

Becoming human- giving glory. 29 April\_2018.

**(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 19 Sunday 13 May\_2018.**

**Transformation through Community Relating.**

Background text READ **ROMANS 12: 1 – 2 and 13: 1 - 7. (and rest of the letter)**

**This year we are exploring 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 in relationship to others and with God.**

**Romans:** Paul spends the first 11 chapters describing the full extent of God's mercy. Then he voices a **DOXOLOGY** and calls for others to praise: **to God be glory forever.** He calls upon Believers to bring praise to God by the way we live our lives. Those who give glory to God must first have appreciated just who God is and what God has done. Throughout our lives this can be a growing appreciation as we reflect and experience God increasingly.

Supremely **God has publicly displayed his glory in the person and works of Jesus** for all to see and consider their response. And we too can bring glory to God. ***The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. (Presbyterians. Circa 1646)*** (Others aim: to make as much money as can; to have a family; to be happy and fulfilled; to have a great career; to avoid paying tax, to do as much charitable work as I can...)

**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 so that others may change their focus.

**(PP2) Romans 12: 1, 2 True worship** involves my whole self-including my mind (NOOS) and also my body (SOMATA) – a living sacrifice and not a dead one. True worship then is not just the words of praise I utter or sing with my lips but the way I think and live my life.

**Indeed, Paul argues within this chapter that the transformation of mind and behaviour that we need comes about as we make this personal offering and as we help and encourage one another in the community of God's people to do this.**

**V2 We are not simply to conform (SUSCHEMATIZESTHE** – squeezed into a mould of this present age. We are to resist the outward pressures to conform – instead we must seek to become what God wants us to be.

Within this is surely the understanding that human identity, purpose, meaning and satisfaction are **discovered in personal relationship with God BUT ALSO AS WE REITERATE TODAY IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS.** So, our discovery of our true self is also inevitably a seeking for the greater glory of God PARTICULARLY IN THE WAY THAT WE RELATE TO OTHERS.

**Paul talks nonstop about relating**...presumably unpacking what it means to “love one another” (13:8) and to “love neighbour” (13:9). In verses 9 and 10 he talks about sincere love and hating what is evil. He talks chapter 12 verse 4 using the metaphor of the human body to describe the community of the church – God’s people. Each of us brings different gifts to enable the Body to work and live and we have different functions within the Body (v4). **Romans 12:6 These are graces that God gives for the common good not just to give me identity and fulfillment. Paul calls for us to change while in community and relationship rather than in isolation. He uses another metaphor – extended family.**Remind by putting up on the screen only(PP3,4)

V10	<i>Be devoted to one another – as a family of “brothers &amp; sisters”. Respect one another.</i>	Paul calls for this sort of behaviour.
V13	<i>Share your belongings with those fellow Christians who are needy and show hospitality – welcome strangers.</i>	
V14	<i>Ask God to bless those who persecute you, bless them don’t curse them.</i>	
V15	<i>Be happy with those who are happy, weep with those who weep.</i>	
V16	<i>Live in harmony with EVERYONE – don’t be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position (willing to do menial work).</i>	
V17	<i>Do not repay evil for evil.</i>	
	<i>Try to do what everyone considers to be good.</i>	
V18	<i>Do everything possible on your part to live at peace with everyone.</i>	
V19	<i>Never take revenge, my friends.</i>	<i>Let God take revenge &amp; pay back.</i>
v20	<i>Instead of revenge: If your enemy is hungry feed them; if thirsty give them a drink...(you will make them burn with shame)</i>	<i>As the Scripture says: Jesus Sermon on Mount...</i>
V21	<i>Do not let evil defeat you: instead, conquer evil with good.</i>	
Ch 13	<b>Relationship with Authorities</b>	
Ch 14	<b>Relationship of the “weak and strong”</b>	
Ch 15	<b>Relationship with “foreigners” - Gentiles</b>	
Ch 16	<b>Friends and co-workers</b>	

