

Joke: A man buys a paint factory in a small town.

He visits the local volunteer fire department to see for himself if they'd be able to handle a fire at his plant. What he finds convinces him they could not...the whole fire department consists of one old pumper truck and a bunch of volunteers he finds less than reliable. He tells them "Boys, I'm sorry to tell you this but I'm not confident you could handle a fire at my plant. I'm going to contract with the nearby big-city fire department".

A few months later the unthinkable happens and the plant catches fire. The owner calls the big-city fire department, and when they show up the fire chief decides that it's just too dangerous to approach the plant. He decides to set up a roadblock to prevent anyone from going near it, and they begin to wait it out. Just then the local boys come barreling down the road, fire bell clanging and siren blaring. The driver is waving his arms to get the big-city firemen to move out of the way, and crashes right through the barricades. They smash through an overhead door into the plant, set up a few hoses and start fighting the fire. The guys without hoses grab shovels and start flinging dirt onto the fire.

The big-city fire chief sees this and shouts "C'mon boys, let's get in there and help 'em out!" After a few hours their efforts pay off, and they manage to save a large portion of the plant. The owner is happy as he can be, and tells the local fire chief "That was the most amazing thing I've ever seen! Thank you! I'm going to write you a check and donate \$10,000 to your fire department! Do you have any idea how you're going to spend it?" The local chief thinks for a moment and says:

"Well, I don't know what we're going to do with the rest, but first thing tomorrow morning that fire engine is getting new brakes!"

This is our last week in our Easter series today we will be looking at The Road Beyond Easter: Rooted in Jesus

Now that the resurrection has happened what are we supposed to do with it

Show video: www.skitguys.com

In the video, we see that Redwood trees have a remarkable root system.

They have no taproots like most trees. They have what are known as “lateral roots,” which can extend up to 100 feet and they intertwine with the roots of other Redwood trees which add support and strength.

And the thing is they need the support and protection of other trees in the forest to grow as tall as they do and to stay upright in storms and winds.

Show root system of Redwood trees.

As mentioned in the video, “Redwoods do for each other what they can’t do alone.”

That sounds like a lesson we could all use. Not concerning trees but how we act and interact with one another.

It is a lesson the apostle Paul wrote about in his letter to the church in Ephesus:

Ephesians 3:16–18 (NLT) - 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.

17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. 18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

How we act and interact with others is the very sinew of the “roots” we spread as Jesus followers.

So how do we grow healthy roots - established in love - that bring life, health, healing, and strength to those around us?

It begins like this:

First, Healthy Roots Grow: When We Love One Another Unconditionally

John 13:34–35, (NLT) - So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

That Redwoods intertwine their roots to strengthen and uphold each other is a beautiful picture of the nature of this command given by Jesus.

He needed his disciples to hear and understand these words for all that would shortly come their way.

And we need to hear and understand these words as we seek to live our lives “rooted and established in His love.

Do you ever wish you could ask one of those present that night with Jesus if his words made a difference in their life?

Truth is, we have some written words that show us just how impactful Jesus’ words were.

Reading the New Testament, we can see actions that affirm they listened and obeyed.

The apostle John, many years later, wrote the following to remind his readers, which include us, of what it means to love as Jesus did.

1 John 4:9–11 (NLT) - God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. 10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

And healthy roots grow when we love unconditionally.

And that leads us to our second point: Healthy Roots Grow: When We Love One Another Sacrificially.

Philippians 2:5–8 (NIV) - In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

That Jesus loved sacrificially, for us as Christians, should be obvious. But is it? Could it be that his ultimate act of sacrifice has become so familiar to us that it has lost its impact?

The roots of Jesus' sacrifice reach as far as the circumference of the world and as deep as any ocean.

Jesus, being the very nature of God, made himself nothing.

He was born in a manger a helpless baby. Reliant upon newly minted parents for his care.

King Jesus, taking on “the very nature of a servant.” Was obedient even to death.

What sacrifice!

So here, Paul implores those who bear the name ‘Christian’ to put on this same mindset. To love sacrificially. To humble ourselves on behalf of others. And to love with the heart, mind, and soul of Jesus, who willingly “made himself nothing” on behalf of others.

And church I realize that some people are easier to love than others. But in that verse in Philippians it doesn't say in your relationships with one another that agree with you. In your relationships with one another when they love you in return. It simply says, in your relationships with one another.

And let me just pause here to say this. Maybe you think you're too broken. Well, here's the truth broken pots spill more water. Truth is I'd rather see your scars because it encourages me that if you made through I have hope of making it also.

And one more thing the pot doesn't tell the potter what's its worth. The Potter tells the pot what it's worth and Heaven sent its best because God thought you were valuable.

Broken pots spill more water so let God pour out of you what He has done in you.

The apostle John affirms just how far and wide our roots of faith should be encouraged to grow:

1 John 3:16 (TPT) - This is how we have discovered love's reality: Jesus sacrificed his life for us. Because of this great love, we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another.

Am I actually being called "to lay down my life" for others?

Maybe. But if not that, what else could this mean?

Let's continue in 1 John 3:

1 John 3:17–18 (NLT) - 17 If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister* in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? 18 Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

Long before the idiom "actions speak louder than words" was first published many by the way believe it was in 1692, John helps us understand the breadth and depth of loving sacrificially.

Healthy roots grow when we love one another unconditionally and when we love one another sacrificially. But there is another area I want to share today. It's something we all need. And yet something often hard to give and receive.

Point number three is this, Healthy Roots Grow: When We Love One Another Forgivingly

Paul wrote these words to the church in Ephesus:

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV) - Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

That body of believers needed encouragement in this area. There had been some instances where they had not lived up to those words.

So, Paul reminded them of the importance of forgiveness in the life of this young church. It desperately needed healthy roots. And without forgiveness, those roots could not grow and intertwine.

Truth is, we need that reminder as well sometimes don't we? To forgive. As well as the reminder of "Why."

And what is the reason why? We are to forgive just as, in Christ, God forgave us.

Colossians 3:13 (NLT) - Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Listen there is no shortage of opportunities to be offended. I'm sure I've done things that has offended the heart of God. Yet He shows me grace.

Should not I do the same

Can you recall the first time you were forgiven for something by someone other than a parent?

I don't recall if it was my first time or not. But I remember when I took something from a store and got caught. Neighbor store people knew who you were. With tears streaming down my face I had to say I'm sorry. They didn't say never come back, they just said don't ever do it again.

I don't recall if they told me I was forgiven after I said I was sorry, but them not holding it against me and allowing me to return to that store let's me believe by their actions I was.

And you know what, there's a few Bible verses that talk about that very thing.

1 John 1:9 (NIV) - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness

Truth is when I was busted at that store I surely did not want to admit what I had done. And I must add that it happened long before I became a follower of Jesus. But I will also admit that day I experienced the relief and joy of forgiveness.

And that's the forgiveness God gives to us. . .

Psalm 103:12 (NLT) - He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

Hebrews 8:12 (NIV) - For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV) - that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Colossians 2:13–14 (NLT) - You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

And He simply asks us to pass on to others. . .to make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Healthy roots grow when we love forgivingly. And lastly healthy roots grow when we are Rooted In Love

1 Corinthians 13:1 (NLT) - If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

We can tell a hurting world how much we love Jesus and how much Jesus loves them.

We can tell a wayward family member how much we care. We can tell, them. . .well, you fill in the blank. But without loving unconditionally, sacrificially, and forgivingly. . .we'll likely never be heard.

May we be about growing the healthy, healing, supporting roots of love that Jesus shared on the cross:

John 3:16 (NLT) - "For this is how God loved the world: He gave* his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.