

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Road Map
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Romans 12:1-8
September 13, 2020

It's not your body to use as you want - Thank God!

- The cry goes out with bold defiance: *It's my body. I can do what I want.*
 - ◆ A claim of autonomy - of *liberty, freedom, my right of independence*
 - ◆ A claim that raises concerns by parents and others who care.
- Then there's the variant: *My body. My choice.*
 - ◆ A claim that makes us cry, because it ignores the other person involved. The new human being that her own body has conceived.
- While recognizing these false claims of freedom, we **all** need these words of the Apostle Paul to avoid our self-willed false claims of autonomy and freedom:
 - ◆ *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.*
 - ◆ We have a **higher calling** for our bodies **than** *using them as we want.*
 - ◆ Our bodies - our whole being - has the high calling to glorify our Creator.
 - Everything we do and say - how we care for our bodies - is to worship God.
 - Our bodies really belong to God. He created them. He redeemed them.

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- ❖ **Recognize both: what God saved you *from* and what he saved you *for*.**
 - *Jesus died on the cross to save me **from** my sins so I don't go to **hell** when I die.*
 - ◆ *God's mercy provided his Son as my substitute to fully pay for my guilt.*
 - *Jesus rose to life, so when I die I can go to **heaven**. He saved me **for eternal life**.*
 - What comfort for life after death! Saved **from hell**. Saved **for heaven**.
 - The **mercy of God** proclaimed in 11 chapters has fleshed this out and more.
 - ◆ **Our sin problem:** we dethrone God as our Lord, and crown ourselves as the ones in charge of our lives. *It's my life. I do what I want.*
 - Our sinful nature finds *wisdom* in the world's ways. *Everyone is doing it.*
 - Our rebellious hearts and minds call this *freedom of choice*, when in reality sin blinds us to its impact and end, holding us captive, slaves to sin and death.
 - ◆ Through his light-giving word, Jesus rescues us **from** this foolish blindness and captivity. Yes, Jesus saves us **from** the **guilt of our sin**, but also its **captivity**.
 - ◆ Redeemed, bought back from slavery to sin, we belong to God. He's our God.
 - Jesus saved us **for new life**. To be **citizens in God's kingdom of care**.
 - Jesus saved us **for a life of worship** - joyfully treating God as our God.
- ❖ **Be nonconformist, transformed to recognize God's will is good.**
 - *...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.*
 - Having experienced the bitterness, guilt, self-destruction of following the pattern of a sin-loving blind humanity - why would we call that *fun*?
 - Christians are *nonconformists like Christ*. Not joining those dwelling in death.
 - ◆ Not anarchist nonconformist. Not Old Order Amish nonconformist.

- Knowing our own struggle with our sinful nature (Romans 7) we want the Holy Spirit to transform us, renewing our mind to think & see reality like Christ Jesus.
 - ♦ The more we see how **good, pleasing, and perfect God's will** is, the more we **fall in love** with his will and **affirm it** in our thinking, speech, and conduct.
 - ♦ We want to **mature** so we don't call our sinful desires *freedom & liberty*.
 - For sin is **never** liberating! It enslaves. Doing God's will is true freedom.
 - When God's will seems oppressive and restrictive, smell the breath of Satan.
 - Flee to the Scriptures, praying for the renewal of your thinking and desires.
 - ♦ Jesus saved us *for a life of knowing just how good, pleasing, and fulfilling his will is*. That's what awaits us in heaven & at the resurrection. Explore it now.
- ❖ **Worship God by using your God-given gifts in the body of believers.**
 - ***...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice — holy and pleasing to God — which is your appropriate worship.***
 - ♦ **Worship** = serving God in a way that treats him as your One and Only God.
 - ♦ Living according to God's will is an act of worship - a life of worship.
 - ♦ Treating *God as God* calls for humility that knows I'm not in charge. I serve.
 - Paul reveals an important truth - a great mystery!
 - ♦ ***...though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.***
 - ♦ All followers of Jesus are part of one body - Christ's Church (community)
 - Not an organization. But **an organic reality - each members of one another.**
 - Those who say they can be a Christian without the Church are missing this!
 - Faith is **not a personal walk with Jesus by myself!** = self-willed arrogance!
 - Christian congregations are not human inventions!
 - **Jesus gathers** his people around his Word and Sacraments
 - ♦ *The Marks of the Church.* They create saints. Saint can't get enough.
 - To mature together in Jesus - teaching, modeling, correcting, encouraging
 - ♦ God gives each member (body part) gifts to be used in that part of the body.
 - Paul lists 7 gifts as a sample: proclaiming, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leading, showing mercy - for a healthy thriving community
 - The Christian who thinks they have no gift - insults God who gives freely.
 - The Christian who thinks their gift is his to use as he wants, is arrogant.
 - The Christian who withholds their gift cripples the body, withholds blessings from fellow believers, and stunts their own growth by not using them.
 - Most of these gifts don't call for a position in the church.
 - They call for worshiping God by caring for one another and sharing your gifts in ways that promote Christ's will - the common good and maturing.
 - This also calls for **letting others serve you** - listen to the proclamation and teaching. Be open to encouragement. Allow others to show mercy.
 - This is not busy work or even obligations. It's the blessed life of worship in and through God's mercy. **Very liberating!** Why deprive yourself?
 - God gave you a body to offer in worship of your Creator and Savior.

**It's not your body to use as you want!
Thank God - he has a much higher and better purpose for it!**