

## **Sunday 01/19/25 – Panama Methodist Church**

**Sermon Title: A New Year in Christ: Part 3 of 4 – “New Beginnings - Intentionality” (2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 14:1-23)**

**(Slides 1-17 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)**

So, I remember hearing a very short story a number of years ago. It might be true, or it might not be true, but it is a story on “Intentionality,” which is what I am preaching on today. So here is the story, which is about a man and a woman who had been married many years. The man’s wife liked to be told and shown once in a while some love and care from her husband. Perhaps her husband wanted to be told and shown love and care from his wife once in a while, as well. In this instance though, the husband’s wife was really frustrated with her husband. In fact, she confronted him, and told him, “You know, you haven’t told me that you love me since my birthday!” The husband then said defensively, “Well I did tell you on your birthday, wasn’t that good enough?” She then said to her husband, “It would be if my birthday wasn’t ten months ago!” Now did the husband get what his wife was saying or not? The point of this very short story is being “Intentional.”

In this New Year, we should challenge ourselves to be more “Intentional.” Sometimes what we say, what we do, and how we act, can make a world of difference for others. Sometimes when we show others the love of Jesus, when we

care for them, and when we disciple them, it changes them deeply for the better.

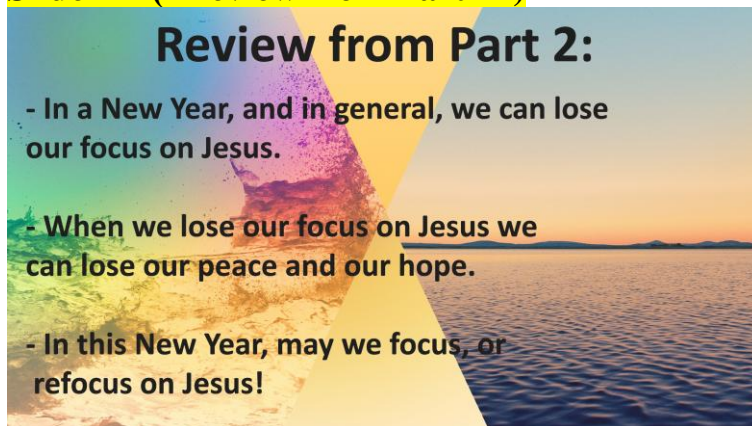
This morning, in this “New Year in Christ” sermon series, we are going to be talking about, once again, “Intentionality.”

**Slide 1 – (“A New Year in Christ: Series – Part 3 of 4)**



Before diving into the topic of living and being “Intentional,” let us look at briefly what we discussed from last Sunday.

**Slide 2 – (“Review from Part 2”)**



Being “focused” or “refocused” on Christ helps us all to stay grounded in Jesus.

Staying grounded in Jesus, and being grounded in the Bible, also helps us to better love and serve others. When our attention is not on Jesus, it can be much harder

to be “Intentional” with how we are living, loving, and serving others. We have already touched on this, but here is a question for us to consider this morning:

**Slide 3 – (“Are we Intentional in the ways that we love others?”)**



Do we take those opportunities to live, to love, and to care like Christ? I saw a person at the store once, and they noticed a checkout clerk that was clearly having a bad day. They went over and “Intentionally” encouraged this person, and it was light switch. The checkout clerk seemed more joyful, more attentive, and less upset. As Christians, in the New Year, and in general, we have the opportunity to share the love and the hope of Jesus with each other. Sometimes though, we get so busy and distracted that we can lose those opportunities to be people who love more, disciple more, and build up more.

The base scripture that I have been using through this sermon series is 2 Corinthians 5:17, which says, once again:

## Slide 4 – (“2 Corinthians 5:17”)



In this New Year, and in general, our “Intentionality” can be used through the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. If we are more “Intentional,” we can be used by God in ways that we cannot even imagine!

