Service for November 15, 2026 - The 25th Sunday after Pentecost

Romans 12:1-8 EHV

Theme: **God's Mercies…**

1) Transform you…
2) To serve Him and one another.

Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship. 2Also, do not continue to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you test and approve what is the will of God—what is good, pleasing, and perfect.

3So by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think in a way that results in sound judgment, as God distributed a measure of faith to each of you. 4For we have many members in one body, and not all the members have the same function. 5In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given us. If the gift is prophecy, do it in complete agreement with the faith. 7If it is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach. 8If it is encouraging, then encourage. If it is contributing, be generous. If it is leadership, be diligent. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully.

"If you are saved completely by grace through faith in Jesus, what prevents you from sinning?" Has anyone ever asked you that question? I have been asked it many times. The people who ask it can't comprehend how we can believe that our salvation is so secure in Christ that we no longer need to fear God's condemnation.

It's a fair question – one that the devil uses to get us to think there must be something more than just faith in Christ that saves. But there isn't.

With the apostle Paul as our guide, let us learn that God's grace to us in Christ not only saves us from sin, it saves us to live for Him, under the theme: **God's Mercies** 1) Transform you 2) To serve Him and one another.

Part One: God's mercies transform you.

Our sermon text follows Paul's praise of God's wisdom and mercy. Throughout his letter, Paul proclaimed the richness of God's grace for us through faith in Jesus. God chose to save us despite seeing no goodness in us at all. How? By sending His Son into the world to be the atoning sacrifice

for our sins. Through faith in Jesus, His righteousness covers our unrighteousness. Through Baptism, God raised us to live a new life. Even though we still struggle with sin, there is no condemnation for those who believe in Jesus. Even in persecution, danger, and weakness, He is working for our good – not letting anything separate us from the love He has for us in Christ.

In view of all these mercies, and the many more yet to be fulfilled – like our resurrection from the dead and life everlasting with Him in heaven - Paul writes:

Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship.

In Old Testament times, God's people offered thank offerings to the LORD for His mercy. They involved the death of an animal. Our appropriate response to God's mercy also involves a sacrifice of thanksgiving – not the killing of an animal, but the denial of our sinful self as we live to the glory of Him who lived for us. We live for Him, not because must earn His favour, but because the new spirit He gave us at our baptism wants to do His will.

But if you are anything like me, you might think, "I want to live for God, but my sinful nature keeps tempting me to live for myself. How can I offer my life as a living sacrifice to God?" Paul tells us in the very next verse.

[2]Also, do not continue to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you test and approve what is the will of God—what is good, pleasing, and perfect.

The world is constantly calling us to conform to its way of thinking: to use whatever gifts and talents God has given you to enrich yourself instead of others. Our society tells us to live our own truth instead of the truth God gives us in His Word. It encourages us to value things like money, technology, and the latest fashion trend above God – turning them into idols.

And don't we often fall? I know I do. I find it all too easy to waste an hour on Amazon, but a struggle to read a 5-minute devotion. I find it all too easy to argue politics with somebody but am too timid to share the Gospel. Yes, like ruts in a road that constantly pull you in, the world is constantly enticing us to conform to its way of thinking, and we all fall. We all sin. And these sins are not small things. They all put other things ahead of the LORD, who is coming to judge the world.

So how do we break the cycle? By our own strength, we can't. But God can. How? By transforming us with His mercies and renewing our minds with the Gospel. His Spirit gives us both the will and the strength to resist sin and live for Him.

Yes, even though we have sinned time and time again, and have no power in ourselves to break the cycle, God forgives us for Jesus' sake. He lived the perfect life of obedience to God's Law we all failed to live. More than that, He died on the cross for our sins, paying for every one of them in full. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Jesus, and by His wounds, we are healed.

And the LORD brings these saving blessings to us through His Word. Through His Law, the Holy Spirit exposes our sin. Through His Gospel, He reveals our forgiveness in Christ and creates faith in our hearts to receive it. In Holy Baptism, He clothed us with Christ's righteousness, declared us to be His sons and daughters, and created a new spirit inside of us that, led by the Holy Spirit, wants to do God's will.

We can't transform ourselves, but the Holy Spirit transforms us through the power of God's Gospel to reflect the image of God's Son. Yes, through continual meditation on God's Word, we are renewed, learning what is good, perfect, and pleasing to God.

