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| Jeremiah 31:31-34 Romans 12:1-8  | Covenant service –Never Give Up !! | MGV – 9:30am – 15/01/2023Pinelands – 9am – 22/01/2023Thornton – 10:30am – 22/01/2023  |

I have a great **admiration** for People who **never give up…**

 **The Author** who keeps writing until their book is published.

 **The Mountaineer** who keeps climbing until they summit.

 **The Engineer** who keeps trying until the problem is solved

 **The Musician** who keeps practicing until

they play the piece perfectly.

 **The Inventor** who keeps trying to make things that work…

 **The Mother** who keeps loving their drug addicted child…

**Sir Winston Churchill’s** famous words come to mind…

 ***“Never, never, never, never, give up!”***

**Today** we are…

Renewing our covenant with God,

Rededicating ourselves to his work,

Recommitting ourselves to do whatever he calls us to do.

Whether it brings reward our not,

Whether we really want to do it or not.

Some would say that we ***“Never Give Up”…***

by committing ourselves to…

such a difficult and potentially awkward task.

**So…** **to remind us to Never Give Up…**

let us go back to **Pauls Letter to the Romans.**

**Paul** is Writing to the Christians in Rome…

 In preparation for his visit.

**Paul’s letters** all follow a pattern…

 Paul is a deep thinker and he grapples with deep truths.

 He explains his thinking in his letters…

 Usually ending the letter with some PRACTICAL ADVICE

That is where we find ourselves in **Romans 12:1…**

***“So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I***

***appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God,***

***dedicated to his service and pleasing to him.***

***This is the true worship that you should offer.”***

**What Paul is saying** at this point in his letter is…

**In view of** all that God has done and continues to do for us,

**In view of** the theology that he sets out in his letter,

 (Example… Humanity’s need for salvation,

 God’s way of salvation)

**What should our response be?**

**And the answer** **Paul** gives to that question is that we should…

*offer the whole of ourselves to him in worship and service.*

**Count Zinzendorf…**

Tells the story of the turning point in his life…

when he saw a painting of Christ on the Cross…

The artist – **Steinberg** – had added these words…

***‘All this I did for thee. What has thou done for me?’***

In that moment… **Count Zinzendorf** understood what…

God had done for him in Christ…

and just had to respond.

**Count Zinzendorf** went on to become a Bishop in the Moravian Church…

 The Moravian Church… ultimately…

 Had great influence over the life of **John Wesley**

**So…** **What has God done for us?** ***AND…***

 **What does God continue to do for us?**

**CREATION…** God has created and Continues to Create…

God has created this wonderful world in which we live,

the beach, sea, hills and mountains, the valleys and streams.

 ***Examples…*** Walking on the promenade *(Sea Point)*

 Listening to the Sea

 Watching the Sun rise / sun set

God’s creation all around us…

Liza shared this meme with me the other day…

***“How can Capetonians say they are going***

 ***on holiday when they are by the holiday”***

 **DO WE APPRECIATE our surroundings?**

AND… Recognise who gave it to us

**SKILLS AND TALENTS…** God has given and continues to Give…

All the gifts and talents and skills we have…

ultimately come from God.

Our gifts of poetry and music, reading and writing,

singing, playing, listening, painting, manual skills.

When we realise that it was God who gives us these skills and talents we begin to realise what he is doing for us.

**CHRIST…** BUT above all God has given us Jesus,

 And continues to give us Jesus.

A special gift which we have just celebrated at Christmas.

But Christmas is just part of the story.

 Jesus grew, he taught, he preached, he healed,

he was obedient to his Father and went to the cross

and offers us forgiveness and a future.

 GOD… Continues to give of Himself… to US…

 Through CHRIST…

 It is **NOT A ONCE OFF** *(done and dusted)*

 ***BUT…*** **CONTINIOUS… GIVING**

 ***RELATIONSHIP***

When we realise what God continues to do for us in and through Christ…

we begin to realise… ***God's great mercy to us***

 what he continues to do for us.

