

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 17 Sunday 29 April_2018.

To God's Greater Glory: live a new life.

Background text READ **ROMANS 11: 33 through to 12: 2. (and rest of the letter)**

Our AIM for this year is to explore what it means to be truly human. Also, I pray that we will seek individually and together to bring greater glory to God by the way we live our lives. The Biblical argument is that true humans are those made and remade in the image and likeness of God. The New Testament developed argument and the belief of Christians is that it is Jesus who shows us what it means to be fully human and who enables those who believe and receive him to enter into the experience of human life in fullness (*John 10: 10*).

Romans: Paul spends the first 11 chapters describing the full extent of God's mercy. **(PP2)** Then he calls for a **DOXOLOGY: to God be glory forever**. In chapter **11 of Romans vv 33 – 36** he calls upon Believers to bring praise to God who is worthy of all praise. Those who give glory to God must first have appreciated who God is and what God has done.

God's GLORY: the manifest beauty of his holiness. It is the going public of his holiness. It is the way he puts his holiness on display for people to apprehend. (John Piper).
Supremely God has publicly displayed his glory in the person and works of Jesus for all to see and consider their response.

Those of us who value what God has displayed in Jesus Christ are called to surrender our lives to live for God's greater glory and with the intention of bringing others to surrender their lives to God. We want to draw attention to Jesus.

Romans 12: 1, 2 True worship involves my inner self including my mind and my whole body – a living sacrifice. True worship then is not just the words of praise I utter or sing with my lips but the way I live my life.

The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. (*Westminster, and Church of Scotland Confession. 1646*) Within this is surely the understanding that human identity, purpose, meaning and satisfaction are discovered in personal relationship with God. So, our discovery of our true self is also inevitably a seeking for the greater glory of God. Perhaps our human desire for satisfaction and meaning should take second place to the seeking of God's glory – BUT- we are what we are: weak and needy humans. Our priorities and motivations may not always be of the highest order.

The Doxology (call to praise God) has an internal logic as to why we should praise God and seek to attribute glory to God.

V33 Because RICHES are found in God's plan of Salvation – which is to raise up human beings ("a pearl of great price"). Three rhetorical questions are raised by Paul referring to statements and questions in the books of *Job, Isaiah and Chronicles*.

- Has anyone ever been able to anticipate God?

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- Has God ever needed anyone's advice?
- Has God ever been short of resources and needed to take a loan? (*David Coffey, Romans by Crossway*).

The logic? Praise is due to God as both Creator and Sustainer and everything exists to praise God – to give God glory. But not everything or everyone does or will acknowledge God.

Paul's logic: "***In the light of God's mercy***" – I should change my behaviours to match my beliefs about God. Verses 1 and 2 of Romans 12 set the direction for the next 5 chapters. (Read book of *Romans*).

Paul calls for a holistic response: use your bodies to show mercy, to do righteousness and to be hospitable. Whatever gifts and grace you have use it all to **bring greater glory to God**.

When we offer our bodies and our minds are transformed as living sacrifices then we are truly engaged with worshipping God.

If we want to **please God**, then this is what is required. We are not just talking about being Justified by God but also about being true to the Holy Spirit and Jesus who have come to live within us and also **living to God's greater glory**.

(PP3) All of you that say you want to **know the will of God for your lives** here is the answer to your question: **how do I discover the will of God?** *Brothers & sisters* it is as r we: -

- Offer ourselves now, not waiting till we die
- Dedicate ourselves to serve God's purposes not insisting on our own way
- We agree we will not conform to this world's standards and attitudes
- Instead we will let God transform the way we think

We will be discussing and thinking in the weeks ahead about how we might help and encourage one another in the community of God's people to do this. Let's remember that we are seeking to **become more truly human and bring greater glory to God**.

A change of mind as well as a change of behaviour is called for.

Is this possible? The cynic will say, **can a leopard change its spots**. This is not intended as a question but is meant to make the point that people revert to their old, life long ways of learned behaviour. The cynic is saying – it's imprinted, a fixed mind set and human attempts to change only last a short while.

