

Sermon 2017-09-03 - Year A - Pentecost 8-31

Jeremiah 15:15-21; Psalm 26; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:21-27

## Introduction

- Therefore...is that a good way to begin sermon? V. 12:1.
- V. 1 The word “therefore” is very important in this opening verse. It is the lynch pin that connects together everything upto this point with everything that comes after.
- A few weeks back I shared with you about Paul’s image of the olive tree Israel, the people of God, onto which gentile branches had been grafted.
- Membership in the people of God is no longer by birth and adherence to the Law but by faith.
- “For a Jew it would be self-evident that faith and theology must come to expression in daily living. What follows is instruction on how the newly redefined people of God should live as such”<sup>1</sup>

## A Living Sacrifice

- Christians were strange to both the Jews and to the Romans because they didn’t offer sacrifices at all. Not to the pagan gods, nor to the one true God. They didn’t even have a temple.
- Animal sacrifice was a key practice in both Judaism and Paganism.
- Christians don’t need to offer animals for the atonement of their sins because Jesus took care of that by sacrificing himself. “*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*” (Hebrews 10:4, ESV)
- But even though Christians don’t offer animal sacrifices, they do offer sacrifices of another sort.
- Story of the sacrifice of Isaac “*And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.*” (Genesis 22:7–8, ESV)
- Isaac didn’t realize that HE was the intended sacrifice!
- YOU are the sacrifice in the new covenant!
- Rom 12:1
- And here we offer to you, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- When we give our lives to Christ we are all in! This is our spiritual worship.
- Worship = worth+ship
  - Car enthusiasts show that they value cars by investing money in them. Spending time driving and fixing them. Washing and caring for them. Sharing their enthusiasm with others.
- One significant way to demonstrate the worthiness of God with our lives is to be obedient to him.

---

<sup>1</sup> James D. G. Dunn, Romans 9–16 (vol. 38B; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 708.

## Members of the Body of Christ

- Following this introductory paragraph is a long series of these “so what” instructions beginning with 12:3 and ending around 15:13.
- The rest of this passage from Romans today is the first of these teachings.
- Here Paul lays forth the image of the body of Christ.
  - The church is one body, and each of us is a member of that body with a different role to play.
- A-team or heist movies. A team is gathered and comprised of many different people with vastly different skills (explosives, engineering/inventing, computers, speed and strength, etc). Each person has been hand-selected for the team and they each have a very important role to play in the plan.
- Just like these various team members, each of us has a purpose in accomplishing the mission of God. We call these spiritual gifts. vv. 4-5
- In this letter Paul lays out seven gifts, but he identifies other Spiritual gifts in some of his other letters. These lists are not meant to be comprehensive.
  - Prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, acts of mercy
- V. 6 - let us use our gifts! This is a part of our living sacrifice, our spiritual worship!
- What is your ministry?

## Don't think more highly of yourself that you ought

- V. 3 - danger of pride
- We can counteract pride (think with sober judgment v. 3) by:
  - Remembering that your gifts are gifts, they were given to you, you didn't earn them - in that sense you don't really have anything to be proud about!
  - Recognizing the gifts of others - God has blessed people with such diverse gifts that you can sit back and marvel at the way God created someone else to be so different from you. When you notice someone's gift, tell them. It is a great way to encourage.
  - Seek to work yourself out of a job - at some point you won't be able to do your ministry anymore. You might get sick, you might move, you might die, God might call you to something new. You should always be looking for the people who could replace you and training them to do your ministry better than you ever could.

## Conclusion

- *“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”* (Revelation 3:15–16, ESV)
- To me the hardest thing about swimming is getting in the pool. One toe in the pool, but the whole body out.
- Take the plunge. Go all in.
- *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”* (Romans 12:1, ESV)