

“WITH...humility”

Scripture: Romans 12:1-13

Graphics: Stones, hands, togetherness

Big Truth: The people of the Panama UMC are called to live out their salvation with a set of characteristics that accompany the presence of the Holy Spirit.

1. Introduction

- A. WITH. W-I-T-H. WITH.
- B. It’s a word we use all day, every day. We say it so often, we don’t even really think about it.
- C. “Would you like fries WITH that?” “I can’t wait to go on vacation WITH you.” “I don’t like cream WITH my coffee.”
- D. It’s a word of location...a word of connection...of joining one thing or many things with other things.
- E. *grammarbook.com* tells us that ‘with’ is a preposition, which means it’s a word or set of words that indicates location or some other relationship between a noun or pronoun and other parts of the sentence.
- F. The Cambridge Dictionary says ‘with’ means ‘*in the same place as someone or something*’ or ‘*accompanying*’.
- G. WITH is a simple, but powerful, word. In fact, the power of WITH comes in the fact that, if something or some characteristic is GOOD and DESIRABLE, then WITH is the best thing you can hear.
- H. When Stacy was first pregnant, I remember being thrilled that she was WITH child. When someone we love is near, they are WITH us.
- I. WITH is an awesome word, in my book.
- J. Today, we’re starting a brand new series of messages called just that: WITH. So many times in scripture, the authors use the word WITH to indicate something that someone has, or a connection with someone.
- K. The word WITH is found north of 7,000 times in scripture. In Hebrew, the word is either ‘eem’ or ‘et’. In Greek, the word is ‘me’. Incredibly simple word. Incredibly powerful result.
 - i. For example, in Genesis 6:9 we read, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked WITH God.” They were connected.
 - ii. Or in Matthew 1:23, this incredible prophecy about Jesus, “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is (*what?*) WITH us.”

- iii. Or Revelation 22:21, at the very end of the bible, proclaims, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be WITH all the saints. Amen.”
- L. **WITH** is a powerful word. Just think about the things or people in your life that are WITH you. Or the things you brought WITH you to worship (your bible, your mask, your purse, your keys, your hand sanitizer).
- M. So, the series is called WITH.
 - i. We’re moving into a different section of the book of Romans for a few weeks. In the previous section we studied, Romans 5-8, we heard all about the Apostle Paul’s theology of Jesus - that, because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we, who believe in and follow Jesus, are coming alive and, in fact, are alive forever!
 - ii. In chapter 12 of Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome in the first century, he turned his attention to how the church was to live out their everlasting life as a church...as a body of believers (Paul loves to use this metaphor of the church as a body with Christ as the head).
 - iii. We’ll be reading through chapters 12 and 13 over the next 5 weeks. In this section, Paul told the church that as they live out their faith, they must do that WITH humility, WITH peace, WITH respect, WITH love, and WITH honor. And all those things, give glory to God and build up the church.
 - iv. (stones) These five things are like well worn stones that you can hold in your hand. You can touch and feel them. They are solid. They are powerful. They are smooth and not pliable. They are dependable and true.
 - v. Today, we start with humility. After that, we’ll move to living out faith WITH peace when people oppose you. Then, respect, as we hear what Paul has to say about respecting the government authority over us (that’s timely, huh?). Then, we’ll move to love and, finally, honor.
- N. **WITH**. That’s the word on which we’ll focus. But more importantly, it’s the Holy Spirit that’s WITH us that will be our focus, our guide, and our strength.
- O. Let’s pray and then dive into Romans chapter 12.
- P. **PRAY...**
- Q. OK...let’s turn together to Romans 12, starting in verse 1...

2. Scripture

A. READ ROMANS 12:1-2

- i. Chances are you’ve heard these two verses of scripture a few times.
- ii. Paul starts with a ‘therefore’. In this case, he’s just finished writing that there’s hope for the nation of Israel. There’s hope for the Gentiles, who were previously outside God’s kingdom - because of JESUS!

