

Romans 12:3-10 Love in the Body

Intro

Hey everyone welcome to the second week of our new series God's Love in Action, my name is Tom if I don't know you, along with Hayley I'm involved in youth ministry here at Churchatthepeak. I think its really cool that after spending a term thinking about the story of Jesus in Matthew 11-13 we are now thinking about how the love of Christ impacts his people and what that looks like in the Church. You may have picked up from our passage that we are going to be thinking about gifts today, but really we are going to be thinking more about how and why we use the gifts that we have to serve one another. I'm going to leave it up to you and Stu and others to think about what your personal gifts are, what I'm hopefully going to do, is provide you with a foundation and encourage you to use them to serve God and his people.

How about I start by praying for us?

Analogy: doing something without knowing why?

Hearts for service

Notice how Paul doesn't jump straight into telling everyone what to do with their gifts. He doesn't throw out the quick start practical knowledge. Because he understands that sending people out to do the things they want to do straight away probably isn't going to work out well. They first need to have some important foundations laid.

First we need to think through why we use our talents or gifts to serve each other and the church.

³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

Hearts for Christ

First, he wants us to think about the faith that we have in Christ that when we submit ourselves in faith a change happens in us where we become one of God's people. The reason we are here at church in the first place. That we are responding to the ultimate act of love and humility in the world and therefore need to consider ourselves properly within that and with this comes an understanding of the purpose that we have for serving him. Our purpose is not to bring attention to ourselves, not to be known for our gifts and talents, not to be puffed up. We first need to look at ourselves and consider our hearts before we begin to serve. Do we have hearts for Christ? Does our faith that we have, given to us by God, lead us to consider ourselves with sober judgement?

Humility

Humility is an interesting concept in Churchland. It is something we all value, its something we all think is a good and important thing but its something we treat in a strange way. I think often we fall into the

mistake of thinking that humility is what the world thinks humility is.

That you need to put yourself down to be righteous. Here in

Australia we hate seeing people get puffed up or think they are

better than us, that's why tall poppy syndrome is a classic Australian

thing and so we think humility is them doing the opposite of that.

Putting themselves down when praised or presenting our abilities as

lower than they are. I think Paul gives us a good definition here.

Thinking of yourself with sober judgement. Not thinking that you are

awesome because of the things you can do or the roles you have at

church, not thinking that you are better than anyone, but

understanding yourself as a saved sinner who needs Jesus and it is

incredible that he would allow you to serve him and then recognising

the gifts he has given you in order to do that.

The thing is at Church at the peak I think we are all on board with the

idea that pride is a bad thing. I don't see a lot of people talking

themselves up. But the other side of this, is something that we see so

much in Churches, the putting yourself down humility. Oh I'm not

good enough to do that, im a struggler, oh im not the right person. I don't think I could do that. Oh im not going to contribute because everyone else is so much smarter and knows more about the Bible than me. We think that the Bible in its encouraging us in humility is encouraging us to doubt our abilities to do things. But this isn't what Paul desires of us. Sober judgement means having a real understanding of your abilities and gifting. Putting yourself down in ability further than you are is actually not good either it's a bad thing, it's your sin stopping you from building up the church by making you self doubt. So two things for us all here. If you think you are awesome and the best thing ever because of your gifts, you're wrong. If you think you are not good enough or confident enough or talented enough or charismatic enough to serve in different ways at church you are also wrong. Because you have been gifted faith in God, he has equipped you to serve him whether you believe it or not. I'll talk about that more in a bit but these next parts will hopefully help us expand and develop these ideas but first we need

to convict our hearts of who we are in response to the faith we have in Christ.

Our family, the body

Jewish Culture of Family

Paul is a Jew writing to gentiles. In both this letter and 1 Corinthians Paul uses this image of a body to explain the interaction between different members in a community. He is doing this because he is trying to tune them into how important community, for the Jews, and now for all followers of Jesus is. In fact as we will see Paul argues that we are not able to function as followers of Christ if we are not working together serving each other.

In Jewish culture the family unit is key to the function of the community, there are large sections of Jewish law that seem weird and backwards that are actually all about securing the family unit so it can work within the community. Paul as a Pharisee knows this and

so is desperate to ensure that the ideas around the Jewish family are expanded. Because as Christians we view all other Christians as family, here at Churchatthepeak we are a family of believers. And so Paul wants us to be an effective family unit. Lets see what he thinks about the Christian Family.

⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Ikea flat pack analogy.

