

Sunday October 4, 2020

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Ross Logan)

Welcome, it's good to be together again. Daylight saving is back, and the year is rolling on. For many of us this has been a year when our worlds have been turned upside down. We're living in a new normal and we've re-evaluated and struggled to work out who we are, where we fit in and what we should be doing. In our families we each have a role to play, to give to each other, to support each other in different ways, depending on our gifts, so that we can grow together. Our workplaces and sporting teams all depend on us bringing our different skills and to work together as one for combined success. Paul writes that the church is one body and, no matter who we are, all the parts work together and belong to each other. It's in the light of the gospel that we can work out our gifts of serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading or being merciful, amongst others. None of us exists outside of the body. No Christian is an unattached Christian. We are all members of each other, connected to each other with the purpose of serving each other. Last week we were reminded that we are to be living sacrifices. This morning, as Jon unpacks Romans 12:3-8, we'll be challenged to consider how we live that out. Where, in the light of the gospel, do we fit in? What are our gifts? And how do we use them to act together as one body, joyfully serving and supporting each other.

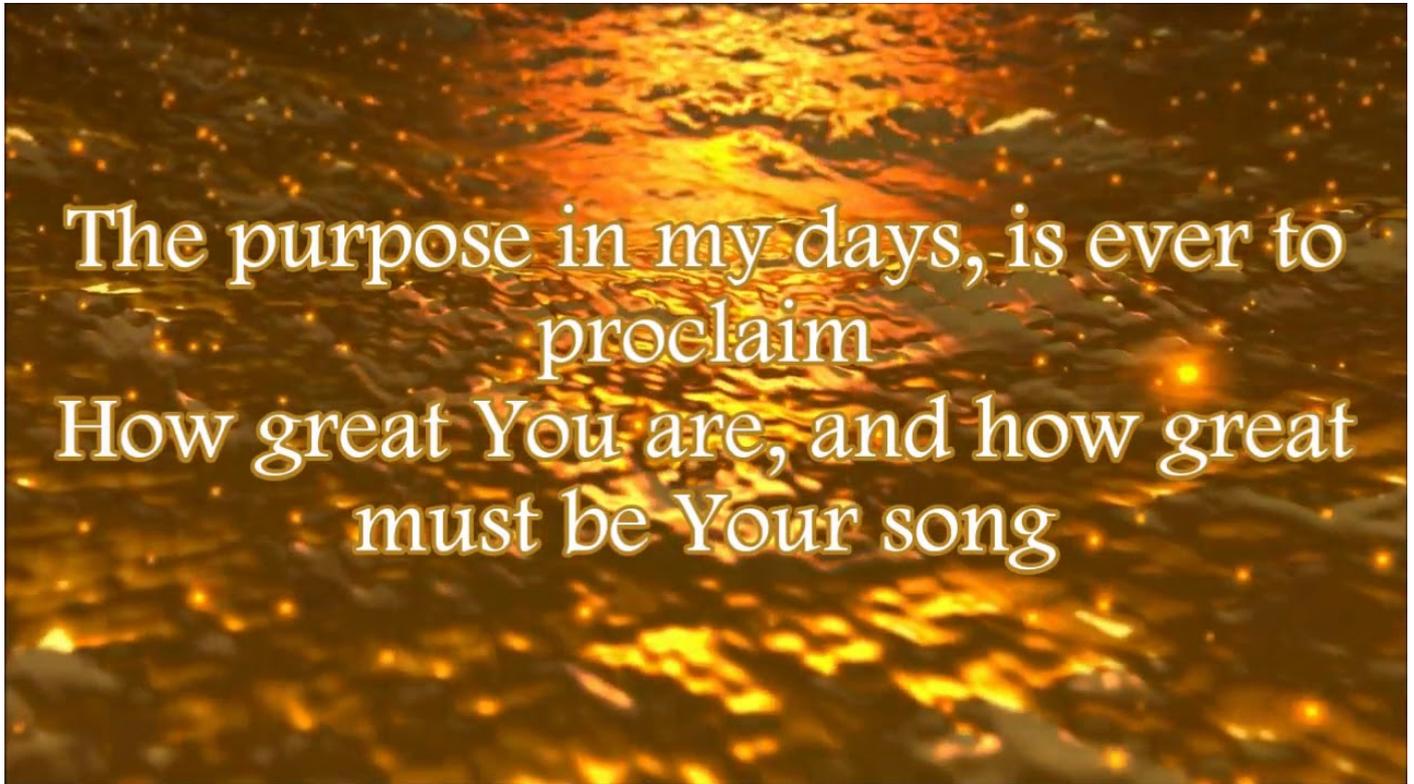
Prayer

Father God, you are the creator. We praise You because you made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. We want to thank you for all the things you put around us. For animals and birds, for plants and trees, for the sun and the moon, for food and shelter. You are the Almighty God. Who is like you? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you” We want to praise you for you stand above all things, glorious and majestic, ruling and faithful. You are the Everlasting Father, the Ancient of Days. We praise you, Lord, as the 'Ancient of Days' and the 'Everlasting Father', who lives forever and ever. We want to acknowledge that you have always been, and always will be. You are dependable, a solid rock. We give You our praise and adoration, because you are a faithful God, keeping your covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love you and keep your commands. We want to do that. We ask for your forgiveness when we don't do what you require, when we fall down in our own selfishness. We know that you are gracious and merciful. You are our refuge.

And you Lord, are the God who heals, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. You heal our bodies and our relationships; you forgive us and bring us back to you. You lift us up with the strength that we need. You give us peace. Thank you

Amen

Hymn of the Ages



Bible Reading - Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!

2

It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.

3

It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

Romans 12:1-8 (NIV)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. **3** For 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. **4** For 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, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. **6** We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[a] faith; **7** if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; **8** if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,[b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Announcements – 4th October