**In view of ALL this… PAUL says…**

***Offer yourself as a living sacrifice***

 ***Offer your bodies as living sacrifices.***

In the **Old Testament** ***sacrifice*** took a central part…

in the life and worship of the people of Israel.

They had many forms of sacrifice, each of which had a particular purpose.

 Some were a gift to God,

Some were offered in **Worship…**

symbolising an ongoing right relationship with God.

 Some sacrifices were for **Purification…**

after recovering from leprosy, or after touching a corpse

 Some Sacrifices were for **Sin…**

 Asking for / Demonstrating **Forgiveness**

**We don’t need** these **SACRIFICES** any longer…

Because of what God has done for us in Christ.

***In Christ all sacrifices are completed.***

We have access to God through Christ.

**So in effect…** **What Paul** **is saying is this…**

Because of what **God continues to do for us** *in and through* **Christ…**

**We are to…** **CONTINUE…** ***over and over again…***

Take our bodies,

 Take all the tasks you have to do,

Take the ordinary work round the house,

Take our life in society, in the community,

our family and friends, our walking,

Our visiting people,

Take everything WE do day after day and…

**OFFER them in worship to God.**

**Yes…** We worship here at church,

We worship in our Shared Life Groups and Prayer Meetings,

**BUT…** WE worship God by **CONTINUALLY** offering him…

***ALL that we have, ALL that we do and***

***ALL that we are.***

**REAL WORSHIP…**

Is not just about where we worship,

Is not just about what we do here on a Sunday…

 **IT IS ABOUT…** ***EVERYTHING !!***

**We should be able to say…** ***‘I go to church to worship God’.***

**But we should also be able to say…**

‘I go home… To Worship God,

‘I go to the supermarket… To Worship God,

‘I go to the beach… To Worship God,

‘I go to visit someone, to cook, to write a letter …

and **IN SO DOING** **I am worshipping God.’**

It’s about giving our whole selves over to God’s service…

in response to ALL he continues to do for us.

**AND…** It is in doing that… **THAT WE ARE TRANSFORMED**.

In doing that we… become a little **more like Christ** everyday

 Chip away at everything that is…

**NOT of God** in our lives.

***AND…***  Slowly we are ***TRANSFORMED***

What did **Paul** say?… ***“Let God transform you inwardly***

 ***by a complete change of your mind.”*** (Verse 2)

Because of all that God continues to do for us…

we are called to offer the whole of ourselves,

all that we have and all that we are, to God.

**BUT HOW CAN WE DO THIS?**

**HOW can we** make that commitment to renew our covenant?

**HOW can we** say those words…

***‘I am no longer my own but yours.***

***Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will,***

***put me to doing, put me to suffering,***

***let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,***

***exalted for you or brought low for you.***

***Let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things,***

***let me have noting. I freely and wholeheartedly yield***

***all things to your pleasure and disposal.’***

**WE CAN… BECAUSE… WE NEVER GIVE UP.**

**We Never Give Up..** On ***GOD***

 On ***SELF***

 ON Being ***TRANSFORMED***

Both… Inwardly and Outwardly

**God never gives up on US…**

 He keeps demonstrating His love for us…

 He keeps meeting us…

 He keeps creating and He keeps giving…

 **So we KEEP Committing ourselves to HIM…**

 **And we** **Never GIVE UP ON HIM.**

**Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The Lord says, “The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although I was like a husband to them, they did not keep that covenant. The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. None of them will have to teach a neighbour to know the Lord, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the Lord, have spoken.”

**Romans 12:1-8 Life in God's Service**

So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

And because of God's gracious gift to me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, be modest in your thinking, and judge yourself according to the amount of faith that God has given you. We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body. So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to speak God's message, we should do it according to the faith that we have; if it is to serve, we should serve; if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so. Whoever shares with others should do it generously; whoever has authority should work hard; whoever shows kindness to others should do it cheerfully.