Message for Leith Valley 4th December 2016

Main Scripture: Luke 6:43

The very words of Jesus…*43 No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briers. The good man brings good things out of the good stored in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart the mouth speaks.*

*Introduction*

For those of you who may not know me, my name is Bruce Geddes; I’ve been coming to Leith Valley church here for a number of years with my wife Pauline. I’ve been a Christian since my friend persuaded me to attend a Billy Graham crusade in Auckland in 1969.

I work in an office in town and recently I overheard a colleague of mine engaged in a telephone conversation with a client and I could tell by the conversation that the client was being very difficult. My colleague was being very polite and professional but the client was just being extremely difficult. And I wondered to myself, Why are some people just difficult? And I thought well they probably just don’t know Jesus; they don’t know the love the God has for them.

And I thought to myself how great it is to know Jesus and know his love for me. And what I love about being a Christian is that we are saved for eternity because of the work of Jesus on the cross and from that moment on we Christians are just like Jesus; we are always loving, we never get into arguments or disagreements; we never have conflicts within our churches we are just perfect people. Right?

What – not right? Christians fight and argue, churches split, Christians scream and yell at one another, in fact sometimes it’s hard to pick a Christian from a non-Christian?

Wow! What a way to start a message! Surely I could promote being a Christian a little better than this!!

But I think if we wish to walk well with Jesus we have to be real don’t we? We need to accept that sometimes we act badly and are not a good advertisement for being a Christian

So today briefly what I want to do is examine why we as Christians sometimes don’t have it altogether, sometimes, we find ourselves dealing with emotional issues that we just can’t seem to shake, issues that can sometimes dominate us, cause us great anguish and affect the relationships we have with others.

And I guess the first question that might come to mind as I say this is; “didn’t it all get fixed when we were saved?” And the answer to that is clearly, “No”. Not everything about us is repaired or healed at the moment of our salvation. Many things are sorted then; eternity, our relationship with God, redemption, mercy, and grace poured out on us.

But as we all know in our hearts we did not instantly become exactly like Jesus when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Some things still need to be dealt with after salvation. I suspect that the Apostle Paul’s statements in Romans especially have been difficult to grasp and accept. Because he states in Romans 7: 21-25 that he has conflict within himself.

Romans 7: 21 *So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil I s right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me. What a wretched man I am.*..etc

Paul is clearly saved, and speaking as a redeemed man but still acknowledging that there is stuff in him that is not Christ-like, some of his behaviour is wrong and not Christ-like. So clearly we can be saved, and now a Christian, but still not always acting like Jesus.

Essentially whilst we are ‘In Christ’ and in a sense ‘free from sin’ we still live in our flesh, our bodies, we still have within us our nurture and experiences from our past that have shaped us and shape our behaviours. Traumas from our past especially still remain and are in a sense a root in us that produces not nice fruit.

I want to look at a few of these things briefly today. My wife Pauline and I are involved in a very dynamic and effective prayer ministry called the ‘Elijah House Prayer Ministry’. And so these things I’m speaking on today are not only my thoughts but very tried and true biblical ministry principles that I’ve learned though the Elijah House ministry.

Fruit and Root

So first of all I want to look at this concept of, “where there is fruit – there is a root”. The reason why fruit trees are able to provide us with their wonderful fruit is because they have roots going down into the ground where they draw up the nutrients and moisture that allows fruit it develop. That is a very positive process. From the root comes the fruit.

In our lives there is also a ‘root to fruit’ process that happens and sometimes if we suffer a trauma such as abuse as a child then a root can be established in our hearts because of that event. This could be a root of bitterness, resentment and/or judgment. And from such a root inevitably comes the fruit.

Now when we are saved and become a Christian we are forgiven our sins and washed clean by the Lord with all the wonderful promises that come with that, but bitter roots are not automatically dealt with.

The trauma of a past event is still lodged in our hearts and our minds. The roots are not automatically expunged by the process of salvation. So these need to be dealt with using certain principles provided by the Lord and together with the enlightenment and leading of the Holy Spirit we can deal with these roots.

In our readings today Jesus puts it to us that our actions come from our hearts. Luke 6:45 *The good man brings good things out of the good stored in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart the mouth speaks.*

There is a reason why some things in life cause you to get immediately angry, or upset. The effects of events from your past reside in you and bring a reaction when they are stimulated by an associated event or a reminder.