- **Church Services this term.** Each week there are about 10-15 spots available at our Charlestown morning services and around 5-10 spots available at our Sunday @ 6 services. Seeing most of us are not going to church as much as we did pre-COVID there is room for most of us to come at extra week per month. So if you are currently not coming at all, why not try to come once a month? If you are coming once a month, why not come twice a month? And some people will be able to come every week! That way we can all make the most of the opportunities we are given during these difficult days.
- **School Holidays.** Our usual activities like Bible studies, Zoom prayer meetings, and Play group are having a break over the school holidays. Enjoy your time resting in Jesus.
- **Operation Christmas Child.** Our church is hoping to participate again in Christmas boxes for disadvantaged children overseas. Would you like to help by packing a shoe box for someone less fortunate than our own families?
- **Focus for September – Sport/Leisure.** Sport and Leisure are followed religiously in Australia. While these are great in their place, a Christian should be more dedicated to Jesus than sports. And find more rest and comfort in Jesus as much as leisure. Let's examine our hearts and see if we are being conformed to the world. And instead pray for a greater passion and zeal for Jesus and His Kingdom.
- **Charlestown Work Day.** Please put Saturday 17th October in your diaries for a much needed work day around the church. More details to come.**Charlestown Work Day.** Please put Saturday 17 October in your diaries for a much needed work day around the church. For further info see Ean Sutton. Please register to attend via this form https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd92wY8hbU4Xk9aPJVTMM40Zs6PXGmh0adlkhln8Y_LGfPlag/viewform?usp=sf_link
- **Training Event.** Sunday October 25 from 3-5pm via ZOOM or live at Church we will be having time to grow our skills (and grow the pool of people willing to use their skills) in all aspect of service in our services including sound, computer, music, leading, welcoming, bible reading and public praying)

- **Rosters for Term 4.** We are in need of about 5-10 extra people to help out with our rosters for our morning church services. In the past the rosters have meant a four week rotation but since we have added an extra service it is now a two week rotation. So if you would be willing to help out with sound, computer, prayer, bible reading, welcoming, music or singing, please let Liz or Stephen know in the next couple of days. And if you are not sure why not come along to the training event on Sunday October 25 where there will be half hour training modules for each aspect.
- **Finances.** Please note the following results for the month of August.

Offerings – Budget	27,330
Offerings – Actual	27,150
Deficit for August	180
Surplus for Jan-Aug	37,925

The committee of management is very thankful that through the generosity of our people and the access to the jobkeeper subsidy that our finances are in a healthy position at present.

Prayer Points

Pray for Myanmar (Population 54 million, Christians 4 million). Myanmar faces a humanitarian crises caused by the Rohingya conflict. In 2017 around 700,000 Rohingya people fled to Bangladesh to avoid religious persecution. Many thousand were killed. Pray for peace in Myanmar. Pray for those responsible for war crimes and genocide to be found and convicted. Pray that Christians would be able to minister to persecuted Rohingya Muslims, especially those returning from Bangladesh. Pray that many hearts would be open to Christ.

Scott Morrison. Thank God for his leadership during the pandemic. Pray for wisdom in making the best decisions to promote peace and welfare in the country.