I would invite you this morning to open your Bibles with me, or you Bible Apps to Book of Romans in the New Testament. We will be reading through Romans 14:1-23, or just Romans 14, as it is the whole 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans. The subtitle of Romans 14:1-13 or just Romans 14 is “Do Not Judge Another”. When I was looking for good scripture passages on “Intentionality” this was definitely a good passage. “Intentionality” is often connected to judging others, but “Intentionality” is also about how we love, live, and treat each other. As a result, let us read through Romans 14 together. This is what it says:

**Slide 5 – (“Romans 14:1-2”)**

## **Romans 14:1-23**

### **Do Not Judge Another**

**14 Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. 2 Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.**

**Slide 6 – (“Romans 14:3-4”)**

## **Romans 14:1-23**

**3 Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. 4 Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.**

**Slide 7 – (“Romans 14:5-6”)**

## **Romans 14:1-23**

**5 Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. 6 Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.**

**Slide 8 – (“Romans 14:7-9”)**

**Romans 14:1-23**

7 We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

**Slide 9 – (“Romans 14:10-11”)**

**Romans 14:1-23**

10 Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. 11 For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.'

**Slide 10 – (“Romans 14:12-13”)**

**Romans 14:1-23**

12 So then, each of us will be accountable to God. Do Not Make Another Stumble 13 Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of another.

**Slide 11 – (“Romans 14:14-16”)**

**Romans 14:1-23**

14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let your good be spoken of as evil.

**Slide 12 – (“Romans 14:17-19”)**

**Romans 14:1-23**

17 For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. 19 Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual edification.

**Slide 13 – (“Romans 14:20-21”)**

**Romans 14:1-23**

20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; 21 it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble.

**Slide 14 – (“Romans 14:22-23”)**

**Romans 14:1-23**

**22 The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. 23 But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.**

One of the big themes of Romans 14 is for all of us to live by faith and conscience. We should not be naïve, and not protect ourselves, but we should “Intentional” about how will live and love each other. While being “Intentional” is a very broad category, our scripture from Romans 14 gets into some specific examples around “Intentionality.” In this case, the Apostle Paul is telling the church in Rome, or the Romans, and us, to welcome those with weaker faith than we have. This means, if we have been walking with Christ for a long time, we should be “Intentional” about making room for people newer to the faith. Some people that might come into this church might have never come to Christ and or made Him the Lord of there lives, or maybe they are newer to the faith. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 14:1 we should be “Intentional” about welcoming those are new to the faith, or even people asking question about the faith. Instead of fighting or quarreling with some new to the Christian faith or exploring the Christian faith, we should be “Intentional.” Are role is often to share our faith in

Christ, what Christ has done for us, and how knowing Jesus has changed our lives. There will be plenty of time to debate doctrine and other things later, but our main task is to share the gospel, welcome people, and bring them to the cross of Christ to repent of their sin. We then with good “Intentionality” are discipling people to let them know that Jesus is real, that he died for us, and that through Him we are offered eternal life. Sometimes in the Bible eating meat or “solid food” is compared to having a deeper level of spirituality. Drinking milk or even eating vegetables from a spiritual sense, is sometimes compared to weaker or newer Christian faith. We are to be “Intentional” to shepherd, to lead, and to disciple these people to a deeper faith in Christ.

The Apostle Paul continues with this food analogy and says in Romans 14:3, “Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat: for God has welcomed them.” So, Romans 14 is not about physical food, but instead it is about spiritual food. If we are feasting on God’s word, and if we are feasting on growing our relationship with Christ, we should be “Intentional” with those who are not or who are doing this less. This should be an opportunity to draw people closer to Jesus, not the opposite.

The Global Methodist Church, which of course is the denomination that this church is part of, was formed three years ago now, so that we may “Intentionally” seek and save the lost and bring all people to repentance of their sins. Bring all

people to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and be part of a spiritual movement that focuses on personal holiness and scriptural holiness. We do not teach or support sin, but we are to be “Intentional” about discipleship and leading others to Christ. We want to see lives changed, people to come Christ, and people strong in the Christian faith. The Apostle Paul then tells us in Romans 14:5, the Apostle Paul is talking about people that observe holy or important days, versus people that do not. It is not that observing Christmas and Easter Sunday, for example, do not matter, but do not judge and love each other anyway. If we observe a special or a holy day, we should as the Apostle Paul says, “do it in honor of the Lord.” If we eat certain things in honor of God, while others abstain from others, may we not judge, but instead do what we do in honor of the Lord. Basically, we should not let our worship, our praise, and our observances make us think we are better or superior to others. We all need Jesus.

The Apostle Paul then doubles down in Romans 14:7 and says, “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.” The Apostle Paul then says, “If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.” No matter what we are God’s, and we should not judge or think ourselves better than anyone else. We should have “intentionality” to let all people know that Jesus died for them, and that we want to be in relationship with them. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us in

Romans 14:9, “For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and living”. Our faith calls us to Christ, and we all need Jesus.

