

**Message #1: God is a good God!**  
**Rev. Dr. Kim Engelmann**  
**West Valley Presbyterian Church**

Today we are talking about the importance of Bible Study.

We have broken the message into three different segments on this communion Sunday, because instead of wagging my finger at you and telling you SHOULD “study the Bible” I want to share with you three insights that come from studying the Bible, so that you can get excited about doing it.

The part about this parable of the sower that I love is that essentially what Jesus is saying is that **if we are mature Christians, we have to have deep roots.** Otherwise, over time we will shrivel up and die.

My husband Tim has a green thumb. He can make anything grow.



We have something exactly like this in our back yard that just keeps growing and growing. Its huge...but its Tim's project and he is huge so its all good.

But Tim is always concerned about the roots of the plants he puts into the ground. He digs these enormous holes for these relatively small plants that he starts out with – this one was little when he started - just to make sure the roots

have enough room to spread out. He gives the roots special food with the right pH balance to be sure that they don't burn.

He will often say...Its all in the roots!

It's the same with our faith.

If my faith in Christ is too shallow, I am going to wither and die. The roots of my faith need to be deep enough to hold me steady when life circumstances go bad; I need rich theological soil in which to grow ...I cannot be grounded in circumstances, or in my mood of the day.

Much of our deeply rooted understanding of God, theology, Christian world view, come from studying the Bible; knowing it like a friend.

And you will find as you study scripture that This stuff is deep - it is not superficial.

The good news is that today there are more books, and online resources than ever before for YOU to be able to study God's word, on your own. I have put some of these resources into your bulletin today. Check them out.

The whole Protestant Reformation was based on the idea that we are all priests – the priesthood of all believers means that all of us are capable of plumbing the depths of the truth of God's word. Of going deep...

It doesn't have to be a priest/pastor doing it ...John Wycliff – give him some love – he suffered terrible abuse at the hands of religious leaders, his friend was burned at the stake...soyou could read this Bible in your own language –. Before only priests could read it...people didn't understand it!

The church bitterly opposed it: **"By this translation, the Scriptures have become vulgar, and they are more available to lay, and even to women who can read, than they were to learned scholars, who have a high intelligence. So the pearl of the gospel is scattered and trodden underfoot by swine."**

**Wycliffe replied, "Englishmen learn Christ's law best in English. Moses heard God's law in his own tongue; so did Christ's apostles."**

So study it folks! Its at you fingertips today. You can an APP for it. You can read it in a book. You can find it in your pew.

So with that as an introduction, here is insight #1 taken from the scripture we read last week. This is a study of a particular verse or verses....

I gave you the challenge to persist in prayer for something. You wrote it on a card and you are persisting in praying for it...

We did this in response to Jesus who tells his followers to *ask*, to *seek* and to *knock*.

**If you study this passage you find out that these verbs are continuous verbs.**

Ask, seek, knock. Not just once, but all the time!

You might also find out that knocking was a common Jewish metaphor for prayer.

**When you pray, the Jews said, you are knocking on God's door.**



Finally, Jesus' comment about fathers and children is very telling...

**Which father of you, if your child asks for bread, will give him a stone?**

**Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion.**

If you study these two statements, you realize, where you wouldn't have before, that a loaf bread in the ancient world, and a stone could look very similar.



Also scorpions, the kind that lived where Jesus did at that time, when their legs wrapped around themselves, makes them look very much like an egg.



All these details lead to  
A deeper interpretation of the parable. ***Are you being evil, going to trick your children and give them something that harms them?***

***That looks good, but in the end is not good?***

Act like you are giving them an egg but its actually a scorpion going to sting them? Act like you are giving them bread, but actually it's a rock they are going to break their teeth on?

Now evil have been depicted this way, down through history. Evil is enticing, looks good, but pulls the rug out from under you. It looks good...but it ends up being bad.

Jesus says, God is not like that! And then he makes the contrast...

If you being evil, still know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will God...who is good...who is not evil...give good gifts to those who ask.

It ends up being a statement that was meant to assure us of how good God is, and that he never tricks us with something that seems good and isn't. God works directly opposite way of how evil works. We can trust him entirely.

Do you see how I sort of dissected that passage for you? That's Bible study. Isn't it fascinating?

Your roots have just grown a little deeper into the soil of God's word. Next time you doubt God's goodness remember this parable.

## **Meditation 2: A Timely Awareness**

One of the best Bible studies I ever did was on time, as it exists throughout the Bible...

So now I am going to share with you more of a thematic Bible study focusing on a concept throughout the entire Bible...rather than just studying a verse, you can look at themes or words throughout the Bible to help your roots grow deeper.