COVID-19. Pray that God would protect poorer countries from the spread of the virus. Pray for a vaccine to be ready soon and created in an ethical way. Thank God for lower case numbers in Australia. Pray for those struggling because of unemployment and loneliness that God would comfort them.

Mayfield Presbyterian Church Plant. Thank God for continuing to grow his church in Newcastle. Pray for Tim Ravenhall and his family that God would continue to strengthen them to serve the church. Pray that the lost be reached in the Mayfield area. And the church would grow in unity.

Collyer Family. Thank God for the safe birth of Arthur John Collyer last Friday. Pray for Sam and Heather that God would give them grace to raise all their children for His glory.

Stephen Taylor. Pray for Stephen and his family that they would have a restful break. Thank God for Stephen's ministry among us. Pray that he would come back refreshed and God would continue to give him strength.

Our Church. Pray for the Church as it makes its plans for Term 4. Pray that God would raise up people to serve. Pray the gospel would remain at the centre of all we do. Pray for the preaching that it would come with power and authority and conviction. Pray that as we consider Jesus that we would consider one another more important than ourselves. Pray that we would be filled with love for the lost in Newcastle.



Church Prayer (Jon Brown)

Our great God, you are our Creator and our Redeemer. You are the author of all life, and the source of all goodness. Thank you for creating us so we can know you. We praise you for revealing yourself to us in the gospel. And now being justified by faith we have peace with you through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for saving us and giving us purpose. You have united us to one another and we are one body in Christ. Help us to walk worthy of the gospel. Bind us together by the Spirit of unity. Help us to be humble and serve one another. Help us to know what gifts you have given us and use them to build one another up.

God of all comfort, we pray for those sick and grieving among us. Help us to comfort one another just as you have comforted us. Help us to minister to those in need and pray for one another. We pray for Lorraine Ejea who had surgery this week for cancer. We pray your healing hand to touch her, and your peace and joy to fill her heart. Lord we pray for many in our community who are at a loss with the effects of the pandemic. Give those in despair hope. Give those struggling comfort. Give those in need mercy. Use us as your hands and feet to serve those in need.

Heavenly Father, we pray for the country of Myanmar. We grieve to see the horrific effects of war. Bring peace to that nation. We ask that those responsible for war crimes and genocide would be fairly

trialled and justice would be done. Help your church to continue to minister to the persecuted Rohingya Muslims, especially those returning from Bangladesh. We ask that many hearts would be open to receiving your Son.

Gracious God, protect the poorer nations from the pandemic. We continue to pray for a vaccine to be created and in an ethical way. Thank you for the low case number in our country, and especially Victoria. We commit our prime minister, Scott Morrison to you. Thank you for his leadership during the pandemic. Thank you for his faith in you. Continue to give him wisdom and compassion for the people of Australia.

