

Romans - Week 35 Sermon Notes

Sunday, September 10, 2017

<http://www.rivercc.org/2017/09/10/romans-week-35-sermon-notes/>

1. INTRO:

Paul Comegys: "Finally"

-Divorce

Paul's Humility (teachability) was a key component of his transformed life and his great joy in using his gifts for the Glory of God and the good of others.

Humility/teachability can be hard...especially when we are emotionally invested in a belief or habit...or just insecure about being wrong, or being perceived of as failing.

But may God help us all be people who live with sane estimates of ourselves...able to hear what God is saying to us through others.

Let me give you a gentle warning: As we proceed this morning if your mind runs to the people who "really need to listen to you" or those who "need to think more realistically about themselves"...try to reel it back in.

You may be right about those people...but its not the most helpful place to go in your thinking.

Push your mind to your own self-estimate...to your own need for a sober, sane...realistic view of yourself.

When we have a realistic self-estimate...we will always see our great need for help from others to stay on track.

If we see it, believe it...then we will avail ourselves of that help.

That help, from others, is essential to spiritual transformation

You just can't make a good case for the possibility of real transformation into Christlikeness apart from a life lived in community.

And to live successfully in community we must be continually moving toward a sane self-estimate.

Let's catch up to where we are in Romans

1. Paul presented the knowledge of the Gospel (this is what is real about life, the world, us) (chapters 1-11)

2. Then in 12:1-2, In view of the reality of the mercies of God...we are to live as his people...to align our thinking, speaking, doing with what it ultimately real.
3. We do this by ongoing transformation that allows us to understand, value, and do his will for our lives.

Next he gives an important challenge and opportunity in regards to experiencing this transformation in community

4. The Challenge is "Have a sane self-estimate"
5. The opportunity is "Serve others"

First: the challenge:

Rom. 12:3 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 measure of faith God has given you.

We live this transformed life in community:

I will not be able to "renew my mind" without the active help of other believers.

I will not make sense out of Scripture by myself.

I will not endure long or do well apart from believers encouraging, praying, setting an example for me.

I can't discern blind spots unless someone is looking at me from outside of me.

I can't experience transformation all by myself...I need community.

It takes humility to live effectively in community...I need a sober estimate of myself.

How will I see my need for others, or be positioned to listen to others when I really need to...if I don't see myself accurately?

In verses 1-3 Paul talked about being "transformed by renewing our minds"...in this passage he deals again with our thinking.

In fact he uses a play on words that is lost in the English translation:

*Phroneo: is to "think" or "hold an opinion of"

-Don't think too highly of yourself: hyperphroneo (exalted, hyper-opinion)

-Yourself with sober judgment: sophreneo (have a sane opinion)

If I believe I am smart, sufficient, capable...all by myself (at all or most times)...why would I pay

attention to anyone else when they challenge my thinking or living?

***Last week a dear friend of mine was challenged about some of his decisions...his response was to embrace the challenge with gratitude.**

-His life is a great challenge to me...to love truth that much, more than I love being right, or hate being wrong...I would like to more like him.

Self-Serving Bias is well documented and virtually universal:

-Most people give themselves more credit than is due them.

-Most people believe they are above average drivers, readers of people, judge of character, decision maker, rational thinkers.

-Of course it isn't possible that most can be above average at anything...that would be a contradiction of terms.

But what it does demonstrate is that **most** of us lack a sane estimate of ourselves...at least some of the time.

Even complaining about leadership...work, nation, home, school...is often tied to an exalted self-estimate (the implication of complaining is "I could do better"...maybe we could, but probably not)

I lack of sober self estimate can keep us from transformational community engagement.

The gospel can (should help with this).

"In according with the measure of faith God has given you."

Some theologians take this to mean "in light of the individual amount of faith God has given you."

Others (myself included) take it to mean "**The**" Faith...the gospel itself.

Its not subjective "Your faith"

It is objective "The Faith"...the reality or facts of the gospel.

But either way...whether it is the specific amount of faith God has given you, or the "faith" as in the gospel itself...it should lead to humility not pride.

If God gives you faith to see yourself soberly...you will see at least two things about yourself:

1. What you have, you were given (including the faith you have)
2. What you have been given is for the good of others and the glory of God.

Humility empowers accountability...in fact there is no effective accountability without humility.

Accountability: I have found that many of us want accountability until we actually need it.

- "Please help me, speak to me, tell me the truth if I ever start acting, or believing this way."

- Then when it comes down to it and we are believing a certain way (and really need outside perspective/accountability) we tend to ignore or are frustrated by anyone who challenges our perception or actions.

-Why is this?

We do not live with sane self-estimates...so if we are ambivalent or don't care much about something...we listen.

But if we are convinced and invested (believe we are right)...then we tend to not listen.

When do we **most** need to listen? The same times we are least likely to listen.

We all have the capacity to get "drunk" with our own perceptions of what is real and true.

A sober estimate is not drunk with self-perceptions and self-serving bias...it is tethered to the factual reality of the gospel.

"While I was a sinner, Christ died for me."

"What do I have that I did not receive"

"I have sinned and fallen short"

A "hyper-self-estimate" is a disastrous way to live.

A "sober-self-estimate" is a safe way to live.

First key to thriving in community: Humility...a sober (sane) self-estimate.

Without humility there is a force field around us that will not allow influence to flow from others to us.

Let's go on

4 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 who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it

cheerfully.

Second key to thriving in community: Service

Paul would make no sense out of an unchurched Christian.

Many in America think it makes perfect sense.

Besides the fact that sitting at home and watching a TV preacher does not allow anyone to actually know you (you are very, very unsafe if you are unknown)

How would you serve others? How can you function as a part of the body?

Paul likes the analogy of a Body to describe the church.

Christ is the head...we have different roles in the body.

He wrote at length about this to church at Corinth because they had such a hard time getting along.

He wanted them to see that it makes no sense to look down on others, or not to work together since we are members of one body.

I'm not going to walk through the specific gifts listed here because I don't believe they are ever Paul's main point.

I think his point is...get along, serve others for the glory of God...you are one body.

Not that the gifts don't matter...they do.

But a "gifts" emphasis often becomes about "me" and my satisfaction.

A service emphasis is about others...their good.

And about God...his glory.

He gives gifts...that we use to love others.

My gifts are for your good and God's glory.

We tend to love personality inventories...and spiritual gifts discovery tools.

Because they are about our favorite topic: "us"

I've said it before...but be honest...in a group photo...who do you look at and for first?

The "Flag Page" is a very helpful tool for understanding what you love...but the reason it was developed

was so that you would pay attention to what the one you love...loves.

Its not meant to be self-serving in its application...it is meant to help us value what our spouses value.

In the same way...the main point of spiritual gifts lists in scriptures is to help us see all the ways God has given us to serve others.

In the three main passages that list spiritual gifts (Rom 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph 4) the specific gifts given by Paul are never the same...the lists change...they are not comprehensive.

I believe its because his point is to focus on the purpose of the gifts rather than a focus on the gifts themselves...the purpose of the gifts are the **good of others for the glory of God.**

Peter is very specific about this purpose:

1 Peter 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

It is ironic that in Corinth and probably in Rome the gifts had become sources of pride and division.

It happens when we become focused on "What is my gift?" "Am I using my gift?" "Hey, that's not in line with my gift"

The focus should on "What do you need?" and "How can I honor God with my life by serving you?"

It is my belief and experience that when a person is pursuing their own satisfaction first they never will be satisfied.

But when a person is pursuing the good of others and the Glory of God...they end up in situations over and over where they are operating out of their giftedness...and they experience satisfaction.

To live the transformed life, that comes through a renewed mind (transformed by God, not conformed to the world's image)

We must learn to thrive in community.

In order to thrive in community we must live with sane self-estimates and with hearts to serve others.