There are two greek words for time in scripture. One is the word chronos.

When we talk of time we are usually talking in terms of chronological time. This is the time we know. This is the time we live in.

Linear time. Day by day time. Clock time. Make wrinkles time.

However in studying the scriptures we find there is another word for time. Its used in the New Testament a lot.

That other word for time is **kairos** time.

You can often tell when you read the Bible that the word kairos is being used for the word time, when the phrase "***in the fullness of time***" is used. That usually means it is kairos time.

Someone once said that Godly "***kairos time pierced its way into creation at just the right moment, slicing through chronos time with a cry of a baby in a manger.***

The cross was another *kairos* moment. [Romans 5:6](#) says, "***For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.***"

The best way that I have found to explain kairos time, which is God's kind of time is this...

Have you ever had such an intense experience that you lose track of time?  
Better yet, have you ever been talking with a friend, and you look at the clock and you realize two hours have gone by.

What do you say?

Where did the time go?

You lost track of it because you were caught up in an experience that was so rich, you lost sight of it.

Kairos time, God's time, is the time of heaven.

When I am having a rich, meaningful experience...(I could care less what time the clock says it is)

When we are in heaven, face to face with the Lord, we aren't going to care how long we've been there. It's going to catch us up, capture us, keep us full of wonder and awe – that's kairos time – God's time

Isn't this great fun? Bible study causes our roots to grow deep. Next time you worry about being bored in heaven for all eternity, remember the richness of kairos time and get excited about what is to come.

### 3. Meditation: Communion

Finally, Bible study can help us understand more fully why we do what we do here in church every Sunday. Bible study can help us understand our practices, our traditions, our liturgy.

As we move into communion today studying the Bible in terms of the festivals and practices of the Jewish people help us understand what it is we are really doing here.

It helps our roots to grow deep into this Christian practice we call the Lord's Supper.

We find as we study the scripture that Jesus was having a Passover meal with his disciples when he had this supper as all Jews were doing at that time.

He was celebrating the Exodus...the setting free of the Hebrews from slavery.

They were able to escape because they put the shed blood of a slain lamb on their door and the angel of death passed over them, and did not harm their first born child.

So this Passover supper with Jesus was for that celebration and yet at the same time it was a new meal...unbeknown to the disciples at the time, but known to Jesus at the time;

this meal meant that Jesus now would set the whole world free from the bondage of sin, by his shed blood on the cross. He himself is the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world and sets us free from bondage.

However, from studying scripture, we find that there were actually four cups that the Jews used in the Passover meal.

The four cups in Passover were each based in God's promise to his people - and they come from the **I will statements** - as follows in the Old Testament in **Exodus 6:**

*Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. (Exodus 6:6-7 ESV)*

*(note to slide person: Can words be made more clear?)*



**The Cup of Sanctification** – based on God’s statement, “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians”

**The Cup of Judgment or Deliverance-** based on God’s statement, “I will deliver you from slavery ”

**The Cup of Redemption – based on God’s statement, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm”**

**The Cup of Praise or Restoration** – based on God’s statement, “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God”

(NOW PUT UP OUR COMMUNION SLIDE)

**Our cup today that we take in faith focuses on that third cup of Passover - the Cup of Redemption.** Christians see redemption as coming through Jesus Christ. Our celebration here at communion is the third cup always – our celebration that our sins are forgiven because of him – we are redeemed – bought back by God. The other two before it are also wrapped up in this third cup as we believe in God delivering us from burdens and slavery too through the cross.

The fourth cup, according to most biblical scholars has not happened yet for the Christian, even though it is regularly celebrated for Jews.

Our celebration of the fourth cup will happen at what is often called “the marriage supper of the lamb” when the earth will be restored, when there will be no more pain or sorrow anymore, when all things are made new, and evil is destroyed. Interestingly, most Biblical scholars also say that it seems that Jesus himself did not take that fourth cup on that last Passover Meal he had with his disciples.

Now maybe you didn’t know all this about the four cups. Maybe you are wondering why it is important. It is important because we are a part of a rich history, a story that God is telling that has historical underpinnings that go

back to the beginning of time; that overlap and reinterpret much of the Jewish faith

When we think about the story that God is telling, down through history, it might be time to get awed, and decide to study these things more. To be people who take the time to let their roots grow deep into the rich soil of God's word.

**Your challenge: Find out something new, by studying the Bible. Use some of the resources suggested. Let Pastor Kim know what it is you've discovered through study, and if she doesn't know about it – if its new to her - she will give you a prize.**

Friends, let your roots grow deep! Study the Bible! Lets pray.