

Romans: Unashamed; the righteous shall live by faith

Romans 16:1-27 prt 44

MPS Gospel friendship is a gift from God

PRAYER TIME:

- The word advent itself means “arrival” or “an appearing or coming into place.” The Advent celebration is both a commemoration of Christ’s first coming and an anticipation of His second coming. As Israel longed for their Messiah to come, so Christians long for their Savior to come again.
- Hope - Paul describes Jesus Christ as “our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1) and “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). Jesus not only came to bring hope. He is our hope. We have hope because Jesus forgives us and transforms us into his likeness.
- Peace Ephesians 2:14 (ESV) *14 For he himself is our peace...*
- Joy John 15:11 (ESV) *11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*
- Pink represents LOVE **1 John 4:8 (ESV) 8** *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
- White represents CHRIST

1 John 4:9 (ESV) *9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

‘Live’ is the GK word *zao* which has to do with the quality of life not merely the existence of life.

Luke 2:8–20 (ESV) 8 *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

God, I praise you for _____

Good news of great joy
Peace
Provision
Love that conquers our fear
Salvation
Joy
The treasure of Christ

1 John 4:9 (ESV) *9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

Lord, help me/us not merely to survive in this season, but to flourish (zaō) by transforming my/our _____

- fear into peace
- weakness into strength
- doubt into faith
- Loneliness into community
- Grief into hope
- Anxiety into trust
- Bitterness into forgiveness
- Despair into joy

SERMON:

INTRO

- We are coming to an end to both Advent season and the book of romans today – We taken 44 Sundays to journey through this epistle verse by verse. It's a little sad, but we are looking forward to what's next - seek week and sermon on the mount.
- But today, we are in Romans 16, the last chapter.
- As you just heard, this seems like a difficult passage to teach through –
- It would NOT be where you would send someone who was recently converted or wants to know more about the Bible...
- However, there is something special here: *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages*

OPEN

- Have you ever heard the saying: “When all is said and done, if you can count all your true friends on one hand, you're a blessed person.”

Can you count your true friends on one hand, or are you counted in someone else's number?

- Paul lists out 37 names that are his true friends.
- Much of the Christian life is the practice of friendship.
- These friendships are made possible through Jesus, the friend of sinners.

Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, "For it is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brothers and sisters."

Gospel friendship is a gift from God

Think back to Genesis 2. What wasn't good? Adam was *alone* (Gen 2:18).

"Adam was not lonely because he was imperfect, but because he was perfect. The ache for friends is the one ache that's not the result of sin.... God made us in such a way that we couldn't even enjoy paradise without friends ... human friends" Tim Keller

- Think of Romans 16 as a case study on community

3 observations:

1. Delight in diverse friends (Vs 1-16, 21-24)

2. Defend against division (Vs 17-20)

3. Declare your doxology to God (Vs 25-27)

1. Delight in diverse friends (Vs 1-16, 21-24)

- Romans 16 is not just a list of hard to pronounce names.
- Each name represents a person, and each person is a friend
- These friends are diverse (don't think about the word, "diverse" as in politics and culture here) and what they have in common is the gospel,
- There are Jews, Greeks, there are slaves, free, there are men, women, all mentioned in this passage. And what brings them together, the commonality, the affinity, is this gospel, this doctrine that he just spent 7,000 words teaching.
- The number of names (37 names) mentioned here in Romans 16 is more than all his other letters combined
- As Paul got older, relationships became more important.

Vs 1-2 I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, **2** that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

Phoebe:

- She carried the letter to Rome.
- Phoebe is most likely the first person to ever teach The Book of Romans. For Paul is trusting Phoebe, not just with the letter, but most likely also with his wishes.
- Missional women have always played a vital role in the advancement of the gospel.
- ...and Priscilla was one of the teachers of Apollos we read about in Acts 18. So, women clearly are teaching in the early church
- 10 of the 28 people mentioned in this list were women (1-16).
- That's a significant number in its own right, but when you consider it occurs in a male dominated culture, it is very striking.
- A Deacon (Diakonos) – She is a server from Cenchrea, most likely a formal biblical office
- A patron – benefactor (giver of money for a cause) – this woman was wealthy AND a servant. She is a great example for how you should live if you're a wealthy person, to use your finances, to use what the Lord has given you to advance the gospel.
- Women were vitally important in the ministry of the early church and also today in the modern-day church.
- You can be gospel friends with wealthy, hardworking, women on mission to advance the gospel!

Vs 3-5a Greet **Prisca** and **Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. 5 Greet also the church in their house.

Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquilla

- Paul met them in Corinth because of Claudius booting the Jewish people from Rome
- They were both tent makers, so they shared the same trade as Paul, and we see here that their fellow workers.
- Maybe they did something heroic in Ephesus, but it's no small thing to say that you have someone who risked their neck for you.
- They were hospitable: they invited people into their home, they invited friends and potential friends into their home (they also housed the church when they lived in Corinth) A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR CG LEADERS TODAY
- They were a couple in ministry – you and your spouse might do well to be friends with a couple in ministry.

Vs 5b Greet my beloved **Epaenetus**, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia.

Epaenetus

- First convert in Asia – that is he was saved in Ephesus
- We have a lot of people in our church that has been with us from new the beginning
- Illustration: Lady who felt left out because so many people had been here so long.
- You need an Epaenetus in your ministry – pray for one. Invite!

Vs 6 Greet **Mary**, who has worked hard for you.

Mary

- A Jewish name
- Not the Mary(s) in the gospels
- Known for her hard work

We need hard workers in our local churches and its great to be friends with hard workers.

