

15th S after Pentecost (9/6/15) Bethlehem, St. Paul's, Goodwin

(Rev - 11/19/23 - SJ, SM)

Romans 12:1-8 (NIV84) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. ³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for whose sake God has mercy on us, dear fellow redeemed;

People can have very different viewpoints. For some, their life and interest may revolve participating in or watching sports, but someone else might not care about sports at all. Some people are obsessed about clothes, whereas someone else only cares doesn't care about fashion at all. Some people love being outdoors, while someone else prefers being inside. Some people want lots and lots of snow, some people leave the area because of the snow and cold. People can have very different viewpoints.

However, as Christians there things that we share a viewpoint about, as the Apostle Paul today urges us to remember that:

We Live In View of God's Mercy

1. We live our lives as sacrifices
2. Yet we live our lives as one

1. We live our lives as sacrifices

We have here a picture found nowhere else in all of Scripture, describing how we are to live as Christians – **as living sacrifices**.

The basic idea of a sacrifice is to take something that belongs to us and to give it completely to God, and keeping nothing for ourselves. To be a living sacrifice means to give ourselves completely to God, to live for God and not for ourselves, our friends or the world.

The reason that Christians are to live as living sacrifices is **God's mercy**. We remember how hopeless our situation. We were objects of God's wrath, separated from his blessings and helpless to fix or change it. Yet when everything looked so bleak and hopeless, God accomplished our salvation through the gift of his one and only Son. We look at the suffering and death of Jesus for us, and we marvel and we are in awe that Jesus loved us so very much that he took our place and suffered so much – for us!

As we live as Christians, as we talk the talk and walk the walk of the Christian lifestyle, as we live as Scripture tells us to live because these things are our **spiritual act of worship**. Living our Christian faith is pleasing to our Savior and to our heavenly Father. Worship is not something that Christians do only on Saturday afternoon or Sunday mornings. Worship is what Christians all week long as live our faith.

Paul goes on to warn us: **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Literally, Paul tells us not to be **molded** by the world. We need to be careful not to be sinfully influenced by TV, the movies and the world around us as they promote sinful actions and lifestyles.

A mind transplant takes place in the Christian when they come to faith. We no longer see the sinful ways of the world as attractive or desirable. We learned instead to see sin as ugly and vile. Instead of living like the world around us, we live in a way that **test[s] and approve[s] what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will**.

2. Yet we live our lives as one

Something else happens to us as Christians as we live our lives mindful of all that Christ Jesus has done for us. It not only makes a change between our relationship with God (*make up and down motions*), but it also makes a change in our relationship with one another (*make right to left motions*).

By faith in Christ Jesus, we live as one body, the body of Christ. Paul says: **Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others**.

Christians are not clones of each other. We come in all kinds of varieties: rich and poor, young and old, short and tall, athletic and disabled, underweight and over-weight, and every race and nationality. God has made us with great diversity in talents, personalities and appearance.

Yet through that great diversity, the Lord unites this great divergent group

of people into one body, the church. Serving, teaching, encouraging, giving of our time and talents, all the glory and work of the kingdom.

We see this unity in the Lord's Supper, in which all of us as individuals come together and share the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Another name for the Lord's Supper is communion, a name which emphasizes the fellowship and oneness we have as we come to one table and share the one loaf and the one cup.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the oneness that we have as Christians: **one body and one Spirit . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.** (Eph 4:4-6)

Sometimes people have radically different viewpoints about the same thing. Some people believe President John F Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald, just like the Warren Commission concluded. But other people believe there were other people responsible. Over the years, I've heard the mafia, Cuba, the Soviet Union and even the CIA or FBI. There is a documentary out there that theorizes that a panicked Secret Service agent accidentally shot the president.

We may not agree about such things, and we may not agree about snow, sports, the outdoors or a whole of things – and that's okay. However, we are agreed as Christians that we live our lives as living sacrifices, living in view of God's mercy to us in Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen.