

Sermon: **Take your Everyday, Ordinary Life and...**

Readings: [John 4:1-26](#) and [Romans 12:1-2](#)

The lectionary reading that we will be looking at today comes from Romans 12 verses 1-8. I was both delighted and challenged when I saw that this was the passage for this morning. It is a rich passage that has guided me in my walk of faith. I want to focus only on the first two verses of chapter 12.

Listen to these two verses:

"A Living Sacrifice. 12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform 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."

Paul has spent 11 chapters setting out in great detail and carefully the Christian doctrine dealing with the themes of sin, salvation, grace, faith, righteousness, justification, sanctification, redemption, death and resurrection. And having done so, he now turns to teach that Jesus is to be the Lord of every area of our lives. He turns to the practical application of all he has said previously in this letter. He points out that God demands our action as well as our believing and thinking. Faith expresses itself in obedience.

Note that he starts this passage with the word "Therefore". What he is saying is take everything I have said up to this point because now I need to show you how to apply this.

The "Therefore" means that what follows does not stand-alone, it is the application of what has gone before.

And you will note that Paul says: "Therefore, I urge you ..." Paul is giving an important and urgent instruction. This is not an instruction to ponder on what has been said - it is a call to action.

And it is a call given to all of us. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters." Again, it is important to note that this is not a call to the leaders of the church. This was not a call to the Gentile believers in Rome alone, or to the Jewish believers in Rome alone. This was a call to all to act on the truth of the Christian doctrine that Paul has systematically set out.

And then Paul gives the reason why we are to do this. He says I urge you to act "in view of God's mercy".

Much of what has been said in chapters 1-11 has been demonstrating God's mercy. Demonstrating what has been done for us.

We need to go back and look through chapters 1-11. But I touch on a few of the passages.

*"6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*¹

Justification through faith by grace alone.

*"18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."*²

No longer condemned.

*"8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you[a] free from the law of sin and death."*³

No longer slaves to sin.

*"14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The 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,[b] Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now 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."*⁴

More than conquerors.

*"37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. "*⁵

Powerful, powerful passages and there are more.

Why are we and I called to act? "In view of God's mercy!". In view of all that God has done for us.

And then Paul turns to what you and I are to do. He says this:

You and I are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. "Our bodies as living sacrifices!"

¹ Romans 5: 6-8

² Romans 5:18-19

³ Romans 8: 1-2.

⁴ Romans 8:14-17

⁵ Romans 8:37-39.

The system of animal sacrifices would have been well known to Jewish believers. This was a complex system requiring that only animals without blemish were to be acceptable as offerings.⁶

The Christians in Rome from a Gentile background reading Paul's letter would not have felt an obligation to offer animal sacrifices. But Paul is pointing out that they do have a sacrificial obligation: one that surpasses that prescribed in the Torah law.⁷

Paul is saying that our response is to be that we are to offer ourselves as "living sacrifices" in contrast to dead animal sacrifices. "Living" here also in the sense of having the new life of the Holy Spirit with in us.⁸

Eugene Peterson paraphrases this as follows⁹:

"Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering."

Do you hear what that means? It means everything you do in your everyday, ordinary life is to be placed before God as an offering. This is not just something to do when we attend a worship service, a Bible study group or a church function. It is everything we do. 24/7. Paul is not talking about ritual activity. But the involvement of heart, mind and will.¹⁰

And Paul continues that we are to do this in response to what God has done for us in a way that will be holy and pleasing to God.

Then takes it further, giving us a new insight saying that *"this is your true and proper worship."*

We so often think that worship is something we do in the hour or so on a Sunday morning either gathered in the church building or spiritually connected on a virtual platform in these days of the Corona virus pandemic. Perhaps we extend that to times of prayer or times of serving others.

Paul puts this in a completely different light. Living 24/7 in response to what has been done for us, with the involvement of our hearts, minds, and will is our true and proper worship.

"Therefore, I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice."

And then Paul takes this further as he instructs us how to respond to what has been done for us.

⁶[Leviticus 23:18](#)

⁷ See the commentary on this passage in an article here: <https://sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/romans-121-2/>

⁸ See [Romans 6:4](#)

⁹ From The Message.

¹⁰ Footnote in the NIV Study Bible page 1726

He starts verse two with these words: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world."

This is a warning to each one of us. We live in a world of great activity, major distractions and noise.

We are all subject to peer pressure.