- iii. Paul writes in chapter 11, verse 36, talking about Jesus: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.”
- iv. Think about that for a second. There is nothing that is not FROM Jesus. There is nothing that does not go THROUGH Jesus. And there is nothing that is not TO Jesus. Jesus is the source, the gate, and the destination. Jesus IS everything. That’s what we believe, church!
- v. Because that’s true - that Jesus made all of Creation, Jesus is the focus of all creation, and all creation will find it’s final destination in Jesus, Paul is asking the church to bow before this Jesus.
- vi. He wrote, in verse 12:1, “*I appeal to you*” (or better yet, I exhort you or strongly urge you). He’s not begging them, here, but Paul knows the gravity of what he’s asking them to do and Paul has a burning passion for them to do what he’s about to ask.
- vii. I appeal to you, therefore, by the mercies of God - basically, in light of what a merciful God has done in your lives by giving you everlasting life, even though you are yet sinners (got it?) - present your bodies (together) as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
 - a. Let’s unpack that. So, because of God’s mercy (which is NOT getting what you deserve - that’s the definition of mercy), do THIS: present (show up with) your body (physically, in space and time - this is not just theological language but also physical) as a living sacrifice (which is an act of obedience and worship), holy and acceptable to God (set apart for God’s purposes and good in God’s eyes), which is your spiritual worship.
 - b. The word *spiritual* that Paul uses here, is better translated as *reasonable*, as in, this worship response is something that people who can **think** actually **DO** in logical response to the mercy they’ve received from God.
 - c. Because God saved you, your response is to worship.
 - d. And God is pleased by that. Did you know you can please God? Somewhere along the way, the Christian church got the message that we’re all worthless worms and can do nothing to please God, only grovel at His feet as he passes judgment and is unhappy with us. That’s rubbish! God is pleased when we present ourselves in worship.
 - e. Paul goes on in verse 2 to write that the church shouldn’t be pressed into the mold that the world wants to press them, but must be transformed by the renewing of their minds (which are now filled with Christ).
 - f. Instead of trying to fit into what the world wants you to look like, church, we’re to allow the Holy Spirit to reshape us into the image of

Jesus. And if the church is moving closer to the image of Jesus, then we can see and hear and understand the things of God - his good, acceptable, and perfect will.

- g. This image is the same image we see in Philippians 2, which tells of a Jesus who emptied himself of his divine power so that he could take on human flesh, suffer and die. That's the ultimate picture of humility... and is our focus to this morning...and it's where Paul turns next.
- h. Let's look at verse 3.

B. READ ROMANS 12:3-8

- i. Picture with me the very posture that Paul described in verse 1-2. Is it standing proudly before God showing Him all your accomplishments like a second grade show-and-tell?
- ii. Heck no! It's NOT about YOU! Let me say that again, "It's NOT about you." It's head bowed, knee bent, in adoration and thankfulness TO GOD.
- iii. Presenting yourself to God is an act of humility.
- iv. When we were in Israel, we had the chance to go to the Teaching Steps which at one point in history led to the Jewish Temple courtyard. Jesus himself sat on the very stone step we were on. Amazing. But the odd thing about these steps is that they are uneven. You have a short then a long step, and they are spaced pretty far apart. It's actually hard to walk up them. I asked our guide about it and he said, "The designers of the Temple built these steps uneven for a very specific purpose. It's so that when you climb these steps, you MUST keep your head down and watch your step or you'll trip and fall. Climbing the steps to the Temple courtyard, preparing for worship must begin with bowing your head in humility." Just then, I looked up and saw Stacy *running* up the steps like Rocky Balboa. At the top, hands raised in triumph. I'm pretty sure THAT was NOT the posture the Temple designers were looking for but...hey, when in Israel...
- v. Paul gives three characteristics of this humility in the life of a believer:
 - a. First, it starts with sober judgment. Look, there is always a danger in our lives to operate either in false pride or false humility. Sober judgment is understanding who I am, for real...but it's who I am, emotionally vulnerable before God. Who am I when no one is around, and it's God looking into my heart. THAT is sober judgment and it's somewhere between false pride and false humility.
 - b. In order to find that place, Paul says that each person must approach the measuring rod faith. So often this passage gets interpreted to mean that each person has only so much faith. That's not completely true. At this MOMENT you have a certain amount of faith, but you can GROW in

your faith. And the measuring rod is God's view of faith. It's like stepping up to that cold metal height measuring stick that's always seems like it's from the Stone Age at the doctor's office. We all step up to the same measuring rod...but we are NOT all the same height. Paul is saying to the church, be honest with where you are in your faith...and then grow from there. There's nothing more humbling than getting honest with how much you still need to learn as a disciple.

