necessary to live in a given society within the family. The child experiences what it is to be loved and cared for in the family. By interacting with parents, siblings and the extended family, in the give and take of everyday life, a child is taught to love others by word and deed. In the family, a child learns values, ethics and morals. By watching parents, friends and relatives, a child learns and incorporates a work ethic and a sense of what is right and wrong. A child learns to make sacrifices and delay gratification, for the child’s own good and for the good of the family. Familial love, therefore, must include the discipline of a child. A child’s rude, selfish, harmful and potentially criminal behaviors are punished so that they will not flower into full-blown sin and mayhem when the child matures into adolescence and adulthood. In the family, a child learns to say: “I was wrong”, “I am sorry”, and “forgive me”. A child also learns to say, “I forgive you”, in response to an injury received.

It is in the family that a child learns that he/she is a part of history. At first, the child learns his/her family history, about his/her parents, grandparents and extended family. As the child matures, she/he is taught that she/he is a member of a society that has its own history and that the child’s society is part of a broader history of mankind.

It is in the family that a child learns that he/she has a destiny. Over the years, the child learns that he/she is expected to one day to leave his/her family of origin and begin a family of their own. Children learn that, like a plant, they must blossom, grow and bear fruit, so that the human race continues generation after generation, into the future. In the family, the child learns that, like a plant, human life has a beginning and comes to an end. The child learns that, as his/her parents age, he/she must help them in the end, as they pass from this life. The same family that provided the soil in which the child is rooted must also help the child sprout wings, so that the child can fly away, find a mate, and start the cycle of family again.

It is in the family that a child learns to be dependent upon mother, father, siblings and extended family and, at the same time, learn to be independent, to want to strike out on

her/his own and start something new and exciting. What the child learned and experienced in his/her family of origin forms the soil around a child's roots that can sustain him/her as they spread their wings and fly toward their destiny.

I am so thankful for the soil that surrounds my roots. I am thankful for a mother and father and extended family that gave me an identity, a history and a destiny. By their words, example, love and discipline, they provided a foundation upon which my life is built. They taught me that that I came from a line of people that worked hard, saved, preserved what they were given, and what they earned. They taught me that the personality traits they valued above all others were honesty, personal integrity, faithfulness and loyalty. My only regret is that these traits and values should have been reflected more in my life.

The soil around my roots was not placed there by chance or accident. Our family history and identity was not limited to family lines, places of birth and the forces at work in the historical epoch within which each generation blossomed and grew. My ancestors had sunk their roots deep into good soil. My family of origin was part of a larger family; God's family. They were a part of the Holy Christian Church. The Church family is rooted and finds its identity in the Holy Bible. It is in the Church that my family sunk their roots into God's word, and through that Holy Word, God shaped and molded them.

My family brought me to God's house. God made me a part of HIS family and began a process of transformation when I was baptized. From a very young age, I heard God's Word. As I matured and learned to read, God's Word was placed in my hands. Over the years, I have read and studied God's Word.

As I studied the Bible, I came to see that my roots, as a child of God, sank into very deep soil. My faith family history is traced back to creation. The Bible records God's Law. The law reveals God's desire for humankind. It sets a boundary around the other and the other's spouse and property. God tells us to not cross that boundary. God's whole law is based upon love: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and your neighbor as yourself". The text describes in chapter and verse my ancestors, through faith. It details their finest accomplishments and triumphs through faith in God. These triumphs and accomplishments were recorded to serve as powerful examples for me to follow. The same text reveals His peoples' greatest weaknesses and failures. Their weaknesses and failures were recorded for the purpose of being a warning to me, so that I do not venture down the same road. The Bible reveals that because of sin (the transgression of God's laws), we all have a common destiny: the grave. At the same time, God's Word speaks of another destiny that lies beyond the grave. The Bible speaks of a new creation and of resurrection to new life. Resurrection and new creation are a gift from God that comes through His Son, Jesus, the only One on this earth who fulfilled God's Law and served as a sacrificial lamb by being punished and dying for our sins. This is the history my roots are sunk into. This is what feeds me. That same text causes wings to sprout so that I can move forward and out into the world, confident in God's leading. My only regret is that I what I do and say would better reflect that in which I am rooted. I have faith, however, that if I just get 'out of the way' and let the soil and the nutrients have their way, I will grow more and will reflect more of what sustains me.

I hope this little piece of writing will move you to reflect on your own roots and what they are sunk into. I hope that parents and grandparents will reflect on the seedbed they have prepared for their children and grandchildren.

The good news of Scripture is this: The Bible is a gift from God to everyone. God is constantly holding it out to you and to me. His most passionate desire is that we sink our roots deeply into His Word: our destiny and the destiny of those we love depends on it. God wants you to see the Church as a greenhouse. Within its walls are seedbeds filled with the finest soil. God invites all to come and sink deeply into His soil.

The congregation at Grace soaks up the nutrients from God's good soil on Sunday mornings at 9:00 and 10:30AM. We have Bible studies on Tuesdays at 7:30 PM and Wednesdays at 11:00 AM. Check out videos of our worship services on the web at <http://www.gracelutheranelowna.com/WeeklyWorshipServices.html> and follow the links. You are most welcome to come and experience worship at Grace any Sunday morning.

Yours in Christ's service

Pastor Ed Skutshek