Sunday 1st November, 2026
Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church
Welcome & Prayer

As we begin our service of worship this morning lets remind ourselves of the great God we are coming before & so begin with a reading from Psalm 46. *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her; she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress*." (NIV)

Let us pray… "God our Refuge, when human resources fail, you alone remain our sure hope and defense. In the knowledge of your love, grant us courage. We place ourselves in your hands, confident that nothing can separate us from your love. We praise you for Jesus, the Living One, the First and the Last, who was dead, but now is forever alive. Help us, who have not seen, to believe; send us, as you have sent Jesus, to greet the world with your words of hope, life and peace and to share with all the Spirit's new life of forgiveness. We ask through the Lord Jesus, our Passover and our Peace, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Song – The Chorus of the Saved

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilpVNCSOH8k

1. See the radiance of God Risen Son
   All the angels rejoice at his name
   All creation sustained by the power of his word
   And his throne will endure for now and ever

2. Perfect Son sacrificed once for all
   Power of sin, fear of death now destroyed
   Raised to life, raised on high,
   Jesus name above all names
   His acclaim will resound beyond the ages

   Chorus
   Come join the song
   in earth and heaven voices raised
   In the chorus of the saved
   Come shout his name,
   come lift a sacrifice of praise
   With the chorus of the saved

3. Through his blood our forgiveness is sure
   By his Spirit within we'll endure
   Holding on to this hope
   as an anchor for the soul
   And our eyes fixed on Jesus
   the one who saves us

   Chorus

   Bridge
   Now let us draw near the holiest place
   Our hearts full of faith,
   our lips full of praise
   So let us draw near
   the holiest place
   Now pure through his blood,
   our sins washed away

   Chorus

Bible Reading – Romans 12:1-8 (NIV)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. 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 faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For 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, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Announcements

National Church Life Survey (NCLS) – Sunday 8th November. Every 5 years our church has the chance to participate in the NCLS. This survey can be done online or by paper and will take approx. 20 minutes to complete. To get the best results, it would be great if you could fill it on for us. We will provide some time after the service but the alternative would be to fill it in online in the week after. Please help us by be willing to do so.

Focus for the month: Service. "We have different gifts … if it is serving, let him serve" Does that mean only those who have the spiritual gift of service should serve and the rest of can just receive? No! The Bible tells us that we need to be like Jesus who came to serve us. And once we have received this service we don't continue to expect others to serve us, instead we go onto serve others. How can you serve your family and your Church family this week?

Vanuatu Mission. It looks like our Vanuatu mission will be a bit smaller this year. And with Cheryl going to Kenya this year at the same time it will be a bit different as well. If you are interested in going, or even if you are interested in going again, please speak to either Stephen or Cheryl.

JOY. This Friday 10-11am, Belmont 16 footers. A time of fellowship for all those who can make it.

Photo Sunday As you may have noticed, all the same pictures keep getting reused for all the slides and social media posts. Which is why next week, we'll be having "Photo Sunday". The idea will be that Jemma and a team will be going around during and after the service taking photos. We will make sure that there will be no photos of children's faces and if you do not wish for your photo or video to be taken, please let Audric or Jemma know.

Next preaching programme – Swansea/Charlestown AM.

	Romans 9-16 "In view of God's mercy."	
8/11	Romans 12:9-21	God's recipe for love
15/11	Romans 13	Overcoming evil with good
22/11	Romans 14:1-15:6	The weak and the strong

God's Word for God's world (GWGW). In three weeks' time, GWGW has its 500th show on Rhema, a great effort by the small team from within the Church that puts it together each week for 10 years. So we going to have a small celebration at Charlestown Church Sunday 22nd November between 3-4pm. We are hoping that some of our Church family will come along and mix with some of our listeners who have also been invited. More details soon but if you could help out with catering please see Stephen.

Resource. Don't forget that RESOURCE begins in just 10 days! Kirk Patston from SMBC (and a previous minister of this Church!) will be speaking on the book of Isaiah Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th November at Grace Evangelical. See Stephen for more details.

Save the Date: Christmas & Clay – Saturday 21 November, 2–4pm. Ladies, join us for afternoon tea, an evangelistic talk on the hope of Jesus' birth from guest speaker Jenny Martin, and clay ornament making. Who could you invite?

Meal Co-ordinator We are looking for someone who could co-ordinate (not always cook) meals for those whose circumstances have changed and need some practical short-term help. If you would like some more details, please see Elise.

Operation Christmas Child. Do you know that we were able to send 145 boxes this year – 79 were physically filled by us and another 66 will be filled on our behalf. What a wonderful effort. Thanks to all those involved (including Kathryn and Grace who helped coordinate it for us). Could any unused boxes be returned to Kathryn O'Callaghan or left at the church.

