

Lectionary Bible Study Our Savior Lutheran Church



Lectionary 21 Readings

Isaiah 51:1-6, Psalm 138
Romans 12:1-8, Matthew 16:13-20

[Click here](#) to join Pastor Mark for a Live Zoom conversation each Wednesday at 10am.

Meeting ID: 868 8793 0554 Password: 654321

Or dial in for audio only: 1-301-715-8592

Romans 12:1-8 (NRSV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³For 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. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

The New Testament is arranged by 1) The 4 Gospels 2) The Acts of the Apostles (the new church and spread of the gospel) and concludes with the Revelation of John. In between Acts and Revelation, we have 21 epistles (aka letters), many of which were written by Paul. Romans is the longest of Paul's letters, and therefore it is placed first, immediately after Acts. Romans has been highly influential in many lives, including Martin Luther, who writes:

This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and is truly the purest gospel... It is a bright light, almost sufficient to illuminate the entire Holy Scriptures."

Paul wrote this letter to the emerging church in the capital city of the Roman Empire. Paul is writing from the city of Corinth (in southern Greece) during the winter of 56-57 CE. Paul has never been to Rome but is planning to visit after his trip to Jerusalem. The church in Rome is a minority, smaller even than the minority gathering of Jews in Rome. Chapter 12 in Paul's letter to the Romans marks a shift in tone and theme for the apostle. In the previous chapters, Paul has laid the groundwork for the doctrine of justification by grace. He carefully crafts his words to

explain the freeing grace of God in Christ. In Chapter 12, Paul calls the faithful to live out the Gospel message. He answers the question, “So what?” by exhorting the Christians in Rome to live lives that reflect the grace and mercy of God.

1. *What difference does grace make in your everyday life?*

Paul calls for the faithful to “present their bodies as a living sacrifice.” Of course, the many other religions in Rome would have honored (demanded?) sacrifice of dead animals. The Romans believed that blood sacrifices were the best way to communicate with the gods.

2. *Then what does a living sacrifice entail?*

Verse 2 is a pivotal call to what the life of the faithful should entail. Paul is calling the believers to resist behaving in the way that nonbelievers would want them to behave.

3. *How might folks want us to behave that would be contrary to the life of a Christian?*

The call for us is to transformation. The Greek word is μεταμορφώνω – metamorpho. We often think of the transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly as an example of metamorphosis. The transformation from caterpillar to butterfly is a one-time event. But the tense of this word in Greek indicates that the transformation is *ongoing*. This is not a “one and done” kind of event. This transformation is to discern the will of God.

4. *While we often pray “thy will be done,” do you think that we need to be transformed to be in alignment with the will of God? What does Romans 12:2 say about that*

Verses 3-8 include a call to unity and oneness while exhorting the variety of gifts that we have received by God’s grace.

5. *What is the connection between a celebration of diversity and a unity in Christ?*

6. *What is the connection to our transformation and our unity with God and with one another?*