Church Family

When I look around this congregation I don't see carbon copies of the same person I see lots of different people with different stories, backgrounds, loves, hates, skills, interests. Just like a normal family we don't have try outs, we don't get to decide who is part of it or not

only God does and God tends to fill churches with people who are different to each other. The body of Christ is made up of lots of different people. None better or worse than any other, but different. Just as the body has many parts which do not all function in the same way everyone here is part of the body of Christ yet do not all have the same abilities and gifting. And that is a very good thing.

Can you imagine how annoying a Church would be if everyone there was a preacher. An introverts nightmare right? How bad would the band be if everyone was a bass player, maybe funky but not awesome because no one would play other instruments or be stood down here singing. We need lots of different gifts because there are lots of different ways of serving that need people in them. Most people I would say have a few things that are good at and some things that are okay at. Both those categories are places you can serve. The purpose of the body is to work together to bring glory to the father in heaven, for us as a group to be more effective at

worshiping Jesus, and by that I mean more than singing, I mean praying, bible reading, being in fellowship together. But to make each of those things happen we need parts of the body to do the work for the others.

There are so many wonderful ways that people serve at this Church, from morning tea to band, to bible reading, to hosting Bible Study at your house, by praying for people, doing rosters, welcoming, and so many more. As you think through that list you realise that there isn't really anything we could afford to cut out is there and there are more I didn't say that are in the same boat? The Body needs all parts in order to function. It becomes apparent that the body needs more than a senior minister to function. He can set the direction but the body doesn't move anywhere if it isn't using all parts.

⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

As God's people our abilities, our gifts, our talents, belong to each other. Because we are unable to function as a body unless all the parts work together we owe it to each other to use our gifts to serve each other. That work is God's work for his people done according to the faith given to each of us. If one part doesn't function all the rest miss out too. So ultimately what we see here is that first we need to look on ourselves with sober judgement so we can understand ourselves and our giftings. The next thing is to understand that us all having different gifts is a really good thing, but also means that we have a responsibility to use our gifts and abilities to serve each other so that we all benefit from all of them. We have thought about the need to convict our hearts, then our heads, what about our hands?

So how do we go about all this?

How do you serve them and God?

⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your⁶ faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,⁹ do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

What are gifts?

Finally Paul says something about gifts themselves. Now im not going to go into a breakdown of the different gifts because I don't think that's the purpose of this passage, and for that I am grateful and Paul's list here isn't exhaustive. What are gifts though? That's an interesting question. I think gifts are different attributes or abilities which God has given us that can be used for the service of God and his people, I think we grow in these things and can improve on them. Pretty broad I know but I like a broad definition because in my experience there is a broad range of gifts amongst the followers of

God. What I do know from what we talked about before is that all of them are important and valuable and need to be used.

Paul moves into the end of this spiel by explaining that we need to identify what our gifts are. And then get using them. If you're a musician, play music, if you are awesome with kids, get into kids church, if you are a great mentor and carer, start discipling someone or reading the bible with someone. But not just do it, do it the absolute best that you can, give it your all. Because what you are doing is important and is building up the body, you are valuable as a servant of God, we have already seen that no act of service matters less than any other and so we need to do all of them the best that we are able. To be diligent and loving because we are doing it to benefit others in the body and ultimately to bring glory to our God. In this passage Paul is calling for us to be convicted in our hearts of who we are in Christ, to convict our heads to understand and see the importance of all the parts of the body working together in worship

of God, and last to convict our hands to act and serve with our gifts with our all.

We have a great opportunity to do that here at Church at the Peak with the gifts survey. To spend some time identifying and thinking through our personal gifting and how we can go about using those gifts. You can see what an important process this is that Paul is outlining here in Romans. We need to serve, not just for our growth, but for the growth of God's people.

From here?

I wanted to come to the end with verses 9 and 10.

⁹Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Stu last week preached to us the love that we have for others because of the love that the Father has had for us through the death

and resurrection of Jesus. That part of how he loves the world and his people is through his people. When we serve the body we are doing this. We are clinging to the good that we see in the Gospel. We are putting others before ourselves, not just the people we want to but all the people our Church because that's what Christ did. I want to encourage you to love your Brothers and Sisters here by being convicted in your heart of who you are in Christ and be humbled. To be convicted in your head of the importance of the body working together understanding that all parts are important and therefore all parts, all gifts, need to be active in the church. And that you are convicted with your hands to act, to respond to Romans 12 3-10 with action and to do so to the best of your own ability. In 1 John it says that we can love because he first loved us. Through great cost to himself, through the death of his son Jesus, our father in heaven has loved us. And so now we can love others, love the church, and love God. A key way that we can do that in our Church here in Peakhurst, is to use our gifts to bring glory to God in the

service of his people. What a wonderful place the Church is when
the body does this.

Let me pray for us.