

Living to serve disciples

1. Intro

- During December we're doing a Vision series looking at our plans here at C@P
- We've talking about it already for two weeks
- So here's a test to see whether I have been doing a good job of communicating it or not ...
 - Who can tell me what our mission is? (on newssheet)
 - *At Church@thepeak we live to BE and MAKE disciples of Jesus*
 - Notice 'Mission' (spelling!!)
- Vision
 - *We want to see Peakhurst and beyond transformed by the good news of Jesus*

- We're going do that focusing on Four E's
 - Establishing Christians – deepening spiritual maturity
 - Engaging the Community – connecting with unbelievers
 - Evangelising our Contacts – reaching the lost
 - Equipping Each Other – training and empowering members to exercise their gifts

- Today I want to pick on that word 'transformed' ...
- Because what we expect, and what the Bible tells us to expect ...
 - When you come to hear the gospel ... the good news of Jesus
 - And you believe it
 - And not just believe it ... but it penetrates deep into your heart ...
 - It changes you
 - It turns your whole life right side up
 - It transforms your whole like

- That's what the gospel does

- When put your trust in Jesus Christ ... it's like a bomb goes off in your life and you will never be the same again
- Therefore, we ought to know and expect that living to BE a disciple of Jesus brings radical transformation to your life and anyone else who comes to this church and receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour

- A great place for us to look at this is Paul's letter to the church in Rome
- As we do we're going to see that being a disciple of Jesus means you will be transformed in two ways
 - Transformed for sacrifice
 - Transformed for service

2. Transformed for sacrifice (12:1-2)

- In the book of Romans Paul spends 11 chapters laying out the gospel and its implications
- Paul gets to 12:1 and says "Therefore..."
- This immediately tells us that what he's about to say follows on from all that he's been saying beforehand
 - *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.*
- In other words ... the way you live as a disciple of Jesus all flows out of God's mercy

- What's he mean by that?
- That's what he's been unpacking in Ch 1-11
 - No one is righteous
 - All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
 - But now a righteousness has come through faith in Christ Jesus
 - Our right standing is by grace through the sacrifice of Christ who atones for our sin

- Implications are life changing
 - Since we are justified we have peace with God
 - No longer his enemy but reconciled to God,
 - No condemnation, but assured of eternal life
- This is the gospel > the good news

- And what does Paul exhort Christians to do in light of the gospel
 - *Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God*

- In the OT, God's people sacrificed animals to deal with the sin of the Israelites
- But they were also offered as an act of worship ... an expression of devotion, commitment and complete surrender to God¹
- Christians no longer offer animal sacrifices to atone for sin ... because Jesus is the one who died once and for all for sin
 - But in the same way that the Israelites would make offerings as an act of worship, devotion and commitment to God
 - Christians are to offer their **bodies** / their lives ... as sacrifices as their act of worship, devotion and commitment to Him
 - A Christian no longer offers **dead** animal sacrifices ... they offer themselves ... as **living** sacrifices

- WHY? – because of the of God's mercy shown in the gospel
- But notice, what Paul says about the sacrifice Christians called to make
 - He says that such a sacrifice is your 'spiritual act of worship'
 - Giving yourself to God this way is what Paul describes as spiritual worship

- If you're a Christian, you worship God by giving him the only thing you **can** offer ... your life

¹In Lev 1:17 & 2:10 God refers to these types of offerings as 'holy' and 'pleasing'.

- That is ...your genuine commitment of our entire being - heart, mind, body & soul ... all for his glory and purposes ...
- That's how you worship

- **Application – offering your LIFE**
- What does offering your life to God look like?
- LIFE > Labour > Influence > Finances > Expertise
 - Labour > time, energy
 - Influence > P&C, coaching or managing kids sporting team
 - Finances > church, mission, needy,
 - Expertise > Christian boards, projects, church governance, training

- All this flows from a renewed mind
 - v2 – *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*

- Word transformed = metamorphosis
 - Metamorphosis is the process of change that caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly
 - It's a complete transformation
- When you become a Christian you metamorphose / you're transformed
 - Not just the moment you become a Christian
 - Notice Paul says – BE transformed
 - It's an ongoing transformation that happens right throughout your life

- Renewing of your mind doesn't happen through some mystical mind altering experience caused by drugs or meditation or anything weird
 - Your mind is renewed as the HS helps you to believe and understand the word of God

- I talked about this two weeks ago ...
 - It's as you engage with the word of God ...
 - Your convictions grow
 - Your mind is renewed
 - Your life is transformed in response

- Which of course means we need to be
 - Feeding our minds with the word of God
 - Coming to church
 - Going to GG
 - Reading the Bible
 - AND ... obeying the prompting work of the HS as he convicts you of the truths you're reading

- That's the first thing ...
- A mind transformed by the gospel leads to a life of sacrifice

