

Sunday Sermon September 17, 2017

Sermon Text: Romans 12:1-8

Sermon Theme: You Are Here For a Reason

1. It is God's Will 2. To be Part of the Body of Believers 3. To Use Your Gifts

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.

We use the phrase “God put you/me here for a reason” a lot. We use it when we don't really know what we are doing here, “God put me here for a reason.” We use it when we don't really know how to respond to another person's problems or issues, “Well, God put you here for a reason.” We use it to explain decisions we have made, “God put me here for a reason, maybe this is it.” We even use it in a fatalistic sort of way, “God put me here for a reason, so I guess I should keep going until he shows me what his reason is.”

We use that phrase, “God put you/me here for a reason,” in many ways at many times, but we should also use it for comfort and for direction in our lives. The statement is true; God did put you/me here for a reason. There are many passages that tell us what those reasons are. One of those sections of Scripture is our sermon text this morning. The apostle Paul shows us some of the reasons God put us here. It is God's will we are here, we are part of the body of believers, and God expects us to get to work, using our gifts to serve.

What is God's Will for us? What does want me to be doing? While God's full will is impossible for us to know, he does tell us what he wants for us and for people on earth. **God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4).**

God's good, pleasing and perfect will is for all people to believe in Jesus and to be in heaven with him, that includes you and me. Yet, God does not force his Word on anyone. He does not come and hit us over the head with the Gospel and force us to believe in Jesus. To accomplish his will, God has given us his Word. The Holy Spirit works through the Word wherever it is taught and preached. God tells us his Word will not return to him empty.

God works through his Word, but he also works through his believers. God has placed this Word in the care of his people on earth. He gives this Word to people like you and me who love the Lord and believe in Jesus. But to us, whom God has entrusted his Word to, Paul asks a question that should burn in our hearts because there are many who do not believe. **How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Ro 10:14)**

Paul summarizes God's will for us. God's Will is for all people to hear his Word and believe in him. It is also part of God's plan that God's people do what God put them on earth to do. It is God's plan that you and I do a good job of preaching and teaching that Word with our whole lives. **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. (Ro 12:1,2)**

Paul doesn't say that we should do this, or we ought to do this, he tells us this is what we do because this is why we were put here on earth. In view of God's mercy, knowing what Jesus has done to save us, we then go out and share that Word with our words, our actions and our lives. Our life is a living sacrifice that points directly to Christ.

Paul gives three reasons why this is part of God's Will for us and the reason he put us here. The first is personal. As we dig into God's Word, the Holy Spirit will work in us to be more Christ-like. Our lives will be transformed from lives of sin leading to death to lives of faith leading to life.

We will never be able to completely eradicate sin from our lives, but as our faith grows, we will turn away from the sinful ways and temptations of this world because it is clear they are sinful. We will grow in faith. Even our minds will be transformed as our knowledge of Christ and his Word grow. As mature Christians, we will be able stand on that foundation of Christ and be able to test and approve what God's Will actually is. We will be able to nod our heads when we hear it and see it and we will also stand against those who are preaching and teaching against God's Will and against his plan for this world.

Paul gives us two other reasons why we are to offer our lives as living sacrifices. These reasons show us how God wants us to praise and thank him by serving other people. God has put you/me here for a reason, it is his Will that we are part of the body of believers and that we build up that body.

God has blessed us all with many gifts, talents, and abilities. He has not done that so we can use those gifts only for ourselves and be good at our job, good at our hobbies, or well-rounded as a person. God has given us those abilities so that we can fit together with our fellow Christians, members of the body of believers, and their gifts and abilities and use them to bring God glory and spread his Word here on earth.

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. (Ro 12:4-6)

We are all parts of this body of Christ and we have jobs to do.

If you have ever had major surgery on a part of your body, you know how hard it can be to go through recovery or rehab where you can't use that body part, that arm, leg, hand or foot for the weeks or months it heals. When those surgeries occur, your body does not function as well as it should.

Your gifts, talents, and abilities are needed in the body of believers. The church needs all different kinds of gifts in the same way that your body needs all its parts to function correctly, just as your body doesn't function correctly when your parts are not working together. Try to open a door with your elbow, how does it work? Try opening that same door with your foot, what are your results? Try writing with your toes or walking on your hands for a few days, how will that work?

God put you here for a reason; to be a part of this body of believers. Do we want the church to just get by? Yes, it may be that you can open a door with your elbow or foot, and you may be able to make letters with your toes, or move a small distance walking on your hands. But how much easier and efficient is it to use those parts that are designed for that purpose? How much better does the church function when Christians use their gifts and talents in the way that God designed them for his purpose?

Let's look at some church examples. What if we all wanted to fold the bulletins in service to our God? If we all did that, who would hand them out? What if we all wanted to be ushers, who would play the organ? What if we all wanted to do the landscaping, who would make sure that the maintenance on the inside of the church would get done?

For the church to be effective and efficient at its mission of spreading the Gospel to others, for the body to work well, we must also understand the final reason God put us here; God says to get to work, to use those gifts and talents to spread the Gospel in whatever way we can.

What if we think we don't have any gifts that would be good to use in the service of the church, what if we think that our gifts are not necessary or that we can sit on the sidelines? This is part of the two-headed coin of temptation that the devil uses to try to stop us from serving. Either we value ourselves too highly or not highly enough. 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. (Rom 12:3)**

The sober judgment that Paul talks about is very important for us to not undervalue or overvalue our gifts. On one hand we might undervalue ourselves and our gifts. We should not think that our gifts and abilities cannot be used because they are not the ones the church needs. This will lead us not to serve at all. On the other hand, we should not push ourselves forward and think that our gifts should be valued more highly than others because they would be of greater value than someone else's. This will stop others from serving as well.

Paul says, **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. (Rom 12:4-8)**

Paul says we use these gifts not for ourselves, we use them in service to God and to others. We do not use our gifts to make ourselves feel good or to pat ourselves on the back. We use these gifts in response to what our Savior has already done for us. Our Savior blesses us here on earth, but more than the blessings he showers on us here on earth, more than the gifts and talents he gives to us, is the fact that he has given us a home in heaven. Our Savior has forgiven our sins, our Savior has told us our place is secure. In view of God's mercy, this is the way that Paul led off this section of Scripture. Our response to our Savior is clear, the response to the love and mercy that God has shown us, that we don't earn or deserve is clear. It is a cheerful response, it is a joyful response, it is a loving response to all our Savior has done for us. It's a response that flows from faith.

Sober judgment means that we realize that God has put us here to serve, no matter what gifts we have been blessed with. If we have gifts of time, then we should find ways to serve the Lord using that time. If we have the gift of talents, then we should find ways to use those talents in service to God and his church. If we have the gifts of finances, then we should find ways to put those gifts to good use in God's kingdom.

No matter which part we are, a toe, a pinky, a kidney, a hair, or a nose, we are members of the body of Christ, we are part of his network of believers who join together to do the work the Lord has given to us. We use all of our gifts freely and cheerfully in service to the Lord and to each other because we know what Christ has done save us.

God has put you/me here for a reason. He has chosen us to be his children, he has placed us into the body of believer and he has blessed us with gifts to use in thankful service to him for the blessings that he gives to us. May God grant to each of us a heart of faith which joyfully seeks to use our gifts and talents in service to the Lord out of thanks to our Savior, Jesus. This is why God put us here. Amen