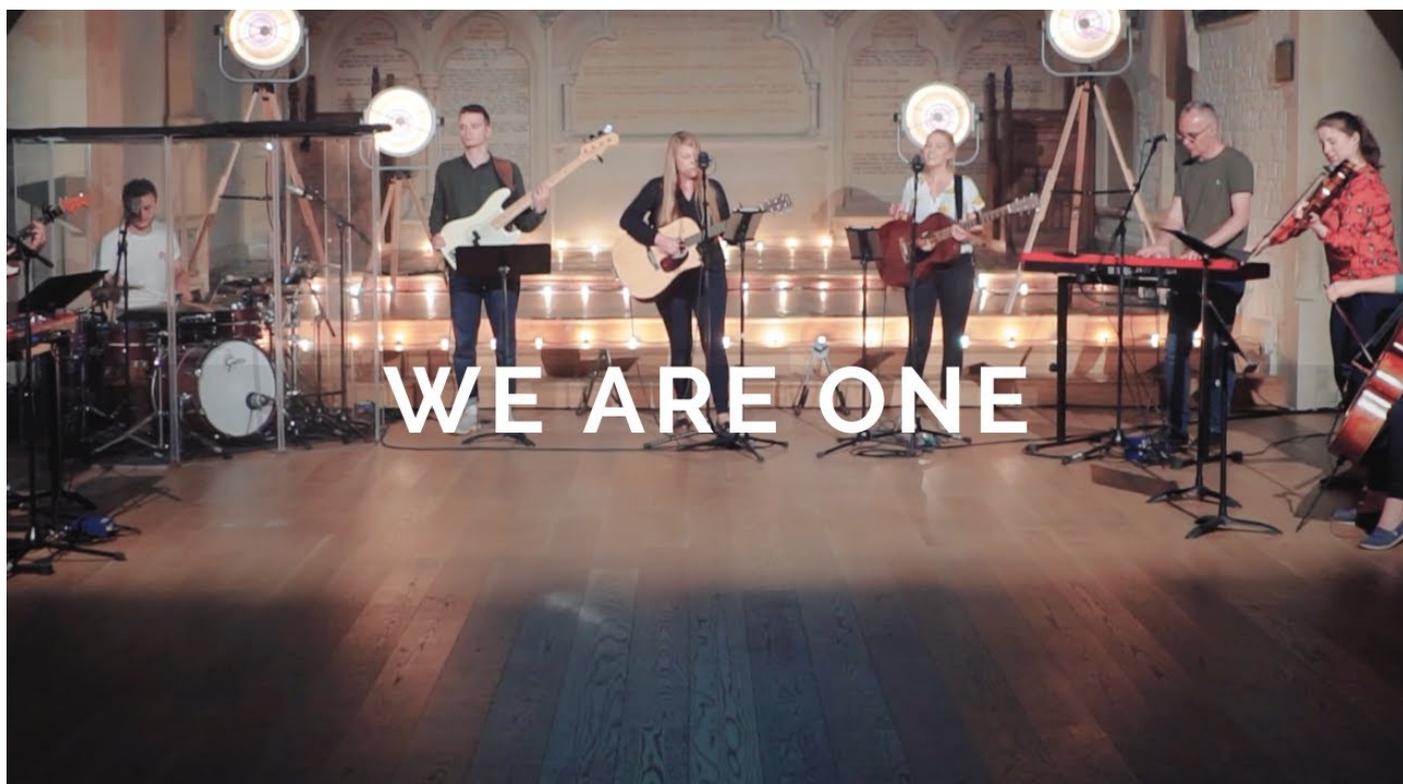
Lord, thanks for continuing to grow your church in Newcastle. Thanks for the work you are doing through Tim Ravenhall and the Mayfield Church Plant. Strengthen Tim to serve. Help the church to continue to grow in love for one another, and the lost would be reached.

Lord, thanks for Stephen Taylor and his ministry among us. Help him and Kaylene to have a restful break and bring them back to us safely. Help us as a church to make wise plans for Term 4 and the new year. We ask you would raise up people to serve. We pray the preaching would come with the power of the Holy Spirit, authority and conviction. And help us in all we do to keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. In his name we pray, Amen. And finally, Lord, we pray for our Church as we make plans for Term 4. With great uncertainty as to what we can and can't do in the lead-up to Christmas, we pray for your wisdom and guidance as we make decisions. We pray that despite whatever restrictions may be in place, that during the Christmas season, we will still be able to get the message of your good news out to non-Christians, and that there will be opportunities to share our faith with others.

And as we shortly come to hear your Word, Lord, help us to be open to it, reflect on what you are saying to us, and to apply it to our lives.

We ask all of this in your Son's glorious name.

Amen.



Sermon - *The One and the Many* (Romans 12:3-8) by Jon Brown

Sermon link - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7jzfHbgKGk-TjLNFTE6DzQ/>

Romans 12:3-8 is a timely passage for us to be looking at today. The last six months have been crazy times, and as a church we've done things differently to cope with the changes. One of the things we did during lockdown was to take church online. While it was kinda fun to do church at home in our pyjamas, watching church has its pitfalls. One of the side effects of pyjama church is that it can make us more passive. Church becomes something we consume rather than something we participate in. Something we do on our own rather than together. Something virtual rather than physical.

Paul has just spent eleven chapters with an epic survey of the gospel. And then in chapter 12 he says, "Therefore, if you believe everything I've said about the gospel, you will be a living sacrifice."

And in the rest of Romans Paul is unpacking what it looks like to be a living sacrifice. What does true worship look like? Maybe we would jump straight to our quiet time. Sitting with a coffee reading some Bible or listening to a podcast. But notice Paul starts with the church not the individual. The first thing that changes for someone when they become a Christian is they join a church. It's no longer just me but I'm joined to other Christians by our common faith. And here Paul uses his favourite metaphor for the church: the body of Christ. This reveals that church isn't something we watch but something we live out together. And that ministry isn't something the pastor does but something Christians do together. All Christians are called to ministry. It's the every member ministry of the body of Christ. Everyone has different gifts and are called to use them.

How do you know what you're meant to be doing? How do you know where you fit in? That's what Paul unpacks here Romans 12:3-8.