For example if your Father was a harsh man, who yelled at you and was mean to you as a child; then very likely, even today, many years later a raised voice will immediately provoke a reaction in you. It might be fear, it might be anger – whatever it is; it is triggered in you because the effects of those past traumas and associated judgments are still in your heart.

If they have not been dealt with by God then they are still there. And the fact that you have become a Christian does not automatically remove those past traumas from your life. And therefore the learned reactions from such traumas have not been removed from your life.

In order to remove the reactions of anger or fear (which we can label the fruit of past traumas); before we can get rid of this bad fruit we must deal to the root from which the fruit evolves. That makes sense doesn’t it?

I grew up in the 60’s as a young boy and though this may surprise some of you I wasn’t always an angelic little boy. Sometimes, (dare I say it), I was naughty. And when I was naughty I was inevitably punished. Physically punished. If I was naughty (very rarely of course was I ever naughty) but on those rare occasions when I was naughty my mother would say to me, “Wait until your father gets home!”

That meant that when my father did get home he would be the one to punish me. I was taken into the bedroom and I was strapped with his leather belt. I would plead with him, I would say I was sorry but I was always given the belt.

Now I’m not picking on my Dad, that was a common punishment of the time, and very likely it was how he was punished when he was a lad and so it was his learned parenting. And it was not against the law to do that in those days.

Now if I don’t deal with my heart because of those punishment traumas, then those events will be a root in my heart and fruit will inevitably come from that root. The fruit could be any number of things; hatred, fear, anger, a resolve never to be like my father, a judgment on my father, maybe even a judgment on older men in general.

The fruit from those punishments could be a resentment of authority figures, even a general rebellion against authority. It could be any number of things. But the important thing to realise is that I must deal with the root if I want to change the related fruit.

And this is where God’s principles come into play. If I want to be rid of a root of bitterness against my father because of those punishments, then I must use God’s methods to do so.

I believe that I sinned when my father punished me. I let my fear and lack of true remorse cause me to hate my Father and not respect him anymore. I’m sure I hated him and made many resolutions in my heart about him. I formed judgments against him.

I lived with the root of resentment against my father for many years until I was taught this root – to fruit relationship. And when I understood I could get rid of the root of resentment I wanted to do this to be free of this inner dynamic.

So I started by forgiving my father for the punishments he gave me. You might say; “What just forgive him?” Yes just forgive – haven’t we been forgiven our sins by our heavenly father because of the work of Jesus on the cross duly appropriated?

Of course we have and so we must be like-minded and forgive those who have persecuted us. *Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgiven men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins*. So I forgave my father for every time he punished me in that way.

And then I asked God to forgive me for my resultant wrong attitude towards my father. I asked to God to forgive me for not honouring my father because of those punishments. And then I expressed my honour toward my father in accordance with God’s wishes because he is my father.

Then I asked God to forgive me for judging my father. This prayer ministry that I’m describing is designed to remove all the effects of my sinful reactions to those punishments my father gave me. You see I want to neutralise every effect they had on me.

Then after I had forgiven my father, I asked for God’s forgiveness for my sinful reactions. Because I know I was no saint during those punishments and straight after. I know I bitterly resented my father for punishing me that way.

And after all that then I asked God to remove every bitter root in my heart and bring his healing into my soul in relation to those punishments. God is my healer and my soul needed healing for the injuries I suffered.

And you know after taking all those steps, my heart towards my father is changed, my relationship with my father is today unaffected by those past events because every aspect of them has been dealt with. Praise God!

Incidentally the issue I had with my natural father would have affected my relationship with my heavenly Father. And as a result of fixing my root issues with my natural father my relationship with Father God is improved. I mean how could I trust a God called ‘Father God’ when I had such issues with my natural father?

I’m sure my root issues would have been transferred to my relationship with Father God, for example; a lack of trust, fear of punishment, fear of unfairness, lack of mercy etc. But I need have no such issues with God because the bitter roots from by earthly parent relationship have been dealt with.

Performance Orientation

But you might say “well this message doesn’t apply to me because I had no such issue with my father”.

But there are many other aspects of this Root to Fruit principle.