"Why don't you do this?"

"Try this out, it will blow your mind!"

"Everybody is doing it, are you going to be the only one left out?"

Advertising and social media presents pictures of people who seem to have perfect lives, material possessions and no problems.

"Politicians are acting corruptly. They are helping themselves. Why are you falling behind?"

The noise and the pressure does not cease.

The JB Phillips translation puts it like this: *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould."*

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould. The word conform means that we are flexible, pliable and impressionable and likely to change as the wind blows in different directions.

Eugene Peterson puts it like this: *"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking."*

Do not conform to the patterns of this world.

Don't get the world around you squeeze you into its own mould.

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.

The call from Paul is a call to pause, to stop and to review our actions, and to identify what is influencing us.

In the gospel of Mark we read, "What good is it to gain the whole world, but to forfeit your soul?"¹¹

Having said what you are not to do, namely conform, Paul goes on to tell you what you are to strive for. This is to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

"Metamorphosis" is the English word that comes from the Greek word for "transform". This means real change from within. Not just bending to outside pressure. And it is not our external appearance that needs to be changed but we need to have a change of mind set. A change of heart as we truly understand what God has done for us. To see life differently, and to live differently.

¹¹ Mark 8:36

Eugene Peterson expresses the change like this: "fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out."

The image that comes to mind is one of travelling on a train running on rails in one direction before coming to a major station. At the station you have the option of staying on the train and continuing your journey on the same line with no change or, getting off the train and getting onto a new train which will take you in a completely new direction.

One does need to pause and to think about this and then to act intentionally.

Paul continues to develop his argument when he says: "*Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is.*"

As we respond to the call to take our everyday, ordinary life and place it before God as an offering, we will come to understand what God's will is for us, that is what God wants from us as believers here and now.

And finally, Paul says that it is God's "*good, pleasing and perfect will*".

"Good" meaning that which leads to our spiritual and moral growth as followers of Christ.

"Pleasing" meaning pleasing to God, not necessarily pleasing to us.

And "perfect" in the sense that it is complete and calls for no improvement from our side.

I believe that we often have a too limited view or understanding of worship. Paul is urging that our true and proper worship is to offer our whole lives to God.

Martin Lloyd-Jones describes some of the wrong ideas that we have about worship.¹² He does so by referring to Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well. When asked whether worship should be on the mountain or in Jerusalem, Jesus responds saying that the time will come when the true worshipper will neither worship on the mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth.¹³

Our worship is not to be bound to one location. Not on the mountain, in Jerusalem or only in the church building. Our worship is to take place wherever we are. We have experienced some of this in the time of the Corona virus pandemic when we have not been able to gather in our church building.

Our worship is not to be restricted to particular times only, but to take place 24/7.

Our worship is not to be purely intellectual in the sense that we delight in understanding and reading God's word, but not responding to it.

Our worship is to be in spirit and in truth.

¹² Living Water – Studies in John 4 by Martyn Lloyd-Jones

¹³ John 4:19-24

What does this mean for you and for me?

I think it means that we need to pause and reflect on how we are responding to what has been done for us.

Break the mould of thinking that worship is something that takes place on Sunday morning, for an hour.

Consider and verbalise what the pressures are on you that keep you from responding to the truth of the gospel message. Think about this. The time of lockdown has allowed us the chance of being released from responding to some of the patterns of the world. Was it necessary to respond? Will we do so again when all restrictions are lifted?

Pray against becoming so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit in without even thinking.

And then pray in regard to the actions that you will take that will transform your mindset and the way that you live.

These need not be major decisions, but they will include things that you will do for yourself, and that you will do for others.

Take time each day to pause, reflect, pray and read. Keep a note of things that strike you and that catch your attention. You can subscribe to a service that will send you a Bible verse, a reading or a reflection every day. You may want to get a guide to help you read through the Bible, not necessarily from Genesis through to Revelation, but in a planned way.

And look on a daily basis as to what action you can take to communicate with, or to reach out to, others. This need not be a major intervention, although it might be.

Start by making a phone call when you think of someone in particular. Just to call them and to say, "How are you?" And really mean that.

In these days of easy communication, you may want to send a message or an email. Get in touch with Michele, Lincoln or Sue and find out how you can offer your services in support of one of our ministries. Join a fellowship group, Bible study group or book club. Seek to broaden your horizons as to how you can respond in true and proper worship.

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