

The One and the Many

Text: Romans 12:3-8

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OPENING PRAYER:

Our heavenly Father, we are conscious of our great need for the wind, the breath of our God to come upon us, that our spirits may be quickened, that we may be energized to praise you, and to love you, and to serve you in the world. We thank you, our Father, for the outpouring of Your Holy Spirit upon the church. For the way in which you have, by that spirit, bound us together, in the one body of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank you for those seasons in the history of the church, when you have come with unusual power, or an unusual numbers of people, and brought multitudes into your kingdom. And we praise you that we live in such a day. And that throughout the world, there are men and women and boys and girls who are being ushered into your kingdom. Thank you for the way, from the rising of the sun until it's setting today, your name has been freshly praised upon lips that have never spoken out of love for the Lord Jesus, or devotion to Him as Savior. And we pray Our Father, as your word comes to us in the freshness of the Spirit's power, that you would breathe a fresh on us. That you would bring to us a sense that you're on the move among us. And you've bound us together as your people in this place. And we pray that you would fructify that work which the spirit engages in among us, that we may see spring times and harvests of Your grace. Thank You that You have called us to plant and to water. To sow and to reap. We pray as we study Your Word tonight, that you would plant it deeply within our hearts, that in due season, a harvest may be reaped: some 30 fold, some 60 fold, and some 100 fold. And this we pray for Jesus our Savior's sake. Amen. Please be seated.

SCRIPTURE READING:

Now, our scripture reading this evening is in Romans chapter 12. Where we continue our studies. Our passage this evening is Romans 12, three through eight. But it will, I think be wise for us to turn back to the beginning of Romans chapter 12 and read in there, from verse one, and catch the flow of Paul's thinking and speaking here. And so we turn to page 947. If you're using the pew Bible, or your own variation of the pew Bible, Romans chapter 12 and verse one.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say

to every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophesy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

SERMON:

There is a saying, I don't know where it came from, but I've heard it used frequently. And I've used it frequently enough myself. The version localized would be when in Colombia do as the Colombians. The original version, of course, is, when in Rome do as the Romans. But the Apostle Paul has reached a point in his letter to the Romans, when he wants them to understand, beyond any possibility of confusion, that when they are in Rome, they are to do not as the Romans do, but as saints do. And in fact, he had really made this clear right from the very beginning of the letter in the way in which he had greeted them. When he had described them in chapter one, and verse seven, writing to them, those who are in Rome, who are loved by God, and called to be saints. They are citizens of Rome, many of them although many of them may well have been slaves. But they do not live in Rome as thought that were their chief or fundamental citizenship. They live in Rome, as those whose citizenship is in heaven. They live in the unholy world of Rome, as those who have been called by God, to be saints -- to be holy. Or to put it in the broader terms with which Paul is really working in his exposition in Romans, they are to live in the world of the old humanity, as those who have been brought into the new humanity. They are to live in the world of Adam's curse, as those who have been brought into the world and the realm of the Savior's blessing.

And he has been urging upon them this very thing and the opening two verses. Not to be conformed to this world, or to this age. Not to follow the spirit of the age as their guide in life, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. God as he had early said to the Galatians in Galatians chapter one, had delivered them from this present, evil eon, or age. And they have been brought into a new universe altogether -- a new humanity, which God is remaking after the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ. This Paul had said towards the end of Romans chapter eight is God's great passion. It is his avocation, his passion, his hobby, his purpose, it is his everything, as far as we are concerned as Christians, that he should remake us into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all that Paul really goes on to say in the rest of Romans is so many different out workings of that principle, if we would only grasp it. If it would only dominate our thinking that the purpose of God in my life is to make me increasingly Christ like. And if in my self examination, that were the chief question, not the question of performance, but the question of transformation. Not as simply transformation into a vacuum. Not as a transformation into a set of propositions. It is a transformation by the truth of the gospel, so that more and more you and I might grow in what the Bible calls holiness, and what Paul sees here as a growing likeness to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And we saw last Lord's day evening and chapter 12, verses one and two, that a key principle in that transformation is what Paul calls the renewal of our mind. It is as the mind is renewed, and the

affections are drawn into Christ, that the life is transformed, and we discover increasingly how happy it is to live at the epicenter of the will of God.