God uses one another in his program of changing us...influence must flow from me to you and from you to me.

In order to be influenced...I must be humble...open to learn from your life.

In order to be an influence...I must serve you...use the way God has gifted me to serve you.

CONCLUSION:

Our primary approach to transformational community is small groups.

The three core components of small groups are:

-Meetings

-Member Care

-Missions

Meeting: A meeting is the action of coming together.

-good things can happen if we show up

-nothing will happen if we don't

-We meet to engage and encounter God through his word, prayer and one another.

Our small groups **are** about "in depth Bible study"

But let me define "in depth"...it is where God's word goes deep into our lives in ways that changes our lives.

Transformed by renewing our minds.

The goal is not to master the scriptures but to be mastered by them.

Information (truth) without personal application (change) is useless.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

Member Care: Taking care of one another, friendships, accountability, encouragement.

-Being there for life's challenges

-Supposed to go this next week to Northcom for some meetings on disaster preparedness

-The meetings were cancelled because they are involved in disaster response.

*Motto: "Trusted partnerships"

-That would serve as a good motto for the Member Care portion of Small groups.

-"When trouble comes...who knows you? Who can come alongside you?"

-When good things happen...who rejoices with you?

When the event happens...good or bad...its too late to build trusted partnerships...start now.

Mission: Working together to accomplish the will of God for our lives and to reach the people he has placed in our lives.

Its not complicated, it is profound...and it can be transformational

Now is a great time to get into a group...many are just starting back up.

Now is a great time to get a renewed vision for your involvement in group if you are already in one.

1. I've been in groups (I'm in one)...they were not transformational.

For the person who wants to grow, almost any group will work

For the person who doesn't take responsibility for their own growth no group will work

Sounds harsh...but I believe it is true.

Truth is important to embrace if you want to change.

If you are ever convinced the problems and the solutions are largely "out there" rather than "in here"...it is no friend of yours who agrees with you.

A friend will challenge that assumption...because that very assumption will leave you unhappy and forever chasing the pot at the end of the next rainbow.

You can change...others can come alongside you...but you must decide and live decided.

You can't do it alone...but others can't do it for you

That is the tension of community.

The Anatomy of Hope: Gropman

-Belief (change is possible)

-Expectancy (what I do matters)

-Desire (do something)

2. I don't need others to change

Okay...I disagree

How are others missing out on what you have to give because you don't believe you need them?

What if they need you?

Who is life about anyway?

3. I am afraid of vulnerability and accountability.

You are not alone in that, its scary stuff

But if you will find people to trust (and you can) you will be surprised at how well it will go.

4. I know I need to change but don't know what that change needs to look like.

I understand, we don't know what we don't know.

All the more reason to get around people and watch and listen.

I have been rebuked the most directly and profoundly by my friends who are just living their lives in front of me and without directing any comments at me...I see their way of life and I compare it to my own and I am challenged.

5. I don't have time.

Its not a matter of time it is a matter of perspective.

We have time for what we deem important or necessary.

First recorded words of Jesus in John.

"What do you want?"

Spoken to some men who heard Jesus was special and so they began to follow him...he turned them and asked "What do you want?"

I think Jesus is still asking that question: "what do you want?"

It is a profound question.

It has several components to is...

-Do I know what I want?

-Do I want what I should want? (what is truly valuable?)

Jesus was **not** asking this question like a genie out of a bottle...he was probing their hearts, their motives.

When Adam and Eve were hiding from God after they had sinned and were hiding in shame he asked them "Where are you?"

He knew their geographic location and he knew the condition of their hearts...he was probing them to get them to see their need for him.

Augustine wrote and I agree..."You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

His rest is not inactivity and it's not the lack of trouble in our lives...it is knowing who our hearts were made for and moving his direction.

God has made you for himself...and he has given you the resources to increasingly experience and reflect him.

It will require the influence of others into your life and the influence of your life in others...humility and service.

This is your design...live in line with the way you have been made if you want to experience the full satisfaction God has for you.
