

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,
whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.” (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Yesterday I led a “Sketching as Prayer” retreat, and I centered our meditations around a theme of trees. Trees are one of my favorite things to sketch; they each have their own character, and are always interesting to sketch. And since they are rooted in one place, they are easier to sketch than animals!

I’ve been thinking a lot about roots and how important different kinds of roots are for trees. Tap roots reach far underground to bring up water, enabling trees to survive droughts. Fibrous roots give stability, anchoring a tree broadly, and have a great deal of surface area for absorbing both water and nutrients. Adventitious roots help stabilize large trees and can aid in propagation and sharing of resources. And tiny root hairs, almost too small to be seen, are critical for absorbing water and nutrients, even on very large trees.

Monday: According to Jeremiah, who wrote during an extremely difficult time in the history of God’s people, we are blessed if we trust in the Lord. Let’s look at ourselves today and see what or who we are trusting in. Is our confidence in God or are we, in subtle or not-so-subtle ways, trusting in ourselves or someone else?

Tuesday: Picture two trees, one planted by water and one in a dry area. Which one will thrive? Thank God that when we trust in him, he cares for us so that we are like the tree planted by water.

Wednesday: Where are your roots? Do you send them deep and toward the “water” of God’s Spirit? Do you nurture them with God’s word?

Thursday: Even when we trust in God, times of heat and drought will come. Ask God to help you grow strong roots of dependence on him, so that you don’t have to fear the inevitable times of heat and drought. Let’s also pray that our Christian brothers and sisters in extremely difficult circumstances, like those in Afghanistan, can remain firmly rooted in God in the midst of all they’re facing.

Friday: Ask God to enable you to stay fresh and “green,” bearing fruit even in difficult, dry times, rather than withering in the heat.

Saturday: At our retreat yesterday we spoke of different kinds of spiritual “roots,” including Scripture study, prayer, worship, meditation, fellowship. What kind of roots are we strong in? What roots do we each need to strengthen in order to be strongly rooted in the Lord, so that we can survive times of spiritual drought or other challenging circumstances?