And now Paul is going to take us in the rest of the letter to the Romans, to answer the question, but what does this look like in practice? What is Christ's likeness in all the different spheres of our lives. And although he seems to move around a great deal in the passages that follow, perhaps at first sight from one subject to another subject, it's actually very clear that what he's doing is demonstrating to us that as we belong to the new humanity and live within the context of the old humanity, belonging to the new humanity in Christ transforms the way we live in every sphere of our lives. And he's wanting to help us to think through and then to live through this transformed life, in all the various relationships in which we find ourselves and these Roman Christians found themselves. For example, later on, in this passage from verse nine onwards, he teaches these Christians how to think about themselves in relationship to others in the church. And then in verses 14 through 21, how to think about themselves and live in relationship to those who oppose them as Christians. The beginning of chapter 13, how to think clearly until live Christlike ways in the context of those who exercise authority over us in the state. The rest of chapter 13 how we are to think and live in relationship to our neighbors round about us. Chapter 14, verse one, right through chapter 15, verse 13, how it is we think about and respond to those whose convictions in the church differ from ours. And he even seems to spend some time as he moves on before his final greetings, teaching the Romans how to think about their lives in relationship to him as one of their spiritual guides and leaders. And so there is a great unity runs through the rest of this letter. It's about living the Christ-like life, in an ungodly world.

And just as we found in the earlier sections in Romans, none of us comes into the Christian faith with all of Romans chapters one to 11 already embedded in our minds, do we? But sometimes, we have this rather strange assumption that now that we are Christians, the one thing we don't need instruction about is about living the Christian life. But Paul is so anxious that we should understand that such is the nature of the gospel, that it touches all of the details of every single one of the spheres in which we live the Christian life, so that there's no area of our lives that doesn't come under the impress of the power, the Christ-like transformation that's produced in us by the gospel of our blessed Savior. And it's interesting that when he moves into this, in these verses before us this evening, verse three, through verse eight of chapter 12, that he begins, in a sense with how we are to think about ourselves. Before he moves out into other areas of life, both within the church and outside of the church, it's as though he says, Now lets you and I have a little talk, first of all about you. How are you to think about yourself as somebody whose desire is that you would be transformed by the renewing of your mind?

And he says, I think basically three things here. The first is that the Christian needs to know who he or she really is in Christ. Second, the Christian needs to know where he or she really belongs in Christ. And thirdly, the Christian needs to know what he or she is really for in Christ.

First of all, he says, so important that we know who we really are in Christ. Because of course, we understand that the way we think about ourselves, whether very consciously, or usually, rather unconsciously and subliminally, that sense of who we are ourselves are determines the way in which we live. This is why Paul is so urgent about the fact that it's by the renewing of our thinking that the transformation of our lives takes place. As the old proverb says, at least in the King James version, which at the moment is the only one I know by heart in the book of Proverbs, "As a man thinks in himself, so is he." And that's written all over us, isn't it? What we really think about ourselves, is always expressed in the disposition that we have, and even in the way we walk, the way we engage in

conversation. We are always giving away we don't often see it ourselves. We don't know this is happening. But we are to anyone who has any discernment, we are always giving away what we really think about ourselves as well as what we think about others. And Paul, is concerned here right at the beginning, that the Christian should learn to think clearly about himself or herself.

And that's marked in a rather striking way that I suppose is impossible for us almost to bring out in English, although you would get a sense of it here just by reading the text. By the number of times Paul uses some form of the verb to think in these opening words. "By the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. But to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith, God has assigned." This is a lesson in how the Christian learns to think about himself or about herself. Paul, in a sense, we might try and translate what he says, by putting it this way. He says, don't be hyper minded about yourself, but be healthfully minded about who you are in Christ. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Don't think, in a hyper way, about yourself, but in a healthy way, about yourself. And it's this that the English Standard Version is trying to capture when it tells us as Christians that we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but to think with sober judgment. I'm not sure that's the best translation. But it's actually quite a good illustration. Because it's so easy for us, isn't it, to become intoxicated with ourselves. And intoxicated with our own interests, our own lives, our own needs, our own successes, our own failures. And whether we're intoxicated with success or failure, we can be equally self intoxicated. And so Paul is urging upon us to be able to think in a sober way about ourselves, because intoxication for the Christian, with respect to self is a dangerous thing. Just as intoxication of any kind, is a dangerous thing. What happens to the person who is intoxicated? They lose their sense, don't they, of propriety. They lose their sense of balance. They lose their ability to think clearly. They lose their ability to walk straight. They are often given to exaggeration.

