

“Rehearse Who You Are”

Colossians 2:4-12

At this point in our wintertime, we begin to look forward to and anticipate springtime. Danette and I anticipate our daffodils and tulips beginning to poke through the ground, reminding us how much work happens below the surface, long before the stems and blooms arrive.

It's not so different with the seasons of our hearts as we move from wintertime to springtime. As we talked about last week, we all experience wintertime's down times, depressing times, grieving times, times when we're struggling. If winter requires us to trust in God's presence, spring calls us to rehearse who we are as followers of Christ. Spring calls us to rehearse who we are as baptized children of God. There's no coming into bloom, there's no being made new, without being rooted in who God is and who He says we are as his children.

If we believe God is who he says he is, then we can trust what God says about us – his children.

In his letters, St. Paul reminds his readers and us of the wonders of the cross, of the character of Christ, and all that Jesus accomplished on our behalf before he instructs us on how to live in our true identity as Christians and how to walk in faith. Right believing leads to right living.

Martin Luther's emphasis on right believing motivated him to translate the Bible into German and to write the catechism so everyone could learn what it means to be a Christian. He thought we should rehearse the truth of who we are over and over again because we so easily forget.

Luther advised that we repeat to ourselves over and over again, “I am baptized, I am baptized . . .” We rehearse who we are until it becomes second nature. We are baptized children of God. We are the body of Christ. We are his church.

Rehearsing who we are leads to right believing that leads to right living. Rehearsing who we are gets us through the wintertime’s and into the new life of springtime. When storms threaten to crush the new buds forming in our lives, we rehearse the truth of the gospel and our identity as children of God. God is with us in the wintertime’s and gifts us with new life and even eternal life in the springtime.

We need to rehearse who we are because people will try to delude us, try to brainwash us with false teachings as they did with the first Christians in Colossae.

Paul responds in the first 2 verses of our text . . . ⁴I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments. ⁵For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

The only way to combat wrong thinking is by filling our hearts and minds with truth. When we rehearse the truth of who we are in Christ, who we are as baptized children of God, then we easily recognize a counterfeit by knowing well the real thing.

As gardeners of vegetables, berries, and flowers we know that fertilizing and watering nourishes the plants we want to grow as well as the weeds we don’t want to grow. How do we tell the difference? The only way to know the difference between a real flower and a weed is to study and know the attributes of the real thing. The weeds in our gardens will always try to crowd out and overwhelm the flowers and plants we want to grow. We must know what we are feeding and growing.

In the same way, we need to be able to recognize what's nourishing us and what's poisoning us. We need to be nourished by the truth of Jesus Christ and the lies that try to brainwash us.

Some of you remember the book and movie, "The Shack", that we did a book study on several years ago. The father who is grieving the abduction and murder of his young daughter, has an encounter with the Holy Spirit played by a young Asian woman who takes him into a huge garden full of weeds. She helps him clean out the weeds to help him renew his faith in a God who gifts his daughter with eternal life portrayed by the little girl running through a beautiful mountain valley of flowers with other small children.

St. Paul reminds us that we are rooted in Christ. "The firmness of your faith in Christ" despite the false teachings we're tempted with.

Psalm 1:3 . . . ³They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

What happens to a plant when its roots are nourished and connected to a water source? We have 3 water barrels collecting roof water on 2 corners of our house. The rainwater nourishes our plants when it doesn't rain. Plants that are nourished are fruitful. Children of God who are nourished with God's Word and presence are fruitful.

Again, Colossians 2:7 says . . . "you are rooted and built up in him and established in faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

Paul paints a picture of growth. He makes it clear to his readers that as Christ-followers, our faith in Christ plants us firmly in Him. We grow and bear fruit that may not be physical or monetary gain as some of the most thankful and fruitful Christians live in humble

circumstances. Every believer, regardless of their heritage, upbringing, biblical knowledge, or personal track record can abound in thanksgiving when we are truly rooted in our faith in Christ. You stay rooted by rehearsing who you are.

Paul gives more instruction in verse 12 . . . “you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

No matter what age we were when we were baptized, God took action. God acted through his spoken Word, through the faith of those who were gathered around us, through the water poured over our heads, to adopt us into His family. The community of faith into which we were baptized made the commitment to raise and nurture us as children of God.

We learned we were buried with Christ in baptism, our sins were forgiven, and we were raised with Christ to live a new life, a springtime life, a faithful life in Christ. We are baptized children of God. We rehearse who we are every day. The church, the body of Christ, is the place and the community in which we rehearse being children of God.

Danette and I were taught some history of the physical church and the people who worshiped in them in the early 1800’s during our stay in Gatlinburg, TN.

We spent a day driving up into Smokey Mountain National Park and driving around Cade’s Cove Loop. It’s a one-way loop around a huge, beautiful valley well into the mountains. Have any of you driven that loop?

There are several stops along the way where we walked through several cabins and churches from the 1800’s. The oldest church building was Baptist and built in 1827. It was one large room with very old wooden pews and a small platform in the front.

In the cemetery behind the church were stones from the 1800's as well as new ones from folks recently deceased. It was a smaller version of the cemetery behind my home church on Abbeyville Rd., where we will go to rest someday.

An old grist mill powered by a wooden water wheel was actually grinding corn while we watched. I'm always amazed at how people lived 200 years ago. One of their first priorities was always building a church. It was the gathering place of God's people. The church was where they came to rehearse who they were as children of God. While their crops were nurtured and bore fruit in their fields, their faith was nurtured and bore fruit in Christian community.

That legacy of faith from the Colossians, from our ancestors, and from the early members of Divinity, is the faith in Christ that we are nurturing and growing today.

As we anticipate springtime, new life, and resurrection, we rehearse who we are as God's children which leads to right believing that leads to right living as the body of Christ – his church in the world.

When storms threaten to crush the new buds forming in our lives, we rehearse the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and our identity as children of God. God is with us and gifts us with new life.

Springtime is coming. Jesus is coming anew.

May the peace of God . . .

#328 – Restore In Us, O God