

Hope in Uncertain Times by Nigel Coles Part 8: Hope grows in our heart when we give it space

I hope you've enjoyed the great weather we've enjoyed in recent weeks. Plenty of sunshine and very little rain - that can of course cause problems for plants. I doubt if these (by the lake) will suffer – however dry a summer we have the roots from these will be able to draw from the water of the lake.

If you watched last week, you may remember I talked about every word we hear from God, speaking something into our lives, is like a seed, which needs to be planted and nurtured. This week I'm continuing the horticultural theme: a word, which has been special for me during the Covid-19 crisis, is: 'ROOTS'. I pray it will resonate with you too, whatever your circumstances right now.

Jeremiah says, in 17:8, that people who trust in the Lord, who have confidence in him, are blessed, but he adds 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.*

I wonder ... do you believe that's talking about you, or not?

The roots, of plants, shrubs or trees need water and nutrients to grow and stay healthy.

Jeremiah's example is of a tree in drought conditions and you may well have seen the effects of a tree lacking sufficient water, even if you didn't know the cause ... the leaves turn brown and soon drop off and without water the whole tree will wither and die.

But Jeremiah's tree maintains green leaves because its roots stay in touch with water from a stream. His main concern however, is people. People like you and me. As human beings we're all affected by our circumstances and things, which happen to us and the coronavirus pandemic is no exception. We'll be impacted in various ways, but I have a hunch certain feelings are almost universal like:

feeling scared ... anxious ... alone.

They're all normal feelings and mostly come and go, but *they can* take root and grow. Feeling scared can become a paralyzing fear, anxiety can invade every part of us and feeling alone, left unchecked, can become our default loneliness, even if we're surrounded by other people.

What has the virus revealed to you? Maybe you need to check your roots, because what takes root grows. I recognise I make choices about what space I give in my heart to what grows and takes root.

I've got three, or I should say, I 'had' three rhododendrons in my garden, but this year, a white one failed to produce flowers and then began to wither. The advice I received was 'examine the roots'.

Well, I have and it's now on the compost heap. Here's the thing: Spring didn't kill it off, it's just revealed the real problem.

Jeremiah was talking absolute sense,
it's why you'd be wise to check your spiritual roots if you notice anything growing in your life your uncomfortable about.
it's why you need never allow feeling scared lead to fear if your roots are into God.

The largest grape vine in the world is at Hampton Court and it is now over 250 years old, planted back in 1768 when the famous gardener Capability Brown was in charge of the gardens. Even if you're not interested in gardening, it's well worth a visit if you ever get the chance. But how does the largest grape vine in the world happen to grow in London, it's not exactly the middle east is it?

Well I've been checking something I was told many years ago and The Gardener's Chronicle of 1843 was the first, as far as my research suggests, to suggest:

"The famous Vine at Hampton Court probably owes its vigour to the proximity of the Thames and we shall always find that the finest and best-flavoured Grapes are obtained under similar circumstances".

Back to human beings, during times such as this, when everyone is looking for hope, where do they look and what do they look for?

Very often it's to other human beings and we're all drawn to those who display the characteristics the Bible describes as 'the fruit of the spirit' of God:
love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Would you love to be identified as a carrier of the hope of God? I'm sure you would. Give space to allow your roots to grow deeper and enable the fruit God delights in and everyone looks for to flourish in your life.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for taking the responsibility to be the gardener in my life.
Search my heart, so I provide good soil for anything and everything you wish to see grow in me.
Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to lead and guide me.
Help me to learn your ways, so I can respond in each and every day, to whatever happens, as Jesus would.
And may my hope in you bear fruit.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

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