



Daily Faith Practices

Sunday, August 21-27 (A) – Romans 12:1-8

Focus: *A Great Transformation*

word of life

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

(Romans 12:2 NRSV)

Read Romans 12:1-8

Chapter 12 in Paul’s letter to the Romans marks a shift in tone and theme for the apostle. In the previous chapters, Paul has laid the groundwork for the doctrine of justification by grace. He carefully crafts his words to explain the freeing grace of God in Christ. In Chapter 12, Paul calls the faithful to live out the Gospel message. He answers the question, “So what?” by exhorting the Christians in Rome to live lives that reflect the grace and mercy of God.

1. *What difference does grace make in your everyday life?*
2. *Does the belief in justification by grace impact your relationships with others? How so?*

There are several key words in today’s reading. Today’s passage begins with the word *therefore*: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, 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 NRSV) *Therefore* emphasizes the strong connection to the preceding theme of God’s mercies. Ethical living is a response that flows from God’s mercy. Because God has loved and justified you, *therefore* offer your whole being—your bodies—as a living sacrifice.

The word *body* is used several times in these verses. In verse 1, the body is to be offered wholly and completely to God in response to God’s mercies. Paul writes in his letter to the church in Corinth about the body as “a temple of the Holy Spirit within you....” (1 Corinthians 6:19 NRSV). It is the outward physical expression of the inward person—a person made holy and acceptable to God in Christ. The faithful are called to give every fiber of their being as a living sacrifice. The words of the hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* express it well: “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” (#803 *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*)

Body is also used in verses 4-5: “For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” (Romans 12:4-5 NRSV) The individual body, given as a living sacrifice, is to be offered for the greater body—the community of faith—not for individual acclaim.

3. *In what ways have you experienced the church as the body of Christ?*

Paul calls for a new way of living in response to God’s love and grace. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2 NRSV) No longer are we to be *conformed* and shaped by the world’s expectation and definition of what constitutes a good life. Rather, we are *transformed* (Greek word *morphe* as in *metamorphosis*) into a new way of thinking, acting and living. We are not called to live up to some human standard or self-image. We are called instead to offer our gifts and our lives in grateful response to God’s grace.

4. *What does God’s love demand of us?*
5. *How might one offer one’s body as a living sacrifice?*

word *among us*

An ugly, squirming caterpillar goes into a self-spun cocoon, only to emerge as a beautiful butterfly. Blackened trees, seemingly destroyed by wildfires, emerge as a lush, living forest after a few years. A young man, overweight and disheveled, goes away to military boot camp and returns home fit, trim and focused. All these are examples of transformation and metamorphosis—a striking alteration in appearance, attitude, character or circumstance.

1. *What are other examples of transformation you have seen and experienced in your life?*
2. *What factors prompted the change?*

The Apostle Paul wrote of the transformation in the life of a Christian. Rather than conforming to the world's values and its understanding of what constitutes the "good life," Paul exhorts the church in Rome to discern the good life as one of a living sacrifice—a life of giving and sharing gifts. It is a life lived in grateful response to the life given by One who gave his life for us.

Imagine you didn't know how to swim, and as you are driving home one stormy day, your car is swept away in rising flood waters. You are trapped in the raging tide. Left to your own strength and skill, you are lost. But just when you are about to go under, a strong hand reaches out and pulls you to safety. As you strain to catch your breath, you try to thank the rescuer, but he simply said, "I'm glad I was able to help."

3. *How would that experience change the way you lived?*
4. *How would it impact your relationship with the one who saved you?*

God in Christ saves us from the chaos of our lives when all hope is swept away. Left to our own strength and ability, we would drown in our sin and our futile attempts to save ourselves. But by the mercy and grace of God, we are lifted up to safety. How are we to respond to the one who gives us life and saves us? Paul gives us the answer: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice . . ." (Romans 12:1 NRSV) We are transformed and renewed to do nothing less than to give our all to God.

faith practice *in daily life*

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

The good news of God's grace is life-changing and mind-changing. It is meant to be shared in our words and deeds. We do so, not to draw attention to ourselves, but to build up the body of Christ. We share our gifts of talent, time and treasure in response to what God has done for us in Christ.

5. *Identify possible actions to be done this week as a response to God's love.*

Prayer

Gracious God, we too often conform our lives to the world's values. Transform our lives and renew our minds, that we may offer our lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to you. Amen

last word

Look for examples of transformation
in your daily life.