Therefore, just as the moon was created to serve the world by sharing the light it receives, so God transforms us by His mercies to serve others by sharing the light of His saving grace with them.

Part Two: God's Mercies transform you to serve Him and one another.

Therefore, the apostle Paul writes:

[3]So by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think in a way that results in sound judgment, as God distributed a measure of faith to each of you.

The LORD graciously called Paul to be His apostle—a calling Paul neither earned nor deserved but received entirely by God's mercy. Through that gracious calling, Paul urges every Christian to think about the talents and gifts God has given them, and how they can be used to glorify God by serving others.

But before doing that, Paul warns us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. Don't imagine that your gifts make you more important or more deserving than others. Don't imagine you can do it all. Such thoughts come from a proud, sinful heart.

Instead, Paul says, think with sound judgement, using the measure (the standard) of faith God has given each believer: the Gospel. Look at yourself in Christ, seeing who He created and saved you to be. Not only has He granted you distinct talents and gifts to praise Him, but He has also placed you in your present situation to use those gifts for the good of others, as Paul illustrates:

4For we have many members in one body, and not all the members have the same function. 5In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Just as God uniquely created each member of our body to serve a specific function for the benefit of the body, so God uniquely gifts us Christians so that we might serve one another in love.

Just think: a hand doesn't just grab things for itself, but for the body. And the eye doesn't just see things for itself, but for the body. In the same way, God wants us to use our gifts not merely to benefit ourselves, but His body of believers. He wants us to do this motivated by His mercies as we bask in the forgiving love God has for us in Christ.

Therefore, Paul writes:

We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given us.

Just as there is no useless part of the body, there is no such thing as a useless Christian. By His grace, God has gifted each of us uniquely to serve one another. And if illness, age, or weakness means you cannot do what you once did, you have not lost your place in Christ's body. You belong to Him by grace. Your brothers and sisters are there to care for you, too.

Paul now offers us seven examples of gifts used in service to Him and others.

If the gift is prophecy, do it in complete agreement with the faith.

Biblical prophecy is not limited to foretelling the future; it is speaking the Word God gives. Here, Paul directs those with this gift to speak in agreement with the faith: to preach God's Word faithfully.

Therefore, all those who have been called and gifted to speak God's Word to His people are not to proclaim their own opinions or ideas, nor are they to preach in a way that brings glory to themselves instead of Christ. Instead, God wants their preaching to be in complete agreement with the faith—with the truth He has revealed in His Word, centred on His Gospel of salvation in Christ. In doing this, they glorify God and serve His people.

What is said about prophecy applies to all the gifts God gives us. He wants us to use them in full agreement with His Word. And as Paul's next three examples show, He wants us to put those gifts to use.

7If it is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach. 8If it is encouraging, then encourage.

Paul's point is this: if God has given you a gift and an opportunity to use it, don't hold back or wish you had someone else's gift. Perhaps a child needs you to explain God's Word patiently once more. Perhaps someone whose grief others have forgotten needs you to listen and remind them of Christ's love. Such service may never draw attention, but it matters to the person God has placed before you. Thank God for the mercy He has shown you and use His gifts to serve others to His glory.

And don't be half-hearted in using His gifts in your calling. Use them faithfully in the opportunities He gives you, as Paul illustrates with his last three examples.

If it is contributing, be generous. If it is leadership, be diligent. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully.

Oh, how I wish I could say I use God's gifts the way He desires, but I don't. Sometimes, I think more highly of myself than I ought; at other times, I envy the gifts of others. I find it easy to voice my opinion rather than God's Word. I daydream about having some other vocation and am often less than diligent. And I don't think that I am the only one with these struggles. We all have them. We all sin. So where does that leave us? At the foot of the cross, asking the LORD to forgive us. And forgive us He does for His mercy's sake. He paid for all our sins in full. His righteousness covers our unrighteousness.

And His mercy renews my desire to serve. Like the moon exposed to the sun, the more we receive God's grace through the Gospel, the more we want to reflect it to the world. All because of God's mercy. Only because of His grace.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, does salvation by grace leave us free to live only for ourselves, as some claim? By no means! God's mercy gives us a new life in Christ. Even though we still struggle with sins, our Saviour paid for them all in full – reconciling us to God. More than that, the Holy Spirit renews us through His Word so we can offer our bodies as living sacrifices to the LORD until He comes.

Yes, God's mercies alone transform us and give us strength to serve Him and one another—all to the glory of His name. Amen.