

“Roots”

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Readings:

Isaiah 58:11

Psalms 92:12-14

John 15:1-5

Introduction

- During the pandemic, isolation imposed a new rhythm on us.
 - Many rediscovered forgotten passions or found new ones;
 - Mine was for the plants.
 - Although the love for plants was in my blood, as if it were a family inheritance, it was in the silence of quarantine that I immersed myself in this universe.
 - When I become interested in something, I delve deep, I research, I take courses, and I learn by doing.
- In this process, I learned some obvious lessons and others that were surprising.
- Plants are not just decoration;
 - They are living beings that communicate and require constant attention.
- The sun, essential to life, is also a challenge:
 - I killed a fern from too much sun and a cactus from too little.

- I learned that when a plant wilts, it is screaming.
 - The problem is that a wilted plant can indicate:
 - water shortage
 - or excess water.
- I've lost plants through negligence and others through excessive zeal.
- But the most impactful lesson was about the flowers.
 - We tend to think that flowers are synonymous with health, but that's not always the case.
 - Sometimes, the plant blooms in a desperate effort to survive.
 - A final effort to spread seeds before dying.
- Gardening is hard work, and having a garden requires vigilance.
- Easter reminds us that what seems buried can come back to life.
 - The winter of the soul can become spring.
 - But spiritual life, like a garden, needs to be cultivated with the intention of producing strong roots.

1. Cultivating Roots

- What sustains the plant is what is hidden beneath the earth.
 - It is the roots that seek nutrients in the dark.
 - and anchor the stem during storms.
- In Isaiah 58, we see a people focused on the aesthetics of faith.

- They fasted and performed rituals with perfection.
- In human eyes, their spiritual garden was full of flowers.
- But God looked down and saw dry roots.
 - There was no real life.
 - Just a religious performance.
- We often judge someone else's garden by the flowers in it.
 - If someone prays eloquently, we presume unwavering faith.
 - If a prayer is simple, we judge it as a sign of little faith.
- When we think about plants, we remember that in winter, under the snow, the plant appears dead, but life pulsates beneath the surface.
 - Snow insulates the soil from extreme cold, allowing the roots to store energy.
- This is an image of Easter.
 - On Saturday, before the resurrection, it seemed as if winter had won.
 - Jesus was buried, and the silence was absolute.
 - But beneath the surface, God was at work.
 - Winter was not death;
 - It was the preparation for the resurrection.
- This is the root of our faith.
 - Resurrection is what brings us the most important nutrients.

- It is because of the resurrection that everything else comes from it.
- PIC 1 (date palm flowers): Psalm 92 says that the righteous will flourish like a palm tree.
 - In the desert, the date palm spends decades deepening its roots until it finds water.
 - It can take 80 years to bear its first fruit.
 - PIC 2 (fruits): But when it begins to flourish, it nourishes generations.
- Nurturing our roots is what sustains us.
- Cultivating roots means taking root in the resurrection of Christ.
 - For as we read in John 15, from this we will produce more and more life.

2. Cultivating Under the Light

- Another secret to the resilience of plants is the sun.
 - You can have the best fertilizer, but without light the plant will wither.
- There is a process called etiolation:
 - In the absence of light, the plant grows super fast.
 - We think the plant is healthy.
 - But in reality, she is desperately stretching for light.
 - She turns pale and the stem weakens.
 - The leaves grow spaced apart from each other.
 - It's rapid growth, but fragile and unhealthy.

- Our spiritual life shows signs of decline through
 - Life seems meaningless;
 - There is a loss of interest in spiritual disciplines.
- These are signs that we are trying to grow away from the Light.
 - We begin to fill our lives.
 - with activities,
 - busy schedule,
 - trying to give meaning to life,
 - trying to make life last longer.
 - So we see some growth:
 - We feel better.
 - We feel that we are doing something relevant.
 - But everything is temporary.
 - The void returns.
 - Until exposed Our soul in the sun, healing doesn't begin.
- Easter took place at sunrise to remind us that darkness does not have the last word.
- Without God, our structures weaken and we become easy prey for the plagues of the soul.
- Spiritual disciplines such as:
 - Prayer life,
 - Meditation on the Scriptures
 - Community worship,
 - These are our leaves, exposed to the light of God, capturing nutrients and transforming them into nourishment for faith.

- Faith needs to be cultivated by focusing on healthy roots.
 - And as soon as the first sprout emerges from the soil, with its first leaves, it should be exposed to light.

3. Cultivating Multiplication

- When the roots are strong and receive light, life manifests itself.
- A life cycle begins:
 - Leaves grow to capture the energy that comes from the sun;
 - The leaves feed back into the roots, creating a virtuous cycle.
- In the Christian walk, prayer, the Word, and community are the leaves that expand our exposure to God.
- And then, after healthy roots and exposure to the sun, come the flowers and fruits.
- Nature shows that flowers come in many different forms.
- Look at the orchids:
 - PIC 3: As roots of terrestrial They seek nutrients in the soil.
 - PIC 4: The roots of epiphytes They cling to trees, living off the moisture that forms in the tree's fork.
 - PIC 5: The roots of rupicola They grow on rocks, clinging to the impossible.
 - PIC 6: The roots of air They hang on and capture everything they need from the air.

- They all need a root.
- All flowers need sunlight.
- And then they produce flowers.
 - Flowers attract pollinators; life multiplies.
- A healthy faith is not for personal consumption;
 - It provides shade and offers fruit.
- Many try to produce fruit without healthy roots or without exposing their leaves to the sun.
 - The fruits don't last.
 - The taste is not complete.
 - And there's a lack of vitamins.
 - These missing elements would be provided by healthy roots and leaves exposed to the sun.
- The resurrection of Christ produced fruits of justice and mercy that nourish us to this day.

Conclusion

- In our day, so many people are trying to produce fruit without God, without faith.
 - They try it themselves: rootless and creating their own artificial light to expose their leaves.
 - They think faith is unnecessary.
 - They believe the church is to blame for all the world's ills.
- But the faith that God awakened in his people,
 - the faith that he gave us through the resurrection,
 - It continues to live, like a date palm, providing food for millennia.

- The church,
 - And by church I don't mean denominations, but the Church of Christ.
 - It survived wars, internal and external corruption, governments, and natural disasters.
 - not because she is good, holy, and perfect in herself;
 - But because the root is the resurrection of Christ.
 - It is from this root that food comes.
 - Christ, one day before his death on the cross, said that he is the vine.
 - He said:

5 Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

- We often neglect our inner garden.
 - We left prayer and the Bible for later.
 - We think the damage is only superficial, but the negligence goes all the way to the root.
 - When the root becomes diseased, everything else withers.
- Faith does not survive neglect;
 - It requires cultivation and delivery.
- The message of Easter is that in God there is always hope for renewal.
 - Even if the ground seems frozen, the Gardener is ready to work.
- Cultivate your spirituality with intention.
 - Let the light of Christ penetrate the dark areas.
 - Spring is coming.