Song – Jerusalem

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g252SXZvdn4

1. See Him in Jerusalem
   Walking where the crowds are
   Once these streets had sung to Him
   Now they cry for murder
   Such a frail and lonely man
   Holding up the heavy cross
   See Him walking in Jerusalem
   On the road to save us

2. See him there upon the hill
   Hear the scorn and laughter
   Silent as a lamb he waits
   Praying to the father
   See the king who made the sun
   And the moon and shining stars
   Let the soldiers hold and nail him down
   So that he could save them

3. See him there upon the cross
   Now no longer breathing
   Dust that formed the watching crowds
   Takes the blood of Jesus
   Feel the earth is shaking now
   See the veil is split in two
   And he stood before the wrath of God
   Shielding sinners with his blood

4. See the empty tomb today
   Death could not contain him
   Once the servant of the world
   Now in victory reigning
   Lift your voices to the one
   Who is seated on the throne
   See him in the new Jerusalem
   Praise the one who saved us

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   Praise the one who saved us

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for Ethiopia. (Population 137million. Christians 81 million). Violence against Christians robs them of homes, livelihoods, and loved ones. Pray for believers who live in areas with active Islamic extremists who are often targeted. Pray for their protection. Ask God to keep those who leave Islam or the Ethiopian Orthodox Church safe and to unify His people in Ethiopia. Pray that Christians will not respond to evil with evil but instead with love.

Pray for A Roche. Thank God for the many people who have dedicated their time, money and prayers to establishing and growing A Rocha Australia over the last 10 years. Pray for God to continue to give wisdom and resources to the Aroche family to continue to care for his creation. Pray that we might remember that we have a stewardship responsibility to look after God's world on God's behalf.

Pray for Jannah a she works as our young adult's worker. Help her to continue to grow in her knowledge of the Lord and in her ministry skills. Strengthen her as she helps coordinate much of our youth and young

adult's ministries. Pray that these two years in the Ministry Training Scheme can give her a good idea of what paid ministry involves**.**

Pray for our political climate. That we may learn to debate ideas without attacking people. That we would lower to the temperature when we disagree with others. That we will respect our politicians and that they will be safe to do the job we have elected them to do.

Sermon: Offering your (whole) self (Stephen T)

We've had a few weddings in our Church recently but can you imagine one of our young men standing before his gorgeous bride and saying, "Today I am giving my whole life to you … except my Saturday afternoons, my phone, my friendships and my wallet!" That's just not good enough for a marriage, is it? And yet at times don't we treat God a bit like that?

We sing on a Sunday, "take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee". And then on a Monday we forget it all and live for ourselves. We stand up and say the apostle's creed and really believe it but then I still think I should be able to do whatever I want with my own body later on that day. We are willing to serve the Lord, even make real sacrifices of our time and money but I won't let him completely change what I think about myself & my identity.

Slide 2

And Paul's main point in Romans 12 is that if we are going to respond to everything that God has done for us, he doesn't want just a part of you, he wants all of you. And all of me.

Slide 3

1. **Beginning with our whole bodies (verse 1)**

"*Therefore"* because of everything I have said to you in this letter up until now, "*Therefore I urge you"*, I'm not going to do a Moses and command you to do something, instead I am going to appeal to your changed nature, I am going to encourage you, **no urge you**, to make this sort of response to God. "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters."* This is not something that only one of us needs to do & the rest can do whatever we want. It is what we are all called to do as a family. We are not lone rangers; we must do this together.

*"Therefore, I urge you, **brothers and sisters**, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

Paul's pattern in all his writings is to begin with doctrine before going onto ethics. So, he begins each of his letters explaining who God is and what God has done for us in Christ, before he gives us the SO WHAT! It is in light of **God's mercies**, the Greek is not singular but plural, it is because of how God has been so, so merciful to you and to me, that the only response, the only possible response, we can make it to offer our bodies as living sacrifices.

Which means the more that we get to grips with God's commitment to us and our world, the greater will be our commitment to him and his word. God grace and his mercy acts then as a magnet drawing us closer and closer to Him.

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So, let's just briefly recap what Romans 1 to 11 has already told us about God's mercies to us. Paul has shown that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And yet in Christ we can have our sins forgiven, we can receive peace again with God, we can have our relationship with him reconciled and restored, we can have new hope for life, complete assurance of our salvation, even the 24/7 presence of God's Holy Spirit. Wow that's amazing.

Which means the motivation for the Christian life is not fear, I really don't want to get in trouble again with God; or guilt, I will turn over a new leaf because I don't want to feel this way ever again or acceptance, if I live a good life, God might begin to like me again or even achievement, look what God and I could do

together. The motivation is responding to God's grace, being convicted of God's mercy, being completely won over by God's love.

