

“The Body of Christ in the World”

(Romans 12:1-6)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, 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. ²Do 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.

³For 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. ⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a person's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if 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.

¹Therefore – What a strange way to begin a new chapter. This refers back to what Paul had spoken of God’s amazing grace he has shown in Jesus Christ through whom he has redeemed and restored us and made us his children and heirs.

¹⁴Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The call to ‘offer our bodies as a living sacrifice’ is a call to live the new life that we have received in Christ, when in Baptism we were joined to his death and resurrection.

In other words, Paul is reminding us of who we are, that we are now **THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD**; that we are to be like Christ in the world and like him we are to **give ourselves away in love**.

The very essence of being a Christian; The very essence of being a congregation, of being a Church:

IS TO GIVE ONE'S SELF AWAY IN LOVE!

This is what defines us as Christians and as Church.

But that goes against our human nature. Even many Christians while they believe in Jesus still find it hard to express this faith in actual practice. So while they might be prepared to pay lip service to Christ, and attend Church – when it suits, and perhaps even do work in church, still won't let Christ interfere with their lifestyle, their attitudes or behaviours!

And this is not just a 21st century malady! This happened in Jesus' day too, when people realised what following Jesus would mean. The Gospel of John 6:66 explains the result: "***From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.***"

Christians today also can all too easily fall into the trap of conforming to the attitudes of the world around them and conform to them.

We need to stop for a moment, and, as church and individuals, quietly sit in the presence of Jesus and through him, as Paul says "***be transformed by the renewing of your mind.***"

You see we, each one of us belongs to God, and as such we are valuable in God's sight. More valuable than we can even imagine, as King David recognized and expressed in Psalm 139:14:

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made, I know that full well."

You see we were created by God in his image – which means to be like him, with him, and for him. After the Fall he sent his Son Jesus Christ, through whose suffering, death, and resurrection, we could be restored – **to be like him, with him, and for him.**

To be like Jesus in this world. That's what we are to be, and that's what Paul is getting at! As Luther put it – we are little Christ's! As individual Christians and as a church.

And to be **THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD** God has poured his grace on us and gifted us with the necessary gifts! God does not ask the impossible of us!

God only asks us to be and do what he has created, redeemed, and empowered us to be and do!

And in case we've forgotten what that is the **Apostle Peter** [1 Pet 2:9-10] reminds us, what we were **created, redeemed, and empowered to be and do!**

⁹You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may DECLARE THE PRAISES of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

God simply asks us to accomplish what he made us, and redeemed us, to be, and gave us the gifts to accomplish!

A man was walking through the countryside when he noticed a young fellow standing at attention in a field. In the afternoon, the walker came back along the same path and noticed that the fellow was still there.

Curious, he approached and asked what the young man was doing. "I'm practising for the Nobel Prize," the man replied.

"How's that?" asked the visitor.

"Well," said the young man, "one of the criteria is to "Be outstanding in your chosen field."

Which the young man misread as "Be out standing in your chosen field."

Well, God is not asking of us to win a Nobel Prize! He's not asking us to do the impossible!

He is not asking that we produce more fruit than everyone else!

And he's not even asking that we produce better fruit than what other Christians and congregations are producing!

BUT GOD DOES EXPECT US TO PRODUCE THE FRUIT THAT WE ARE GIFTED WITH AND ENABLED TO PRODUCE!

And each one of us is able to bear fruit – because each one of us is gifted by God with the ability to produce what the Scriptures call "the fruit of the Holy Spirit," the fruit that is described in Galatians 5 as consisting of:

"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, 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."

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

Sermon by Pastor John Simboras 23 August 2020