

Ephesians 3: 14- 21  
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“Rooted and Grounded in Love”

Playing Church...

Do you have stories of your children pretend playing church? Or, did you ever pretend play church when you were young? I remember hearing a family story of my older cousin, Michael, pretend playing church-- he was the preacher and he was baptizing; however, the poor cat that he was baptizing didn't appreciate the sacred beauty of the moment!

Church is an expression of faith, rooted and grounded in the love of Christ that we co-create. Church is where we learn to practice loving peace, forgiveness, mercy, grace, and the just desires of God.

Church is one public space and gathering where many from different backgrounds (cultural and status) come together and faithfully practice shared community.

The art of AWAKENING OUR INNER-BEING...

Where the letter to Ephesians speaks prayers for strengthening the “inner man”; this inner being represents the interior of one's life-- one's soul. The inner being is the realm of spirituality.

Two reasons why we do not develop or explore the interior of our being (our spiritual inner-person):

1. We are afraid. We are afraid to delve into our inner hearts; we are afraid to face what we have suppressed. We are afraid of what we will find. We are afraid of the unknown. We are afraid of leaving the realm of what we readily understand and sense with our physical being. The spiritual inner being of our lives represents mystery-- mystery can be frightening.
2. We are distracted. We are often lost and distracted in the world of conceptuality. Conceptuality is the mental space where we infer and project meaning and definition onto reality. Conceptuality is not reality, it's an interpretation of reality. Conceptuality is a world of symbols and notions that are subjective.

A story about being distracted and lost in a world of conceptuality:

When I took Sophia to hike Pikes Peak in Colorado (a rite of passage of sorts in our family), we enjoyed the scenery and shops of Manitou Springs a couple of days before our Pikes Peak summit attempt. A wonderful artist named Charles Rockey has a studio in Manitou Springs; Rockey looks like a wizard from Harry Potter or the Lord of Rings with his long silvery hair and long beard. It's a rare feat to see Rockey in his studio. He was all alone. He was gracious to spend time with us and talk; he gestured toward the scene outside of his art studio window overlooking the main street of Manitou where the tourists were passing by and the beautiful backdrop of Red Mountain. As we visited,

Rockey commented on the number of people that he observed on a daily basis with their heads glued to illuminated screens of cell phones-- oblivious to the natural wonder and beauty all around them. What are cell phones? They are in part, an extension to conceptuality. It's easy to miss the wonder and beauty right under the tip of our noses in the distraction of conceptuality.

#### "ROOTED AND GROUNDED"

The phrase "rooted and grounded" in Ephesians is similar to the phrase in Colossians 2:7, "rooted and built up". Again, the notion is that Christians (Hebrew and Gentile alike) are creating together a living body of faith planted and fashioned in the love of Christ. "Rooted" is an agricultural metaphor, and it suggests that we need to roll up our sleeves to do the hard work of spiritual growth. "Grounded" is also a metaphor, it comes from the world of construction. The acts of being "rooted" and "grounded" speak to the engagement and focus required of growing and maturing spiritually in our lives.

The foundation of faith that the letters of Ephesians encouraged first century Christians to root and ground was the love of Christ (3:17), Such a faithful foundation was one where the Hebrew Christians and Gentile Christians of the first century would learn to mutually affirm one another, with Christlike grace (1:6,7;2:8) and in peace (2:14,15, 17).

We practice faith in the presence of others; we learn to live out our faith in community-- the community of our family, our church, our workspaces, and in all of our journeys that intersect the paths of others.

Diana Butler Bass writes of grounded faith:

"Sometimes critics decry spirituality as individualism, but they miss the point. Spirituality is personal, yes. To experience God's spirit, to be lost in wonder, is something profound that we can all know directly and inwardly. That is not a problem. The real problem is that, in the last two centuries, religion has actually allowed itself to become privatized. In the same way that our political and economic concerns contracted from "we" to "me," so has our sense of God and faith. In many quarters, religion abandoned a prophetic and creative vision for humanity's common life in favor of an individual quest to get [oneself] to heaven. And, in the process, community became isolated behind the walls of buildings where worship experiences corresponded to members' tastes and preferences and confirmed their political views." (Diana Butler Bass, Grounded)

Ways to root and ground in Christian love:

- Give one another the benefit of doubt.

Believe that others are doing the best they can by what they know— and understanding that, maybe what they know is in doubt (disorienting, uncertainty,traumatized) in their own mind.

What is this like, the decision and action, to give another the benefit of the doubt?

It's like, in Pauline theology, Hebrew Christians and the gentile Christians the benefit of doubt in believing that they too were fully loved by God and that they

were actively trying to figure out life in meaningful— and sometimes, in deeply flawed ways.

#### “BREADTH AND LENGTH AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH”

While the dimensions of “breadth and length and height and depth” are of no specified or directly named object, it’s possible that the phrase is a poetic vision of the architecture of faith and love that we are building in our lives and faith communities together. The scope and liberty of the inner-being, of the spiritual realm of faith, is wide and inexhaustible.

When you’ve rooted and grounded yourself in Christlike love, your essential inner being is liberated, and your experience of faith (and life) becomes boundless, and able to soar “what is the breadth and length and height and depth” of “the love of Christ” (The way Jesus lived the love of God). Amen.