Vs 7 Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

Andronicus and Junia

- Most likely another couple
- Jewish
- Fellow prisoners – since Paul is writing from Corinth, he isn't in prison at that time, so it most likely meant they had been previously in prison
- We can be friends with those persecuted and those who have done time
- Paul became a Christian about three, four years after the resurrection. That means they were converts before that. There's some of the earliest converts in history. They had been believers for a long time! Maybe older and definitely mature

You need friends with a past, and a little older in the Lord – a few steps ahead of you.

Vs 8 Greet **Ampliatius**, my beloved in the Lord.

Ampliatius

- People with strange names can be your friends.
- Notice that he is loved by Paul
- Paul loves his diverse friends

Vs 9a Greet **Urbanus**, our fellow worker in Christ,

Urbanus

- A slave name
- You can associate with those lower in the social ranks

Vs 9b and my beloved **Stachys**.

Stachys

- You can love people with Stashes!
- Again, loved by Paul

Vs 10a Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ.

Apelles

- Approved – means he might need reminding of who God is
- Might be a difficult person
- You will always have difficult people in your life.

Vs 10b Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

Aristobulus

- This was the name of a grandson of Herod.
- We can be friends with aristocrats and politicians

Vs 11a Greet my kinsman Herodion.

Herodion

- connected with Herod, probably a freed Herodian
- People who have been slighted in life

Vs 11b Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus.

Narcissus

- He was a wealthy, powerful Freedman, scholars tell us, and he probably had slaves who became Christians, and if they grew up under the reign of the king, they lived in a very delicate situation.

Vs 12a Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa.

Tryphaena and Tryphosa

- Probably sisters – maybe twins
- Great baby names
- Sounds like two pharmaceuticals that work together

Vs 12b Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

Persis [PER-sis]

- Persis, noted for her labor. Her name, incidentally, means Persian

Vs 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

Rufus

- This is a common Latin name, very common among slaves. The most interesting thing about Rufus is in Mark 15:21, Simon of Cyrene is called to carry the cross of Jesus. And it

says it's Simon, the father of Rufus. This is, quite possibly, the son of the one who carried Jesus's cross.

You can be friends with famous people

his **mother**

- We need mother figures
- Maybe that is what God is calling you to be more like in the church

Vs 14 Greet **Asyncritus Phlegon, Hermes** (the name of a GK god), **Patrobas, Hermas**, and the brothers who are with them.

Vs 15 Greet **Philologus** (fond of words), **Julia, Nereus** and his **sister**, and **Olympas**, and all the saints who are with them.

All people you don't really know that you could be friends with

- The least of these

Vs 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

- Not wanting to project anything weird here... it was a cultural thing.
- We extend warmth and affection toward our gospel friends.

- Paul sends greetings *to his friends* in Rome (1-16),
- Paul sends personal greetings *from his friends* in Corinth (21-23).

Vs 21 **Timothy**, my fellow worker, greets you; so do **Lucius** and **Jason** and **Sosipater**, my kinsmen.

Timothy – a pastor

- Lucius
- Jason - most likely the one drug from his house in Thessalonica in Acts 17. So a friend who is ready to fight with and for you
- Sosipater – its great when family is also your friend
- And because of Christ work for us and our faith in him we are family – we have bros and sis's all over this room who are also our friends.

Vs 22 I **Tertius**, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Tertius –

- a scribe who wrote the letter to the Romans, dictated by Paul –
- the smart one.

Vs 23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. **Erastus**, the city treasurer, and our brother **Quartus**, greet you.

Gaius – people with large houses

Erastus – people who work for the government. When you go to Corinth today, there's an ancient inscription. I've been there on one occasion, and Erastus's name is on an engraved stone. Erastus, the city treasurer "paid for this with my own hands," his most humble thing to say,

YOU CAN EVEN BE FRIENDS WITH FOLKS THAT BRAG when gospel is your commonality.

Quartus – Love the greeters that make you feel warm.

Notice Paul's love for his friends

Notice Paul's honoring of his friends

Notice they do ministry together and it was hard work

2. Defend against division (Vs 17-20)

17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. **18** For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. **19** For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. **20** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

- The enemy tempts you to isolate yourself.
- He spreads lies. Let's list those lies. They're hypocrites. They don't really care about you. Nobody likes you. You're forgotten. You're overlooked. They're fake.
- Those are all lies from an enemy who wants to isolate you like a little piece of charcoal that stumbles to the side of the pile and burns out while the rest of the coals burn hot because they are feeding off of one another.
- The God of peace – those who do good and are innocent bring peace because they are following the God of peace – but those who divide with evil intent always bring chaos.
- Even in confrontations, those who are wanting to make peace approach those situations with kindness, gentleness, and patience.

Community Groups – take the card home with you!

3. Declare your doxology to God (Vs 25-27)

25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

- The Gospel has power to not only save unbelievers, but to strengthen believers!
- Be thankful for friends who remind you of the gospel, thus bringing you strength...

26 but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—

- Many things were mysteries concealed, but are now prophecies fulfilled.
- Many didn't get that Isaiah 53 was about Jesus.
- "All nations" We don't serve a tribal Savior, but the Lord of the nations.

27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

- All other gods are unwise; the only wise God is the true God our heavenly father, the Son who is the image of the invisible God, and the Holy Spirit who brings comfort, peace, hope, and joy to the believer. Do you need wisdom, look to God, by looking to His Word.

CONCLUSION:

One relationship is the most important and that is with Christ and the foundation to all other relationships IS THIS ONE with JESUS.

The chief Shepherd knows all of our names, and he's aware of our service, isn't he? And to be commended by Paul, is one thing, but to hear the Lord Jesus say, Well done, good and faithful servant, that's quite another

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. How are gospel friends a gift from GOD?
2. Do you feel you have gospel friends? If not, what do you do to change that?
3. Do you feel you are a good gospel friend to others? If not, what do you do to change that?