1. A transformed view of self (v. 3)

Check out verse 3. Paul says it starts with a transformed view of self. As you view God's mercies in the gospel. As you think about Jesus; who he is and what he's done for you, change happens. It starts with your inner life. The gospel changes the way you think about yourself. Notice Paul says, it's thinking too highly of yourself isn't it. That's the main road block to reaching our full potential. Do you know throughout history until not that long ago - too high a view of yourself was dangerous. Pride was seen as a deadly sin. But in our day the opposite is true. The starting point for therapists is lack of self-esteem. People thinking too low of themselves. It's low self-esteem that stops people from reaching their full potential. The solution to this is more self not less. Self-affirmation. You can do anything and be anyone. You are the most special person in the universe. The danger is never too much self but not enough. And you can see the effects of this in society. All this navel gazing has caused us to go mad. The Greeks believed hubris/pride led people to lose touch with reality. And we certainly see that today. People don't know who they are do they? Too much self-affirmation leads to self-delusion. A world gone mad where people think they can be anyone and do anything. But like the fish that tried climbing trees it doesn't work.

A blown up view of self is the problem not the solution. It's like having a swollen big toe. You don't usually sit around thinking about your toes, do you? Well I don't. But when your toe is sore and swollen it get in the way doesn't it. You can't stop thinking about it. That's an indication that something is wrong. It's the same with our ego. When it's swollen it's sensitive and gets in the way.

Here's a test to work out if you're thinking too highly of yourself: how do you handle criticism? Some people are absolutely devastated by it. They lie awake at night trying to justify themselves. Is that you? Maybe you're thinking too highly of yourself. Envy is another sign. It's when we covet someone else's gifts. It's when we think we deserve what someone else has; the success or the power. And it's debilitating to us. Our pride is our greatest enemy. And it's the greatest enemy of the church. It stops us from living and working together as one body with many gifts.

So what's the solution? Humility, in a word. The Christian is a gospel-humble person. Why? In another word: grace. The grace of God revealed in the gospel is the only true antidote to pride. Notice you see it in the Apostle Paul. Notice how he starts in verse 3, "for by the grace given to me." Paul is drawing on his authority as an Apostle but at the same time he is confessing his humility. That's one of the great marks of his letters, he writes with authority but at the same time humility. "By the grace given to me." Yes Paul knows the Lord called him to be an apostle, but he knows it was all by grace. He knows he was the chief of sinners. He knows it's God who works in him. Paul is always attributing everything to God's grace.

And so should every Christian. Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you are saved, through faith, and not of yourselves but it is the gift of God. Not of works, so that no one can boast." Paul says the same thing here in Romans 12:3, "God has distributed a measure of faith to each one."

Even the faith you have was measured out to you by God. You can't claim anything. You got nothing to boast in. Only the gospel can give us an accurate view of self. It says, you are more sinful than you could ever imagine, but more loved than you could ever dream of. And now you are free to get on with living and serving the church.

2. A transformed view of others (vv. 4-5)

Pride views others as competition. Insecurity views others with suspicion. The gospel views others as... members of the body of Christ. Notice in verses 4-5? Paul says, the church is like a body it's made up of many members. This is Paul's favourite metaphor for the church. One he develops more in some of his other epistles like 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. It's a great metaphor. The church is one body in Christ. Jesus has united you together in himself. He is the head, each of you is a member of the body. And an ear is not a nose. A hand is not a foot. And so on. All members are equal but have different gifts. It's unity in diversity. Different but complementary.

The place you can really discover who you are is at your local church with the other body parts. The church is the way you find where you belong in the world. The other parts of the body will put you in your place and draw out your gifts.

A good church should be like a good band. Take The Beatles for instance: John, Paul, George and Ringo. When you hear The Beatles or watch footage it's something special. They all bring their distinct personality to the group but when they played a song it came together in a brilliant way. Each member was bringing their unique style, and at the same time drawing out something unique in the other members.

If one member was missing it wouldn't have been The Beatles. Or if you want a more quaint illustration, a good church should look like The Wind and the Willows. Not because you have people who look like rats or moles. Rat, Mole, Toad and Badger were all so different from one another. But together they were far greater than on their own. Each one needs the other to be complete. Badger's friends drew him out of his gruff solitude. Toad needed the others to get him out of trouble. Without Ratty, Mole would never have learned the pure joy of messing about in boats. And here's the thing. None of them was trying to change the other fundamentally. No one wanted Toad to change too much. They just didn't want him to get into too much trouble. Each one is accepted and loved because they are unique in the group.