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Which means from now on I am going to give God a really costly sacrifice. You know that's what they did in the OT. When they were thankful, or when they had received the first part of their crops, or when they were sorry for their sin, or when they were called together as a nation to worship God, they would never come before God with empty hands, instead they would show their commitment to the cause by offering God a sacrifice, what would soon become a dead sacrifice.

But Paul is saying that is not what the Christian is being urged to do. You and I are to offer a living sacrifice. Our bodies as a living sacrifice. Not just a one-off offer of martyrdom, dying for God in a moment of crisis. But a day-by-day sacrifice. Each day giving ourselves, our whole selves to Him in light of the fact that God's Son Jesus gave his entire self to us.

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One of my favourite illustrations is about the chickens and the pigs getting together one morning because they wanted to thank the farmer for all that he was doing for them. And the chicken suggested a great response was for them all to make him bacon and eggs for breakfast. That's fine for you said the pigs, you only have to have to give up an egg but for us that means going the whole hog.

Paul is saying we Christians need to go the whole hog. In light of God's mercies to us, Jesus says, take up your cross & follow me. Each and every day. For if you are willing to die for me, then you should also be willing to live for me. Each and every day. And to do that is more than just giving our heart to the Lord, Paul says the only thing that is holy and pleasing to God is if we give our bodies. Our whole selves to the Lord. Our hands and our eyes. Our mouth and our sexuality. Our work and our leisure. Our money, our energy, our homes.

We have all heard the slogan, "My body, my choice!" But if the Christian has given the Lord their body, then it is no longer my choice but his choice what he does with it. For the same body that according to Romans 3 which was completely depraved, because our tongue practiced deceit, our feet were swift to shed blood, there was no fear of God before our eyes: this same body, has been made holy because Jesus' death on the cross has swapped our sin for his righteousness. For Jesus has made our bodies holy. Which means this sacrifice of our body, our whole selves is an act of worship and acceptable and pleasing to God.

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In the words of English preacher Christopher Ash "*Paul makes worship mobile. No longer is there sacred space or sacred time, for wherever Christian people offer their bodies as sacrifices, there is holiness*." So, our spiritual act of worship then is not just at church as we sing God's praises but it is at home as we wash the dishes, it is on the phone as we pray for a friend in need, it is as work as use our gifts and talents in the service of others. But its not just about our bodies, Paul says it is also about

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2. **Our minds (verse 2)**

2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." I love JB Phillips paraphrase of this verse which he translates, *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould, but let God remould your minds from within"*

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You see we can have a choice between two main influences in our lives. The world or God's will. God's world or God's word. And it is a daily choice that each of us have to make about what we put into our mind. And if we don't make a choice, that choice is made for us. Because our world surrounds us at every point. None of us are monks, or nuns or hermits, locked away from all the values and trappings of our society.

Instead, we swim in it every day. And because of that it seeps into our hearts and minds and changes our actions.

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And this is becoming increasingly difficult with our use of our screens. Do you know the average Australian adult is on their phone or computer between 5.5 and 6 hours each day. While teenagers are on these devices even more. And don't think ministers are immune to this. I have to admit my screen time has increased markedly over the last few years.

But friends we need to realise that these things confirm, squeeze us into the world's mold. And 10 minutes reading God's word, a few snatched prayers throughout the day, an hour of Church every Sunday will not hold back the tide coming our way. We will need a renewing of our mind. A transforming of our mind. Actually, the word is a metamorphism of our mind. For just as a caterpillar is metamorphized, transformed into a butterfly, so God's Holy Spirit needs to do his work in each of our minds.

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Our work in giving our bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice does not start with our heart, or our emotions but our mind. For it is in the mind that we can test and approve what God's will is. As we read God's word, as we soak ourselves in the truths of who God is and what God has done for us in Christ, we get to think God's thoughts after him. We get to better understand what pleases him. And that will help us to give our whole selves to him.

And that is God's will for your life and mine. At times it is difficult to discern what God's will is for whom I should marry, what job I should do, how I should spend this day or use my money or time. But much of God's will is plain because God has communicated it to us in his word the Bible. And if we use the Bible as our GPS to follow, then what we do will be good and pleasing and reflect God's perfect will. For God's will is not really about pleasing ourselves or even pleasing others, it is about pleasing Him. Next Paul moves from

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3. **Our body and our minds to our identity (verse 3)**

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 faith God has distributed to each of you."

For two characteristics of a healthy mind & a transformed mind, are a healthy sense of our own identity, who we really are in Christ and a healthy way of dealing with our relationships, how we act towards others. Well, let's look at our identity first.

When it comes to our identity, we can make two mistakes and they are both equally bad and they both come from the root of pride. We can think of ourselves more highly than we ought. Or we can think of ourselves more lowly than we ought. We can have a high self-confidence or a low self-confidence and both means we are thinking about ourselves more than we should.