So, while Romans 14 is about not judging others, it also points us to having “Intentionality” in how we love, disciple, and care for each other. In fact, the Apostle Paul says in Romans 14:10, “Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat and God.” Then the Apostle Paul tells us in 14:11, that one day “every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.” To bring this together even more, the Apostle Paul tells us then in 14:12, “So then, each of us will be accountable to God. Do Not Make Another Stumble.” So, while we are all to repent of our sin and wrongdoing and come to Christ, we are to build people up, not make them stumble. In repeating this theme, we then hear in 14:3, “Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of another“. So, this continued theme of “intentionality,” in the ways that we love and care for each other. Repent of our sin, but seek to welcome, build up, and grow in Christ. I think of the old expression “you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.” Meaning, we are not going to deny the truth, we are going to believe fully in the authority of the Bible, but loving and welcoming people is better than being bitter and judgmental. This is why are part of a Christian denomination that “exists to

make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.” I really believe that our reading from Romans 14:1-23 or just Romans 14 for this morning is telling us all to “love extravagantly”.

Switching back to salvation and being saved by Christ alone, the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 14:14 “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean”. Again, in this case, the Apostle Paul is largely talking about, as the Jewish Law or Law of Moses in the first five books of the Old Testament or Torah discusses, clean and unclean food. The Apostle Paul is telling us here, that faith in Christ is really what matters, not the food we eat. Not that we should just eat anything, but faith in Christ, not the Jewish Law or Law of Moses is what saves us all. In fact, the Apostle Paul, who really seems focused on food in Romans 14:15-16 tells us once again, “If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let your good be spoken of an evil.” We are to be “intentional,” and be focused on Christ, the scripture, what the Holy Spirit is doing in us and among us.

We continue to hear this analogy about food and the Jewish Laws or Law of Moses about clean and unclean food. In fact, in Romans 14:17, the Apostle Paul tells us, “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and

peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”. In this New Year and in general we have an opportunity as people of faith, and in general, to “intentionally” love others, tell them about Jesus, and welcome them into our church, and into our lives. This points us to Romans 14:18-19 that tells us once again, “The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual edification.” We as humans will always have our differences, but may we be “intentional” about our unity in Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul then continues as he has been constantly saying through Romans 14, do not allow food or other non-Christ centered things to get in the way of what we are called to. Let us be “intentional” about love and caring for each other and not allow lesser things to divide us or sidetrack us. The Apostle finishes Romans 14, tell us to not condemn, but to lift up. To love, and point people to Jesus, and let them know that they have a place at churches like Panama Methodist Church. When are “intentional,” we realize that there a lot of things we will never agree on, but we can all agree on Jesus Christ. I mean think about it, what is the likelihood outside of Jesus Christ that we would all be in this church worshipping together, right here and now?

An analogy for coming to Christ and growing in our faith in Christ that I have used before is that of a cruise ship. Some of us maybe have been on a cruise before, and some have not. I know this though, cruise ships are massive! I mean

massive if you have ever seen one in seaport! The really big ones are so large that they have many floors for people to lodge in, as well as for everything else that is on the cruise ship. Some people that we encounter or that come into this church are on different floors spiritually. Some people that we encounter, or meet might be on a high floor of deep faith in Christ, and some maybe be new to the faith, or considering the faith. I have a picture of a cruise ship for us to look at.

**Slide 15 – (“Cruise Ship Floors”)**



So, full disclosure, I have no idea what cruise ship this is, but we can see this reality of different floors on the ship. In this New Year and in general, may we be “intentional” about welcome people, loving people, sharing our faith with people, whatever floor they are on in there walk with Christ. At one point we were all new to the faith, and as we grow closer to Christ, may we “intentionally” life up others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So here is a big question in this New Year then, are we “Loving like Jesus?” In this New Year, and in general my brothers and sisters, may we all be

“intentional” about loving others like Jesus, but at the same time maintaining the truth of our faith.

### Slide 16 – (“Loving like Jesus?”)



In this New Year, how does being “intentional” about our faith apply to our lives today? Let us take a look, as invite our praise team forward:

### Slide 17 – (“Application to Our Lives:”)



So, may we all be “intentional” this year and always in how we love, in how we serve, and in how we care for each other. May this year, 2025, be a year that God does amazing things in us and in the Panama Methodist Church. Amen.