- c. But compare yourself to God's will and plan, not the person who is up front here or the saint in the back row. We are, Paul says, ALL here in response to the grace and mercy of God. And we all have different gifts as part of one body. Use YOUR gifts for God's glory and to build up the church. But, "don't out-punt your coverage" to use a football analogy. Don't try to go beyond your level of gifting and knowing how to use your spiritual gifts until you grow into it. Grow, yes, and then move into more as you are led.
- d. Each one of those parts (sober judgment, accurate measuring of faith, and being part of the whole body together) leads to a faith lived out WITH humility. Having humility in you and coming from you.
- e. Paul then gives some rapid-fire commands to the church about what it should look like to be a humble follower of Jesus...verse 9...

C. READ ROMANS 12:9-13

- i. Every single one of the actions on that list require humility. In fact, love requires humility, period. Especially when it has to do with loving those who you don't know or who you DO know but that you don't want to love or don't love you back.
- ii. And, Paul says, "...don't log in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord." Love with passion. Serve God with all you have.
- iii. Love and serve every strangers...which requires the deepest forms of humility because it's love that has no emotional attachment...but done purely out of love for God.

3. Application

- A. The thing I love about this passage is that it contains every single one of our Intentional Discipleship Milestones. And if you'll recall, when we talked about each of these in our SHIFT series, we said that relative to God, we bow before Him as we learn and grow into each of these categories:
 - i. Worship - humbly present your body in worship in response to God's mercy, rejoicing in hope.

- ii. Community - humbly grow as a member of one body, the church, with different gifts, given by God.
 - iii. Openness - sober judgment and assessing your life by the measuring rod of faith, persevering in prayer. All of that humbling you before God.
 - iv. Obedience - humbly saying yes to worship, to passionately love others, to be humble, to be patient in suffering.
 - v. Serving - outdoing one another in showing true honor, extending hospitality to all, and;
 - vi. Sharing - contributing to the needs of the saints; using your gifts in the church...not for YOUR glory, but for God's glory alone.
- B. That's how to live a life of faith WITH humility, as you follow Jesus and love those around you.
- C. The caution is, of course, that you must spend time assessing where you are on the spectrum between false pride and false humility.
- i. False pride brags about what I've done, even though I know I'm not all that and a bag of chips. False pride is defined as an exaggeratedly high or pretentious opinion of oneself, one's abilities, or one's circumstance not based on real achievement or success (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/false+pride>). To view that through a Christian lens, it's taking credit for things in your life that are clearly the direct result of the grace and mercy of God. Reality is, either you got what you didn't deserve or you were spared by God's grace and didn't get what you DID deserve. The better road is to receive the prize, say thank you, and then instantly give it to God to safeguard in your life.
 - ii. The other extreme is false humility. False humility tries to tell everyone else how humble I am, even though I'm secretly proud of myself...I just don't tell anyone (unless they ask of course). If, "...humility is the state or condition of being humble...false humility, on the other hand, is pridefulness in disguise. We practice false humility when we intentionally devalue ourselves or our contributions in an attempt to appear humble. Examples of false humility include deflecting praise we truly deserve, fishing for compliments to draw attention to ourselves, "humble-bragging" (talking about how humble we are), falsely portraying helplessness or a lack of power, and self-deprecating humor. (<https://leadingwithtrust.com/2019/10/06/4-ways-to-overcome-the-danger-of-false-humility/>)
 - iii. To paraphrase Paul, "You are gifted and loved...you are pleasing to God. You are holy and acceptable. He wants you to worship Him in response to what He's done in your life."

iv. If that's the case, then stay away from false pride...and stay away from false humility. Look at yourself through Jesus' eyes...and then love and serve those around you.

4. Conclusion

- A. WITH. God is WITH us. We are WITH each other. Together, we can live out our faith WITH humility.
- B. Imagine a church filled with humble people who are joyful because they are gifted and effective in serving and ministry...yet, are confident because they know exactly where those gifts come from and who has saved them.
- C. There would be no competition IN the church, BETWEEN churches, or amongst the followers of Jesus around the world.
- D. There WILL be strangers that get served, worship that is Spirit-filled and powerful with rejoicing, prayer lifted up, and God WILL be glorified.
- E. Take time this week to center yourself...center yourself as you check your false pride and false humility. Center yourself in confident true humility. Center yourself in Jesus, by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
- F. WITH.
- G. Let's do this!
- H. Pray...