I remember many years ago going from it must have been Christmas time, I'd been speaking at the University in our parish at a Christmas service they had and I was going to a session meeting in our church. And as I went from the university and the parish to the church building to meet with the elders, there was a drunk man staggering along the sidewalk who stumbled into the road almost in front of one of these large buses that roam around British cities. And I dived out into the road and pulled this poor intoxicated man back to the pavement -- back to the sidewalk -- and tried to steady him up. And he took me by the shoulders and asked me what my name was. And then he said to me, and this was the evidence that he was deeply intoxicated, "You Sir", he said, "are the finest man I have ever met." You see, losing all sense of proportion. And the trouble, when you lose all sense of proportion about yourself, is that you're always the last person to know it. Isn't that the truth?

And Paul is saying, you see this kind of thing in the world. But this is the very antithesis of what the gospel does to you. The gospel helps you to think clearly about yourself. And not to be obsessed with yourself. The great thing about the gospel, my friends is that Jesus Christ enables you to be forgetful about yourself. And as you become more and more forgetful about yourself, you learn to think about yourself more and more clearly.

Now we can be intoxicated about our own significance and importance in the world or in the church. But at the same time, and this is true, I'm sure for some of us, the danger is not so much that we both think too highly of ourselves, the danger is that we don't think clearly about ourselves. And we then develop a false humility. You ever met Christians like that? They are always downing themselves -- always downing themselves. And one of the telltale signs is that always downing themselves in relationship to

somebody else who has greater gifts than they have. Which means they haven't been set free from an obsession about themselves, to enjoy the gifts that the other has, and to live with the gifts that God has given to them.

I have a wonderful and very eccentric book, written a long time ago by two brothers, entitled *The Diary of a Nobody*. And it's the story of 15 months of the story of a man called Charles Pooter, who was a nobody. I think he probably was the first person to have a Twitter account. To tell the whole world about the nothings in which he was engaged, as though this would be a fascination and interest to the entire cosmos. You see, he's just a modest little man. He doesn't do anything very significant. But he's totally obsessed with himself. And he's never been delivered from that. And we can be the same thing, can't we, as Christians. Whether it is because we have done what we think are great things or our who we think are important people, or whether we've never done anything that seems great. And we think ourselves to be of absolutely no significance. The great thing about the Christian believer, and this is embedded in the heart of Romans in 5:12 through 21, and into sixth, and seventh, and eighth. The great thing about the Christian believer is that the Christian believers true identity is not to be found in him or herself, but in Jesus Christ.

And one of the marvelous things that Paul is bringing out in this passage as he brings believers together to help us to think about being one body in Jesus Christ is that no matter what our gifts may be, public or private, no matter what they may be, we share a common identity in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are no longer those who belong to the family of Adam. We are those who belong to the family of Jesus Christ. And from the moment we are transferred from that old family into this new family, there is none of us -- not one single one of us, who is more a member of Jesus Christ than any other.

And this is why the renewal of my mind that comes through the gospel -- and you remember last week we noticed how Paul emphasizes, that we are to -- we are commanded to be transformed. It's a passive statement in an imperative form. How can that possibly be worked out in our lives? How can we be commanded to do something that needs to be done to us. And you see, he's teaching us that it's by the power of the gospel as it renews our mind, as it flushes out the old way of thinking about our world and about ourselves, and begins to stamp our thinking. Craft the lenses of our spectacles through which we view not only the world but ourselves. Then we begin to learn to think about ourselves in a way that is taken up with the Lord Jesus Christ. And in that self-forgetfulness that comes from the renewal of our minds about our new identity in Jesus Christ, we are more and more released from thinking falsely about ourselves.