3. Transformed for service

- One of the ways a follower of Jesus expresses their sacrifice to God is in serving others
- In other words, a mind transformed by the gospel, leads to a life of service

- To make his point, Paul uses the analogy of the body
 - v4-5 – *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

- Just as at the body has and needs different members with different functions
 - Heart > lungs > legs > fingers > ears > brain etc
 - All necessary for the body to function properly > all dependent on one another

- Paul describing the church as one body would have had huge implications for multi-ethnic church in Rome
 - This was a church made up of Jews and Gentiles
 - Yet Paul is saying ... you are one body
 - Yes there are differences in the members of the body ... as each person has different gifts
 - But there's also unity within the body because all those gifts are to be used in the service of one another
 - Each member is dependent on one another

- To illustrate his point Paul gives a list of seven different gifts
 - This is just an example of gifts God gives his people
 - Not all the gifts God gives his are listed
 - So if you have the gift of baking or barbequing ... don't worry if you don't see your gift listed there
 - His point is not to give an exhaustive list of gifts

- Rather Paul's point here is to explain how you're to **use** your gifts
 - That is ... you're to use your spiritual gifts for the common good of God's people and God's kingdom
 - You see in v6-8
 - If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it
 - If it is serving, let him serve;
 - if it is teaching, let him teach;
 - if it is encouraging, let him encourage etc
 - That is ... you're to **use** your gift diligently and faithfully to strengthen the body and help it flourish

A Warning and an Encouragement

- To everyone who's part of the body, Paul gives a warning and an encouragement when it comes to utilizing their gifts
- First, he warns us in v3 - *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober*

judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

- A person with a renewed mind thinks about themselves with sober judgment
 - They don't think too highly of themselves

- At the heart of our rebellion against God is human pride
 - We do it with God and we do it with each other
- Our tendency is to think
 - We're actually pretty good people
 - Not as bad as other people
- Therefore in our pride we think
 - we don't need God
 - we don't need saving
 - we know better than him
 - we're unwilling to submit to his good plans and purposes
- Paul is saying ... think of yourselves with sober judgment
 - A renewed mind will have a right thinking about who you are before God

- We're not only proud before God ... but we're proud before others
 - We like to think of ourselves as better than others ...
 - Whether it be
 - Morally superior
 - Better paid
 - More educated
 - More successful
 - More sporty
 - More beautiful
 - More talented
- We do it all the time ...
 - We may not verbalise it ... but we often think it
- Paul's challenge is to say ...

- With a renewed mind ... you need to think about yourself with sober judgment
- This is really important when it comes to using the gifts that God has given you
- Because unless you think of yourself with sober judgment, then you'll only use your gift to satisfy your pride
 - That is, you'll only 'serve' others when it suits you
 - When it makes you look good in front of others
 - In order to make yourself feel good
 - Give you a sense of moral superiority over others
- The flip side of what Paul says to that comes in v4-6
 - *Romans 12:4-6 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*
- See what Paul's saying ...
 - each member of the body has a gift
 - each member has a role to play in the body
- Because it's very easy to think
 - I'm really shy ...
 - I don't have anything to give
 - I don't have anything to offer
 - I'm not as gifted as other people
 - I'm too old ...
 - I can't contribute to the church anymore like I used to
 - I'm too young ...
 - I don't have much to give compared to that person over there
- But these verses remind us that that's not true

- God gifts all his people in different ways
- All members belong to the one body ... therefore everyone has ways to serve the body
- Just as there is no room for pride ... there's no room for self pity or envy

Application

- So whatever gifts God by his grace has given you ... you should use each one in order to serve the rest of the body

- So with a renewed mind
- Rather than be proud and think
 - I'm better educated than others
 - Maybe God has given you gift of teaching that will put that education to good use
 - And that you need to explore that gift and put to use
 - Whether in church, Kids church, Growth Group, Youth group, 1:1 discipling or teaching scripture
 - Use what God has given you and teach others

- Rather than be proud and think
 - I'm better paid than others
 - Understand that God has blessed you with such means ... and that his gift to you is probably supporting gospel ministry
 - And God wants you to use it to be generous to his kingdom and the support of others

- Rather than be proud of your successes in life
 - Maybe God has blessed you with the gift of leadership
 - You're a good entrepreneur or manager or decision maker
 - God has blessed you with worldly wisdom and discernment
 - Paul is saying ... use your gifts for the sake of the body to serve

- Leadership position here at church
- Christian charity or committee
- Lead a project or running an event
- It is of enormous value to have men and women who can lead and who have judgment and zeal to ensure things work properly
- It could be you have the gift of empathy
 - Maybe you could serve the body by pastorally caring for people or being part of a pastoral care team?
- The point of what Paul is saying is ...
 - Whatever ministry gift God has given you
 - Not just these seven ... but whatever gift ...
 - You should get on with the job of using it and putting it into action for the sake of the body
- As you do that ...
 - Remember ... that while your gift is necessary and good
 - You and I are just one cog in the wheel
 - Because we're all dependent on each other using their gifts for the sake of the body
- What this means of course, if you consider yourself part of the body of C@P, then ...
 - Are you contributing to the body?
 - Are you serving the other members of the body in some way with the gifts God has given you?
- If you've been here a while and haven't found a place to do that
 - > let me know on the Comms Card ... love to talk that through with you and see what you think and where you are at
- Could be anything!