That's what church should be like; a Wind and the Willows story. Church is where you can find your place in the world. Like when an artist places a colour next to another colour and it comes to life. Or when a cook uses spices to bring out the flavour of the food. So we discover our gifts as we serve one another.

Do you know as a Christian you are in Christ.... and now your body no longer belong to yourself. You are not your own. And notice what Paul says in verse 5? Together as the body of Christ we don't belong to ourselves but we belong to one another. And so we're to use our gifts for the benefit of one another.

3. Using your gifts (vv. 6-8)

Notice in verse 6, "According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts." Everyone has gifts. And everyone is using it. It all hands on deck. You're not here at Charlestown by accident. God knew what he was doing. And he called you and gave you gifts. Gifts that you can use in a way that no one else can. There are people out there that only you can reach. There are people in here that only you can minister to. You're as unique as a snowflake. Let's look at some of these gifts Paul mentions here. Spiritual gifts are much more ordinary than we tend to think for them. I had a friend who went on car park duty at one of my old churches. And someone posted on his Facebook page an article by Babylon Bee which was titled, 'Man with no spiritual gifts gets assigned to car park duty.' That's funny but it's not true.

Notice here in Romans 12:6-8, seven gifts are listed. In 1 Corinthians 12 there are nine gifts listed, and Ephesians 4 lists four or five, depending if you take 'pastors and teachers' as one office or two. And you'll notice each time 'apostles and prophets' are the first ones. Why? Because these are foundational gifts for the church. Paul says in Ephesians 2:20 that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. Why doesn't Paul mention apostles in Romans 12:6? Because we know there weren't any apostles in Rome (Romans 15:15-29). The reason Paul is writing to them so that he can lay the foundation for others to build upon.

What about prophecy? There's been so much ink spilled on this. Some say the gift ended with the Apostles. But I think there is a greater and lesser gift of prophecy. The Apostles, were prophets in the OT sense. You just believed their words and obeyed because they spoke with the authority of Christ. But I believe there's also a case for a lesser prophetic gift. The Reformers thought preaching was a form of prophecy. Notice Paul says 'if prophecy then according to the analogy of the faith'. In other words we ask, does this teaching line up with the faith, with the Scriptures? Any prophet that contradicts the Bible is a false prophet. There's heaps more that can be said.

So is there some sort of order to with the seven gifts Paul lists here? Broadly speaking, you could break them up into two sections: word ministry and mercy ministry. Notice the first four are: prophecy, ministry, teaching and exhortation. And the last three: generosity, leading and mercy. Now we can't be certain that by 'ministry' Paul means 'word ministry'. It's likely he could also mean diaconal service. But either way there's gifts here that focus on the word, and gifts that focus on mercy. And both are essential to a healthy church (or body).

Remember in Acts, when the early church is growing, they come up against problems. One of the big problems is recorded in Acts 6. We're told that the church was increasing in numbers but there's a complaint made by the Hellenistic Jews because the widows are being overlooked. And the Apostles get together to sort it out. And they decided that they can't give up preaching for waiting on tables. But do they neglect caring for the widows? No. We're told they select seven deacons for mercy ministry (Acts 6:1-7). And when this happens the church grew (Acts 6:7). Here's an example of the church knowing their gifts and using them. That's what Paul is saying here. Word ministry and mercy ministry are both essential to a healthy church.

And notice with the last three gifts Paul lists, it's not just that we use our gifts but how we use them that matters. Check out verse 8, "giving with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness." The body of Christ should never be just be going through the motions. There should be order and ardour. Presbyterians tend to love order. Everything has a place. Everything is done according to the rules. You might have heard that joke about this ecumenical meeting that was happening. And a fire broke out in the building. The Baptists yelled out, 'Water!' The Pentecostals yelled out 'Fire!' And the Presbyterians yelled out, 'Order!' The church needs order that's for sure. But it also needs ardour. Notice Paul says it's not just that things are done orderly but with the heart. The disposition of the heart matters.

And this happens as we view God's mercies on repeat. As we see in the gospel how Jesus didn't come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. As we look at the cross and see how Jesus Christ, our Head, humbled himself and died on a Roman cross for us. How much more should we humble ourselves and offer up our bodies in service to the church, which he purchased with his own blood!

Yet not I but through Christ in me



Benediction - Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Morning Tea

Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don't want to be just consumers of Church, we want to be a part of the family of God. You could give one or two people a call. Who might you ring now?