**Paul's argument that a transformation of mind/ attitude is needed to bring about this way of living all the time.** The human will needs to want this and be engaged but it is surely not brought about just by human effort but by being in relationship with the Holy Spirit of God – listening to God who has come to make his home in us. (Apostle John) **The priority** therefore is the *common good* rather than me. I am important and specially loved but the **teaching of Jesus is in serving God and the true common good I truly discover me.** (*By losing my life, (sacrificing it for God's glory and the common good) I will find it. Matt 10: 39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9: 24; John 12: 25).*

**(PP5) Romans 13: 1 – 7.** Paul breaks in to talk briefly about our relationship with and **“Responsibilities to the State Authorities”**. It does break the chain of thought but it's as though Paul suddenly thinks of something and wants to remind these Believers in Rome from many nations of the world that they also live out their Christian lives in - the PUBLIC world and not just in the church and local community.

We have just had local elections and so this is a relevant and timely reminder for us. A reminder – that we live every day in a society where there are “authorities with powers and responsibilities” to order society and enable it to run smoothly and safely. We live (unlike many people) in an ordered and organized society. We live in relationship to others who are very different to us – we do not live in isolation. We need to be aware not just of ourselves and those we know closely and intimately. **We are citizens of the world as well as citizens of God's Kingdom.**

Paul knew what it was to live in occupied territory in Judea and he had travelled widely enough to see different forms of authorities and powers and to have the benefits and responsibilities of being a Roman citizen. He was not arguing that one form of government was better than another but he was arguing for people to see the need for and respect order and therefore to some extent rules.

He calls for obedience to the powers (EXOUSIA). He is not here dealing with evil or tyrannical rulers – these are spoken of in other parts of the Bible. He is surely aware that all governments as with all families (*Ephesians 5: 21 fol*) don't live up to the highest standards of behaviour and treatment of others. He is arguing that the “State” has a purpose and Christians should seek to live well within that and not to constantly be at war with those in authority. (Some people are anarchic against any authority and it takes much time and energy that could be used for other things).

Early Christians knew that there were times when they would have to disobey the State if they were to obey God (*Acts 4: 19*) but this did not apply all the time. Jesus himself was executed by the State – Roman Governor and the Church of course became greatly persecuted by the Roman State or political system not long after Paul's writing.

However, **Paul uses common sense/ logical arguing for a follower of God when he says of the Authorities:**

- It's Divine origins – ordered government is part of God's plan for ordered society.

- It's protecting role – they are to maintain a safe and peaceful environment where lawlessness is restrained, and citizens can live peaceful lives, and communities flourish and grow. This is not a passage to justify oppression and intolerance but to argue for the importance and relevance of good government and justice.
- It's authority under God – v4 *deacons* or servants of God. Not all authorities to see themselves in this light, but Paul says that this is their calling. This should certainly mean that we hold government local and national to account.
- It's citizens responsibilities – governments have the right to exact taxes from us personally and from property and we are to **pay our taxes** because we want to live in a fair and just society. (*Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's*. Image on Roman coin but God's image on us!) We have a responsibility writes Paul to Timothy to **pray** for those in authority and we will benefit through good government – *1 Timothy 2: 1 – 4*.

[www.citizensuk.org/](http://www.citizensuk.org/)

*Citizens UK* organises communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good. We are the home of community organising in the UK, with ... TELCO (The East London Citizens Organisation) is the founding chapter of Citizens UK.

So Paul calls upon Christian followers of Jesus not just to treat other people as those made in the image of God and loved by God BUT he also calls upon us to consider how we behave in relationship to those who have authority in the state – law makers and law keepers and those who exact taxes of us. **I am not just a private person, an individual and a family member BUT I am a citizen of the world and this nation.**

On this matter too, I may well need a transformation of mind – a changed way of thinking as I live out my daily life.