What do I say when someone says, *can a leopard change their spots*. I say **I'm not working with leopards**. I can look at the lives of many people and see the change when people begin to co-operate with God. Look at Paul who wrote this letter who was

guilty of religious hatred and fundamentalism and obsessed with destroying Christians. He changed to becoming a different man who spent his life travelling the world to talk about Jesus and prepared to die just to do this. He wrote to the Christians in another place Corinth: *when someone becomes a Christian, they become a brand-new person inside. They are not the same any more – a new life has begun.* 2 C 5: 17. Paul argued that they became a “new species” – their mental genetic code – or ways of thinking could be re-written. In his case his racist and religious hatred were in time re-written.

I know in my own mind and behaviour the changes that have happened for the better that are not just human effort but a combined deeper work, over many years seeking to learn from God.

I have seen people’s ways of behaving and thinking change over decades as they become kinder, calmer, more courageous to do right and be less self-centered. Christians may not have the monopoly on change but I have seen it happen in Christians.

I have also seen people go backwards as they stop listening to God and start thinking in isolation or start listening to unhelpful, unkind and selfish people who advise them badly.

Leopards do not change their spots but with God’s grace human’s can change their ways of thinking and behaving. It has to be something that we really want and are committed to because **change needs to be more than skin deep. Transformation of the mind’s way of thinking takes time.** The importance of seeing truth about myself, others and God...the full quote from ***Jeremiah 13: 23 Can a Nubian (empire between Egypt & Ethiopian) change the colour of their skin, or a leopard remove its spots? If they could then you who do nothing, but evil could learn to do what is right.***

Jeremiah warns against human pride which thinks deep changes in human nature can be brought about by human decision and effort. The desire to change is essential but the Bible teaches that we need the deep work of God to effect change in us that is lasting and for good. The Bible teaches that change needs to be more than skin deep – a change of mind and heart is needed.

Paul just like Jeremiah before him addresses the issue of human pride in Romans 12 verse 3 when he says, *I say to everyone of you: do not think of yourselves more highly than you should. Instead be modest in your thinking and judge yourself according to the measure of faith that God has given you.*

(PP5) How do you judge yourself? What do think about yourself? Perhaps this is the good clue that we need to spend less time judging others and more time with God’s help and God’s lens in examining our own motives and behaviours. That’s of course if we want to change to become more fully human and to bring greater glory to God.

The Scripture here teaches that in the Body (church) there are different functions and as people we have different contributions BUT it is important not just that everyone does

their own thing, but we work in conjunction and collaboration – in community with others. **V6 These are graces that God gives for the common good not just to give me identity and fulfillment.**

What attitudes do we bring to working with others – both in the church community and society? Paul recommends generous sharing, hard work and cheerful kindness. In other words, Paul is saying if you begrudge what you are doing and giving. If you are miserable and moany or if you are lazy then you need a mind transformation – a change of attitude.

Why are you doing it?

Are you doing it to show off your giftedness? Are you doing it to show what a great philanthropist and lover of humanity you are. Are you doing it to show you are better than others? What's your motivation? Or verse 1: are you doing it as a response to God's mercy and love? Are you doing it as your true worship – a kiss of gratitude to God for all the mercy he has shown you. **We need a new way of thinking about what we contribute to church community and society.**

Verse 2: Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of mind.

Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and pleasing to him and is perfect.

The “way of the world” is caricatured as having little thought of what is pleasing to God. The way of the world is caricatured as doing things for myself, often in isolation from others.

The standards of this world are different to those of God. If we want to please God because we are grateful to God for all he has done for us in Jesus Christ, then we need to think differently.

How will the change of mind and attitude come about so that I am prepared to offer my body as a living sacrifice?

This is therefore a call to REFLECT, to contemplate on how we are living our lives. We can do that both on our own and also in discussion with others.

What am I contributing to my church community? Everyone has contributions that they can make by using the gifts and graces, funds and resources that they have. (Local community and workplace can ask same question).

If I am contributing, then what is the attitude I bring to it?

Am I doing it to please God? Do I see this as worship – living for God?

RESPONSE: *At the Beginning of the Day.* (adapted unknown source by J. Veltri). Will be posted on Facebook.