

Message for Sunday, August 23, 2026

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8

Title:

Welcome

Announcements

Giving Options; Special Offering this month the ARC; Special offering coming up in September is the Jerome Food Bank; Church Retreat Saturday, September 12; Book Club September 1 at 9:30AM Reading Theo of Golden; Knit Crochet group meets on Wed the 26th at 9:30AM (all are welcome)

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: Amid the forces of death and destruction,

P: it takes a village to save us.

L: Amid the rivers that would carry us out to sea,

P: it takes willing souls to pull us from the waves.

L: Amid the fear and hatred in our world,

P: it takes ordinary people to reveal God's mercy.

L: Come, let us worship.

Unison Prayer

P: Gracious God, we present our very lives as holy and living sacrifices to your purposes.

During this time of worship, we seek the renewal of our minds and the strengthening of our spirits.

Show us your will, that we may know what is good, acceptable, and perfect in your sight.

Amen.

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Offering/Song

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8 NRSVue

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship.

² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.'

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function,

⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith;

⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching;

⁸ the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

L: The word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message

There are predominately two sections in this passage today that we are going to talk about. The first is verses 1-2 and the second is verses 3-8. This is not one of those clear cases where there are two distinctly different topics. Instead this is about how to break this passage down so that we can understand two distinct ideas that relate to one another.

For the typical Methodist Church goer the first two verses should sound vaguely familiar. (slide) *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is*

your reasonable act of worship.” We use the language in the traditional communion liturgy when we say, “present ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice.” This is where that language comes from. In these verses there are a few things going on. Most of us are not really familiar with what sacrifice was in the ancient world. In Roman times you don’t have a living sacrifice, you have an animal that dies on an altar. So conceptually the idea of being a living sacrifice is quite different.

The purpose of being a living sacrifice is to remind us of what verse two says (*slide*) “*Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind.*” You cannot be transformed if you are dead. This line though gets at a critical part for both sections and that is that as Christians we are called not to be conformed to the world but instead to be transforming the world. Unfortunately there are too many times that I see churches conforming to the world rather than the other way around.

In order to demonstrate this I’m going to need us to zoom out to a big picture view. Remember Paul is talking big theology for a big sell, using Rome as a base for ministry expansion. So it makes sense to zoom out to see these verses applied today. If we look at the big picture of denominations today we see more often than not institutions take their cue not from being a living sacrifice but in the world of business and finance. A way I have said this is that the church institution is more interested in surviving than it is in ministry. Is it any wonder why I’m sometimes not popular at meetings?

I have been a part of many denominational meetings and there is always talk about revitalizing ministries, but it is always with a sense of preserving what we have, not adapting to the future. Conserving buildings or operational structures, or to old ways just because, doesn’t mean that we are listening to God and doing what God wants. Now this is not a uniquely Methodist problem, nor a “this conference” problem exclusively. We see these issues playing out in every denomination across the board and it is going to get worse.

Let me give you a different example. The church over by the hospital is now a CCV church. This is the mega church from down around Phoenix, Christ Church of the Valley. Why is a mega church from Phoenix coming into Cottonwood? Simple, mega churches don’t plant where there are no churches, they plant where there are churches that they

Message for Sunday, August 23, 2026

Scripture: Romans 12:1-8

Title:

can draw people from. This is a well-documented strategy that is employed by most mega churches. Is this listening to the spirit? Or is this looking to expand market share?

Let's move on to the second part of the passage because it builds on this concept. The second part talks about your role in the ministry. In fact it uses the analogy of the body to talk about how we are all bringing different gifts into the body of Christ so that we can follow Christ better. The word that Paul uses here is diakonia which is translated as ministry, but it has a more nebulous understanding, it's more like "wait tables." Now I have been around institutional Christianity enough to see every denomination pull the "only certain people" idea. Only certain people are trained or qualified for certain things. Now I do think training is important, but the very real danger is that we downplay the importance of every ministry so that we can lift up only those we think are more important.

Ministry really is what you have to offer the body. Paul warns us right at the beginning not to think too highly of ourselves. In other words do not think your job or position is more important than other people's. I'll use myself as an example. I preach, and yes I work hard to preach but it is also a privilege to preach. If you all didn't pay me I wouldn't be able to do it. So each of us bring something to the table and we enable each other to succeed.

Ultimately I think that is the point. If we know that nothing separates us or others from God's love then we should respond to God by listening to God's direction. Not relying on institutional power to be in ministry, or to see what ministry is valuable. Instead we are called as a body together to listen to God and minister to those around us as Christ wants us to. That is the marker of what it really means to be a successful church. Not size, not budget. But our impact on each other and on those in our community. Amen.

(Might be a fine time to remind people that the Church Retreat is for all parts of the body here)

Pastoral Prayer/ The Lord's Prayer

Song

Benediction

Song

Goodbye