**Sermon Romans 12:1-8 2023**

**Videolink:** [**https://youtu.be/xI7wWeNU8SE**](https://youtu.be/xI7wWeNU8SE)

Our treatment of others often reflects the treatment we receive from them. For 11 chapters the apostle Paul tells the congregation in Roman, how God feels about them, what God has done for them and what kind of relationship God has established with them. Today we begin to hear Paul tell us what he thinks our natural response would be to God, knowing all these things.

How do you respond when you discover and know that God was already thinking about you from before the creation of the universe and before God knit you together in your mother’s womb? How do you respond when you discover that God’s plan for you is based on God’s love for you, a love so large that God the Son became a human being and sacrificed his life for you?

Can you think of anyone in your life who would be prepared to give up their life for you? What about someone who you don’t get along with, who might even consider you an enemy, would you expect someone like that to give up their life for you? Jesus knows that all human beings enter life turned away from God and many stay that way rejecting God. Despite this, while human beings are still his enemy Jesus was prepared to give up his life for all of humanity. When close to death Jesus still said, “Father forgive them.” Showing that even though human beings can kill the Son, they cannot kill his love for humanity.

How do you respond to that?

How do you respond to God knowing that no matter how much you have hurt him by the things you have thought, said, and done - no matter how often you mess up - still in Christ God the Son is on the cross with his arms open wide ready to embrace you.

How do you respond to that?

Offer “your bodies as a living sacrifice,([B](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12&version=NIV#cen-NIV-28247B)) holy and pleasing to God.” (Rom 12:1, NIV). This is how you show how much God’s love, compassion and mercy revealed through Jesus, is worth to you. This is how you show how much your relationship with God is worth to you. This for Paul is the natural response for those who believe the good news about God revealed through Christ and trust that nothing can stop God from loving them.This response is something that flows naturally out of a living relationship with God.

In human relationships, when you meet that special person in your life, you fall in love, and it changes you. Even if you don’t notice it in yourself, other people notice it. They may even say, “They are so good for each other.” Or “He is a changed man.” “She is positively glowing.”

You have your first child, hold that baby in your arms and it changes you. Suddenly you are overwhelmed by a love that has somehow been released in you by the presence of this tiny human being. It doesn’t need to be a romance or a family relationship, it could be a good friend who changes you as you spend time with them.

As you spend time with the Lord Jesus, receiving mercy and forgiveness, his body and blood, hearing and being reminded of his love through his word, you are changed. As you contemplate everything God has done for you through Jesus Christ, in his life, death and resurrection, it transforms you. It renews your mind, and changes your thinking, character, values, and behaviour. As the love of God surrounds you, you are changed like a caterpillar metamorphosing in the chrysalis of God’s love into the likeness of Jesus.

This metamorphosis is not merely internal, because we are more than a mere soul or spirit or mind. We are a body with a soul, spirit, and mind, all formed and knitted together in our mother’s womb. Therefore, when God transforms you, all of you is transformed and that means there is a transformation that happens in every part of your life.

When we read Paul’s letter to the church in Rome in English, often it sounds like he is talking to individuals. Sometimes this can result in us becoming overwhelmed with the enormity of the task Paul seems to be expecting us to fulfill. In the Greek language that Paul wrote in, most of the time he is writing collectively. He is writing to the whole congregation as a collective “you.”

Yes, each individual is transformed by God through the sacrifice, love ,and mercy of Jesus Christ but more importantly, the whole congregation is transformed. All Christians are transformed and the way they relate to each other is transformed. We are all collectively transformed as we serve each other with the gifts God has poured out on us. We are collectively transformed and are a transformational collective placed amid the wider society and culture in which we live.

Having first been loved by God, we seek to love others, beginning with our brothers and sisters in Christ and according to the gifts God has given us. How? The Message translation of the Bible puts it well:

*“If you preach, just preach God’s Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don’t take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don’t get bossy; if you’re put in charge, don’t manipulate; if you’re called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don’t let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face. (12:6-8).”*

These few verses are merely the beginning of the transformed life that we live. Transformed by our relationship with Jesus and our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we begin to see the world differently and encounter the world through a new set of lenses. The more we receive love, compassion, and mercy from God the more we change and bring salt and light into our families, our personal relationships and into the wider community. The more we are transformed into the likeness of Jesus and are filled with a love that overflows into love for God and our neighbours.

Amen.

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz