



Servants of Christ

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A Devotion for the week of June 8th ---Rooted and Grounded in Love

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

In college I was a troublemaker. I thought I possessed all the answers and that any professor who disagreed with me was wrong and I was all too happy to show them the error of their ways. During one of these episodes I was having a spirited discussion with Professor Peterson, one of the most intelligent people I have ever met. (He is now a full Professor of Christian Ethics and on faculty of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, ethicist for the LewisGale Medical Center, and Editor-in-Chief of Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith. The American Scientific Affiliation and the International Society for Science & Religion (Cambridge) have both named him a Fellow). Let's just say I had my work cut out for me...

Although it was many (many) decades ago, I believe I was trying to defend my libertine beliefs. I may have said, "I believe people should be able to _____ (forget the exact issue)." And he responded with a simple, "Why?" And I would

answer and he would respond with, "Why?" And around the mulberry bush we went until I ultimately had no leg to stand on. Without an ultimate grounding in God I couldn't defend myself, and without that grounding everything I argued was my opinion among a sea of opinions. I remember French philosopher Michel Foucault once writing, 'At any given time I choose which laws will affect me.' One of the laws was the French age-of-consent to sexual relations; Foucault thought it should be lower than 15 and he actively advocated lowering it. It would seem Foucault's grounding was in himself as he definitely didn't believe in any god.

So, after leaving me defenseless, Professor Peterson changed the conversation. This super-brilliant (see above) person said, "At the end of the day, all I can tell you is Jesus Christ changed my life. I have no evidence other than that reality." I didn't say any more after that.

One of my favorite spiritual writers is Thomas Merton. He wrote over 50 books in 27 years and sent many a World War II veteran and others to pray in a monastery. But you may not know his early adulthood in the 1930's was... wild. He partied all the time, was known as a womanizer, and even fathered a child. However, it took an encounter not unlike the one I had with Professor Peterson to help him experience God as not only alive, but One who loved him infinitely. In a very rocky road, Merton eventually became a Trappist Monk, a world-renowned speaker and writer whose book, 'The Seven Story Mountain,' is listed as one of the top 100 non-fiction works of the century. He thrived in his grounding in God's love.

In Ephesians, Paul says God's eternal purpose was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, thus the "For this reason" statement above. He invites us to be rooted and grounded in the love of God so that we can be filled with the measure of the fullness of God.

I spent many years trying to make it to shore while I was in the middle of the ocean by myself. Professor Peterson may have as well. Thomas Merton definitely did. Do you need to come home to that divine grounding in love? God is always running towards you. With open arms.

Prayer of Thomas Merton:

*“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I think I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”
Amen.*