Do you know that lovely hymn of Anna Letitia Waring, "Father, I know that all my life is portioned out for me." When she speaks about a "heart at leisure from itself to sooth and sympathize." It's beautiful, isn't it? And that's what I need. And that's what the gospel gives me. A heart at leisure from itself. Don't you notice that that's one of the great characteristics of really mature Christians, that they become self-forgetful. And it isn't because they've, as it were said to themselves, I must forget myself, I must forget myself, I must forget myself. But because they've learned Christ, and because they're taken up with Christ. And they've learned to forget themselves. And that's how they've begun to know who they really are in Jesus Christ.

Do you know who you are? Have you discovered your true self in Christ? And all that goes with that? In a measure of maturity, and poise, and Christ and other centeredness. And this leisure from the demands of yourself to love him. And now, as we'll see, to love all those who belong to Him.

So says, Paul, know who you really are in Christ. Second, he says, know where you really belong in Christ. And you see this as just part and parcel of the same thing. Who am I as a Christian? I am a member of the body of Jesus Christ. Notice what he says here in Romans 12. You are to think of yourself "with sober judgment, according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body, we have many members and the members don't all have the same function. So, we, though many are one body in Christ." We are one body in Christ! He isn't saying hang around congregation for three years, and maybe you'll become part of that body. He says, because you're Christian believers, you actually are part of the one body of Jesus Christ. You know, he uses this picture of the church as a body several different times. And here perhaps the simplest time and the simplest form. He's saying we belong to a body. We are members of a body. That body has different parts. And that body belongs to Jesus Christ. It's not ours. It's his. And because we belong to the body, we are not ours, either. We are each other's.

Now do you follow that logic? Because we belong to Christ's body, the body is not ours. We are not the Lord of the body, it is Christ, and we belong to Him. And because we are members of that body, says the apostle Paul, we actually all belong to each other. "As in one body, we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function. So we though many are one body in Christ, and individually members, one of another." Now, you see how this this powerful truth of the Gospel that Paul is now introducing here, that Christ has made us one body really does transform our lives. Not only individually, it transforms the way we think about each other. It means that you don't belong to you. You belong to me, and I don't belong to me, I belong to you. And you only need to say that to understand what a revolutionary thing this is. And why the Church of Jesus Christ, when it really grasps this is such a phenomenal reality. Because in the world, we belong to ourselves, and others belong to us. Tragically, we can drag that into the church from the old humanity as well. I'd say I'm going. But I'm not going to belong to Him. And I'm not going to belong to her. My dear brother or sister, you have no right whatsoever to say about any other member of a fellowship in which you belong, that you are not prepared to belong to them. You don't belong to yourself. See what a difference this makes in the christian fellowship when we grasp this? Because we're such possessive people aren't we? And not least we're possessive about ourselves. And we're so slow to give ourselves away to others. But dear one, you've got to give yourself away to others because you don't belong to yourself. You see the point? It's not just that you're keeping yourself back from them. You're keeping yourself back from yourself. You don't understand who you really are. Because you're not your own, you're his. Because he bought you with his price. And you're not your own. Because he's given you to all the other members in the body. And when you begin to understand that's where I really belong, then, well, you see then sanctification really begins doesn't it? Because it begins to clean up our selfishness and our self protectiveness. And our unwillingness to give ourselves away. And those shades of hypocrisy that grip our lives, because we've got to pretend not to be what we know we really are. And if we gave ourselves away, then that other person would, would discover us. Yes, perhaps we discover the gifts the Lord has given to us. But we'd discovered all our weaknesses and our frailty and our vulnerability. But we can't be Christ's and live that way. Because if we live that way, we deny what Jesus Christ has actually made -- the fellowship to which we belong. I wonder if this is the reason why the the church discipline, actually it was the heavenly sent discipline on Ananias and Sapphira, in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles were so overwhelmingly severe. Not as Peter says, Peter made it clear, you didn't need to sell anything and bring the money. He says you could have sold things and brought half of the money. But to sell something, and bring some of the money, pretending it was all of the money, what was that

doing? That was saying, I'm not prepared to give myself to them as I am. And I seek a reputation and influence that is based on me keeping myself to myself.

Now, that's one of the most basic instincts of sinners, isn't it? To keep ourselves to ourselves. That's not just an ethnic problem Scottish people have to keep themselves to themselves. That's endemic in us -- giving ourselves away. You see, we can be gregarious and still not be giving ourselves away. I sometimes been fascinated by people that others have thought gregarious. And I've noticed how they are gregarious, because everywhere they go, everybody else is listening to them. And they're not really giving themselves away at all. They're dominating everybody who's around them. Paul is saying when we understand this, this new community that our Lord Jesus Christ is brought into being, we see why it is that the church is like nothing on Earth. And why is there something heavenly about a real church. That when people come into the midst of that real church, they realize that this isn't natural. This is super natural by God's grace, because these people seem to belong to each other. They don't keep themselves as though they were own possession. They are the possession of a great master, but they also belong to each other.

Man who was my boss -- my senior minister when I was a very young minister... Not the man I referred to in the sermon this morning. But another man a very famous preacher in the United Kingdom used to tell the story of a very famous Anglican chaplain during the war by the name of Bishop Taylor Smith. And my boss, George Bailey Duncan, used to say the first time I think he ever worked with Bishop Taylor Smith, Bishop Taylor Smith's first words to him were this: "Have you sanctified yourself for me?" Well, he knew his Bible well enough to know where these words came from. They came from John 17. Where Jesus said, "I sanctify Myself for their sakes", speaking about the church. He was stunned. That --who did this bishop think he was? Using the words of Jesus with reference to him. "Have you sanctified yourself for me?" Get on your bike Bishop. But he used the illustration so often and obviously stuck with me that eventually the penny dropped with him. That if that's what the Lord Jesus has done for us, that's what we are called to do for one another. To set ourselves apart for others because he did.

Now here's the question. Are you doing that, for the people around you in the pew; members of this congregation? Are you sanctifying yourself for others? Because you know where you really belong in Christ? Or are you not prepared to give yourself away?

You know, I'm sure these stunning words of CS Lewis about that very thing... He says, "Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrong, and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries, avoid all entanglements, lock it up safe and the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change, it will not be broken, it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least the risk of tragedy", Lewis goes on, "is damnation. Because the only place outside of heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love, is hell. So for whose sake are you sanctifying yourself in this church to which you belong?

So Paul wants us to know who we really are in Christ. To know where we really belong in Christ. And to know what we're really far in Christ. And this is when he turns to these specific gifts. We don't have time to them, time to go into them in any detail tonight. But you'll you'll notice that this is what he's doing. He is saying, know who you really are. Know where you really belong. And know what you are

for there. Because in all these different gifts that he described, some of them are obviously ministries of the word. Some of them are obviously ministries of leadership. Others are ministries of care. But in each case, he says, whatever gift God has given to you, whatever ministry, the Lord has called you to put your back into it. Do with all your might, and main, use your gifts to the absolute maximum for the people of God. And understand that since each of us belongs to all of the others, and all of the others belong to each of us, each of us has gifts. Each of us will have different gifts. Each of us has received rather than manufactured these gifts. And every single one of these gifts has been given to us, not for ourselves, but for others. And so he says if your gift is prophesying -- about which of course he speaks to the Corinthians, about how prophesying edifies and builds up the body of Christ, because it brings the revealed truth of God to bear upon the situations and the circumstances in which people find themselves. And God's word seems to come with a kind of almost immediate shaft of light to bring illumination or encouragement. Well, then he says, if your gift is prophesying in that way, then do prophesy in proportion to the faith. But if your gift is service, then prophesy. Huh? No! If your gift this service, then serve. Because that's what the Lord has made you for. And he goes on and it's so beautiful, really. He says, the one who teaches is to give himself to his teaching. The one who exhorts who encourages. And you see, it's a fact of the matter. I see this in ministers, I see this in ministers never mind entire congregations. There are ministers whose gift is teaching and there are ministers whose gift seems much more to lie in the world and order of exhortation, and encouragement. And we don't say I like him, and I don't like him. We thank God that God has not given all of his gifts to anyone except the Lord Jesus Christ. In order that we might learn how much we need one another. And the one who contributes. Well, let's see. How many percentages is it supposed to be? No generously, he says. With an open heart with a free spirit. The one who leads with zeal. I love that. The one who leads with zeal, with a passion to do it! Because that's what God has called him to do. And then this -- I think this is marvelous, the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. You ever met one of those people who are always visiting people in hospital. And you think the people in hospital lying there in our hospital beds must be lying there thinking, will he not leave my hospital room? He is so it is so discouraging. He is so dispiriting. No, he says the one who does acts of mercy -- with cheerfulness.

