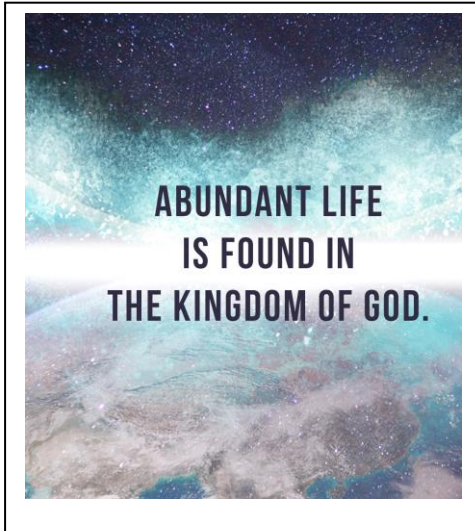


Sunday 6th February 2022.

Standing Firm.



Scripture: Col 2:4-8 & Matt 7:24-27

This week we are starting our Sermon Series – COLLIDE.

Since the beginning, the Christian faith has been on a collision course with the culture

around us. The values of the world do not align with the values of our faith.

The world tries to water down the Gospel and even spread false truths alongside it. These deceptive truths are very enticing, however they will not provide anyone with the abundant life Christ came to bring.

Let me ask you - Who do you listen to? Are you roots deeply embedded in the rock of Christ or easily pulled out by the sinking sands of this world?

I had a great morning on Tuesday, working in my garden. I wanted to relocate a couple of plants and prune my bushes. Have a look at the images of 2 of the plants I relocated. Can anyone guess which one would have the stronger roots?

Interestingly, the bulkier one had many roots leading all over the place and came out of the ground easily. But the smaller one just had one big root firmly secured in the ground. I almost fell over trying to get this one out without damaging anything.

Both of our readings speak of being firmly rooted in Christ. Paul uses this illustration when writing to the Christians at Colosse. Just as plants

draw their nourishment from the soil through their roots, so we draw our life-giving strength from Christ.

And in Matthew, just after Jesus has given the Sermon on the Mount and the beatitudes, He tells the story of 2 lives.

Like my plants, these 2 people may look similar. Perhaps one is bigger than the other – we don't know. They both build, they both hear Jesus' teaching and they both experience the same set of circumstances.

But there is a difference – one ignores what Jesus said. If you saw them down the street you wouldn't notice any difference outwardly – their lives look similar.

But what happens when they hit turbulence in their life?

One man built his life on a false or inferior foundation – not thinking about his life or its purpose – he headed to destruction out of thoughtlessness.

The other one followed the teachings of Jesus and built his life on the foundation of truth – Jesus – the rock. His life purpose was headed for eternal life through trust and obedience.

This is what Paul was saying. He was referring to teaching that was contrary to biblical doctrine which undermined Christianity in several different ways.

Worldly values are inconsistent.

A common motto today is *“follow your heart – do whatever makes you happy.”*

Yet in Jeremiah 17:9 we are warned that the heart is wicked, deceitful and confusing.

The world says that we need to make sure we are happy no matter what but Jesus says we should lose our lives for His sake – meaning we trade all of the stuff that makes us “happy” in our kingdoms for His kingdom where we will find deep abiding joy.

Happiness is an ever-moving target from one day to the next, sometimes an hour at a time.

Worldly values are enticing.

This is what Paul was convicting the Christians at Colosse about. Many people spend their lives searching for a truth that lines up with their lifestyle. Many reject the truth in scripture because it contradicts their lifestyle. They receive something meant to bring conviction and ignore it as useless.

Jesus tells us specifically this is the goal in John 10:10 “*the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*”

Many people give credit to humanity not to Christ with being the answer to life’s problems – this is false religion. There are many man-made approaches to life’s problems that totally disregard God. To resist these false beliefs we must use our minds, keeping our eyes on Christ and studying His word.

Receiving Christ as Lord of Your life is the beginning of life with Christ.

But we all must continue to follow His leadership by being rooted, built up and strengthened in the faith.

The threefold approach to living for Christ is:

1. Committing your life and submitting your will to Him.
2. Seeking to learn from Him, His life and His teachings.

3. Recognize the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to be a guide and a strength to live life on earth. John 14:17 says: *“He is the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.”*

It takes devotion and effort to learn to walk in step with the Spirit as you follow the teachings of scripture. There will always be temptations to veer off the path and go adventuring our own way. But temptations are only temporary, much like the rewards they promise.

Abundant life is found in the Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit was given as a gift to help lead and guide the way.

I wonder how your faith in Christ stacks up – are your roots grounded deeply to Him so that when worldly false teachings come to draw you into their web, your roots, like my small plant, are firmly embedded and the world will move onto an easier subject.

Like my other plant which had a whole lot of little roots seeking nourishment all over the place, the world easily tempts you because you are looking in too many of the wrong places for an abundant life instead of a strong root system into the Tree of Life – Jesus Christ.

The world is trying to draw us into values that are inconsistent, enticing and at worst destructive. But today, we all have the opportunity to invite the Spirit of God to guide us into scriptural truth. The one thing we can stand on, knowing it will remain firm.

Will you choose to take a stand today and every day going forward?

Will you choose to trust the leading of the Spirit?

Will you make a daily commitment to scripture?