- Administration, hospitality, prayer, visiting others, encouraging, tech team, set up, evangelism, training, 1:1 Bible reading, scripture teaching, morning tea, service leading, writing
- If none of those ... start with the gift of attendance ;)
 - Attending church and GG each week is a spiritual gift ...
 - I'm sure it's in the Bible somewhere ;)
- By you being at church and GG every week ... you're serving and building up the body of Christ
 - God gives that gift to all Christians by the way
- One of the things I am grateful to God for is how many of our regular members here at C@P who serve in big and small ways here at church
 - Praise God for you
 - I want to say ... keep going, keep serving the body here at C@P
- **Vision**
- One of the things we want to do over the next five years is train and empower members to exercise their gifts
- Want to do that for two reasons
 - So C@P can be a church that lives out this model of a body that serves one another
 - Secondly, as we enable and empower one another for ministry our ability to
 - Do more ministry
 - Reach more people
 - Have greater impact
 - Go deeper in people's lives ... becomes possible
 - It's like a triangle > the broader the base becomes, the bigger it gets

- Same is true of church
- The more people equipped and empowered for ministry, the greater capacity church has to grow

- With that in mind, our goal with this is
 - Increase the number of our members who are encouraged to find and use their gifts and skills to a great extent from 29% (NCLS 2016) to 40%
 - This is not saying that only 29% of people here at church serve and use their gifts
 - 29% are encouraged to find and use their gifts to a GREAT extent
 - But we want to work hard at helping people here at C@P to find and utilize their gifts

- To do that, the first thing we need to do is help people understand what their gifts are
 - Many of you probably know that already
 - A good number probably aren't sure or uncertain
- So next year one of the things we will do is a gift survey to help us with this and give some guidance in this
- Over the New Year period, there will be opportunity for you to sign up for the different ministries we have here at C@P so you can serve

- Later in the year, we'll do a sermon series called 'God's love in action' where we look at what the Bible has to say about how Christians are called to love one another
 - Serving one another
 - Sharing hospitality with one another
 - Pastorally caring for one another

- Of course, a key part of all this is training

- We want to equip people for ministry ... not throw you in the deep end and watch you sink or swim
- Involved in team ministry > quarterly training
 - GG, Kids Church, Youth, Welcoming, Scripture, Service leaders
 - Important you commit to those so
 - you can be equipped for the sake of the people you lead and minister to ...
 - but also to encourage and equip others who are part of your ministry team
- You know the best way to equip and encourage others in their walk with Jesus
 - It's not by being a ministry leader
 - It's not by being on a roster
 - It's not by being involved in an official ministry team
- Best way is just getting alongside one another and sharing your life and faith with one another
- Best way to do that is to share your life with others
 - Have people over a meal
 - Go to the beach with another family
 - Get together and play some board games
 - Meet up for coffee
 - Help move house
- One of the reasons we deliberately have Pot Luck Lunch and Hospitality Sunday each term
 - Encourage fellowship together
 - My payers is that this would help you to taste and see that that's a good thing to do and do more of it yourself
- Next year ... have a church outing once a month
 - Park, beach, foodies, ice skating

- Come if you can, invite others
- Have fun , share, do life together

4. Conclusion

- A mind transformed by the gospel leads to a life of sacrifice
- A mind transformed by the gospel leads to a life of service

- What's going to help do this?
- What's going to give you the power to serve like this?

- As Paul says in v1 ... it's the mercy of God
- It's know that Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of sacrificial service
 - *John 10:8 - No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord*

- Why did Jesus Christ offer himself at the cross this way?
- Why did he lay down his life ... not as a living sacrifice ... but as a destroyed sacrifice?
- Why did he give up his life ... so you could have life for eternity
- Why did he offer his life as a sacrifice?
 - Out of love for you
 - Now you offer your life as a sacrifice for him

- He offered his life and he became a dying sacrifice ... you offer your life and you become a living sacrifice

- Offer your life as sacrifice ...
 - Your life
 - Labour
 - Influence
 - Finances
 - Expertise

- As you serve him
 - As you serve one another
 - This is your spiritual act of worship
- You want to worship the one who gave up his life for you
 - Give your life for him

PRAY