Here is a question; perhaps a rather deep one; “What is your main motivation in life?” What causes you to exert all that effort in your chosen sport, or your studies, or in the occupation you are working in? The reason why I ask is because sometimes we are wrongly motivated. Sometimes a root lies in us and the fruit is manifest in performance.

There is a term called ‘Performance Orientation’, which is describing a negative coping mechanism for living life. Once again there are prayer ministry principles we can apply to such a thing.

Performance Orientation is a term for being wrongly motivated in a certain area of our lives. To put this into context the motivation the Lord wants us to have in all aspects of our lives is love.

But sometimes we do things not motivated by love but we are motived because of an entirely different dynamic in our heart. Performance Orientation is when we are motivated by lies we have believed in our heart. Our performance is driven by something not healthy. For example:

Some people are very meticulous and very fearful of making a mistake because they believe wrongly that if they do something wrong they will not be loved.

Similarly some people work very hard to live up to their family’s standards on the basis of a fear they have that if they do not live up to the family standards then they will not really belong in the family. So their performance, their efforts, is motivated by a root of fear of not belonging or of being rejected.

The strong performance they engage in is so they can receive feedback that expresses acceptance. So they are not trying hard for the right motives Say to just be loving, oh no there is a deep need for acceptance and love and so the performance is motivated by an unhealthy fear of not getting the love.

Now the Lord has advised us very clearly that we should be motivated by love not by fear. The development of this wrong motivation, this motivation of fear is often caused by lies we have believed as a child such as; ‘I am unwanted therefore I must strive to earn a place in the family’.

Or a person may have received only conditional love. Love given only has a reward for having done something. So they have not received love for just being themselves, they receive only conditional love; love only given as a reward for good behaviour.

Therefore that person comes to an understanding that love must be earned, and so the root forms. I am unloved therefore I must perform well to get love and so the striving for love starts and intensifies.

The root produces this tainted fruit of effort that screams out look ‘how much I’ve done’, ‘look how hard I’ve tried’, ‘surely you accept me now, surely you will love me now!’

This root can lead to the fruit of:

* Workaholism
* Neediness - Needing to be complimented of at least acknowledged
* Compulsively defensive
* Lonely and isolated.

Having to earn love by performance is a hard way to live and not the road the Lord has for us. It’s a lie of the enemy, for we are unconditionally loved by God and lovable to others without having to earn it.

And so prayer ministry is needed to address the root cause or causes of this performance orientation. The root that needs dealing with may be the forgiving of those primary people in our lives that failed to give us sufficient love.

It will involve the breaking of the negative habit patterns we developed to cope with the lack of love. These habit patterns need to be taken to the cross and demolished.

There needs to be a nurturing a providing of real love that has been lacking. A love given for love sake and not as a reward for something done.

There are many dynamics where we see this root to fruit process and I’ve spoken of just two examples of where significant prayer ministry is required to bring healing and wholeness to people who are suffering despite the fact they are saved and now following Jesus.

And I think this gives us an insight into why we as Christians, part of a Christian community - a local church often don’t get it right. We don’t always act Christ-like we don’t always get along. The gardens of our hearts and minds still have these roots in them that need dealing with. There are unresolved issues in us that need to be dealt with.

 So where do we go from here? I think a very good question. Here are my thoughts:

1. Firstly we need to accept we are not entirely like Jesus just yet, we have flaws and failings. This is important. Because frankly if you don’t think you have anything wrong with the way you are then you will take no action to address issues in your life.
2. Then we should understand this dynamic of root to fruit
3. We then should observe the fruit we have on our tree (or allow a loved one to help us see our fruit). That’s a scary concept isn’t it? We could also ask God to show us our fruit.
4. When we can see the fruit it is only then can we deal with the root.

And so in our endeavours to build great community here at Leith, can I encourage us to seek the Lord and ask for his help with our garden. Turn the weeds into sweet fruits!

One way to assist this process is a formalised ministry like the Elijah House Prayer Ministry which has a number of courses that deal with many more principles and issues than I’ve been able to describe today.

There are some brochures for these course starting again early next year that progressively take us through many prayer ministry concepts and principles. Please take a brochure and feel free to talk with Pauline or I after the service.

Let’s pray.