I can't remember whether this was part of my installation vow here, because I've taken a few installation vows in my time. But it's part of the installation vow in many Presbyterian denominations, that you will go about your ministry cheerfully. That always makes me smile. Cheerfully! Why? Because we live in a desperately discouraging world. I was I think, a first year student at University, I went to a church one Sunday evening, because a much older graduate student who was an encouragement to me for some reason or another wanted to go and hear this preacher and he happened to be preaching on death and dying. And I've never forgotten my friend Arthur as we walked out into the Stygian darkness of the Scottish night, he said, "I hope that man is nowhere near my bed when am I dying man?"

You know, our evangelical subculture has been invaded by a lot of happiness, but not so much cheerfulness. And our evangelical subculture has been invaded by a lot of complaining, but not a lot of cheerfulness. Actually, I think this should be the last word in the sermon. Be a cheerful Christian. Ahh you say there are a lot of gifts there. I'm not quite sure where I fit in. You probably fit in somewhere there. You nothing to give? No mercy to show? Do you know nothin' so that you can teach nothin' to nobody? You say -- but I'm not one of these positions. Paul isn't talking here about positions. He's talking about activities. What we engage in day and daily. So how are we going to find our gift?

Well, actually, it's very simple. You give yourself away. Wherever you see another you just give yourself away. Another who is in need. You do what you can. Wasn't that -- wasn't that about Jesus's lovely

word about the woman? She did what she could. So stop fussing about when am I going to get the position to do that? Do what's right in front of your eyes. And when you see the need, and you meet the need, as the Lord has given you gifts, you discover what those gifts are, because of the way in which people respond to your heart of service and to the things that you're able to do. And you discover also the things you're not able to do.

I'm gonna get into hot water for this. But when I came to the robing room upstairs, David asked me how I was doing. I said, "Oh, David, I've got a flat tire." I just discovered it when I came to church. And David said, I've changed many a flat tire in my day. So if I'm not able to do it, -- I'm expecting David to be there tonight because he's got the gift of changing flat tires. Now what course in seminary did he take? He took the course in changing the first flat tire he ever encountered. And he's been changing flat tires ever since apparently. Because God has given him I hope, the gift of flat tire changing. And you see as a fellowship we need to allow people to find their feet. And sometimes to find that's not really their gift at all. But because we belong to one another, we're not tut-tutting. And then as we use our hearts and the gifts the Lord has given to us, because we're not so much thinking, Oh, this is my gift. We're thinking, this is where the need arises. Then, in a marvelous way -- now what you want is a manual, there are big books telling you how to do this. Forget about the big books. Just serve. And it will be like the sea opening up for you. And you'll begin to walk across on dry land. And there'll be more and more room for you to use the gifts that God has given to you, and others will come alongside you. Especially if you are one of those like me that, that isn't very sure of what your gifts might be or where you might be useful. Or how could you possibly do these things. And God will bring others alongside you and say, Now, I think God is really using you in this way. Because you're giving yourself to others. And I see you have given yourself to the Lord. And the Lord is beginning to make space for you. And when you begin to see that you grow into the sphere for which the Lord has made you.

You know, it's one of the greatest things in the world for a Christian to know what he or she is for. To rest cheerfully in that ministry. And at the end of the day, the question is, do you have a servant's heart? Or are you keeping yourself back from us -- and from him? Now give yourself to him. And then give yourself to us. As we give ourselves to you.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, what a brilliance of mind you have. That in sending your Son you would not just call us to him as isolated individuals to live very individualistic Christian lives. Some of us making a good show of it and others of us making very heavy weather of it. But that you have called us together made us one body in Jesus Christ. One fellowship. Oh Lord, we pray, make room in our hearts for one another, and make room in our fellowship for the development and advancement and recognition and encouragement and usefulness of all the gifts that you have given to this body to which we belong and which we love so dearly. We commit ourselves to you and to one another. And to this great vision. In Jesus our Savior's name, amen.