Now our current culture is obsessed with self-confidence, it seems that the solving of most of our ills could easily be turned around if we just believed in ourselves more. But most of the world's religions have identified that most of the world's problems have come instead when we insist on our own importance and when we do anything to get our own way.

So, the answer is to think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. Now that faith is not a different level of faith whereas some one of us have a strong faith and others have a weak faith. No Paul is telling us about the faith. The truth that we Christians are both saints and sinners at the same time.

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So as saints we need to see how God has made us and then redeemed us in his own image. But as sinners we need to remember that we will continue to do wrong things until we are completely changed in preparation for an eternity in God's presence in heaven.

For a sober judgement of being a sinner will keep us humble. And a sober judgement of being a saint will keep us hopeful. So, the challenge of being a living sacrifice is not just to offer your body and your mind to the Lord but your identity as well. You can't say to him, this is just how I was made, it's my personality, I won't be able to change that. For God has the power of metamorphosis, he can turn any old ugly caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly.

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And that's what he is doing with you and me. So, look back at what he has already done in your life. Look forward to what you will become in the end. And realise that we are on a journey from the past to the future. Where the Lord now determines your identity. Remember you have given yourself over to him. It's no longer your body, your choice, your mind, your old way of thing, your identity, your old nature. God is doing a wonderful work in you. By fourthly placing yourself in a body of believers. So next lets look at

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4. **Your membership (verses 4-5)**

4 "For 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, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Paul moves from me to we & he is saying you can't offer your whole self to God and then say I don't need any help from anyone else. For I can do this all by myself. No, no, no. If you have given yourself to Jesus as a living sacrifice you now belong to Him. And he has placed you as a vital part of the body of believers. That is why each member now belongs to all the others.

That is not saying, I now go to Church. Or I'm now part of Swansea/Charlestown Presbyterian Church. It is saying I belong to the body of Christ and my local fellowship is an expression that I truly belong to them and they truly belong to me. For we are family.

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Taylor Swift famously sung "You belong to me." But what Paul is saying here is that I belong to you. That's where the image of the body is such a powerful one and Paul teases it out in 1 Corinthians. He teaches us that there is one body but many parts. That no one part is more important than any other. Instead, we need each other. And so, when one part is honoured, we are all encouraged and when one part is hurt, we all suffer as well.

Which means we can't really say "I love Jesus but I don't really need the Church". For Romans 12 is saying to us that if we belong to Jesus, we also belong to his people.

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So, can I ask you do you attend Church or do you belong to the Church? How dependent are you on other Christians? How dependent are other Christians on you? One of the great joys of my life has been seeing a group of broken people leaning on each other and leaning on Jesus. Achieving far more together for the kingdom than what they could do on their own. People who are different in so many ways and yet don't push away others who are different to themselves but embrace them. Because they know that another person's point of difference will give them something they can't give themselves.

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And of course, that works not just for the local Church but for the Church as a whole. Our church will be able to minister to a certain type of person but the Pentecostal Church down the road and the Baptist up the next road will have a slightly different emphasis and will reach people we can't reach. But we still belong to each other. So, we work together where we can and we pray and support each other all the other times.

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5. **Lastly Paul talks about our gifts** (verses 6-8)

6 "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

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Do you notice that your gifts were given to you **according to God's grace**. You don't own them. They are more than just your natural abilities; they have come from God's hand. And gifts are always for giving. They are not trophies to be put on the shelf but tools to be used in helping others. But in the same way that there are different members of the body of Christ, so God also gives those members different gifts. No one has all the gifts and no one has no gifts. It is another way of God drawing us together as Christians.

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So, Paul goes on to talk about 7 specific gifts. Now before we go into each gift, I want to point out that this gift list is not exhaustive. In two other places in the New Testament in Ephesians 4 and in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul lists various gifts. But no gift list is the same. And there are very few gifts that are common to all three lists. So, Paul is only giving us here a sample of gifts. And in this case, there seems to be three categories of gifts – speaking gifts leading gifts and serving gifts.

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Let's quickly work through each, starting with prophecy, if that is your gift, then prophesy in accordance with your faith. Now this is probably the most controversial. For some say that because we have the Bible, we don't really need to have prophets any more. But I suppose it depends on how you define prophesy. The common idea is that prophesy is about telling the future, foretelling; but the OT prophets also did a lot of forth -telling. "Thus sayth the Lord."

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It seems to me that the gift of **prophecy** is the Spirit-enabled ability to speak a message that brings God's truth to bear on the lives of his people, particularly for their "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3). In 1 Corinthians 14:29, Paul says, **"***Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said***,"** which indicates that prophetic speech in the gathered church was not simply accepted without discernment; it was to be tested and evaluated. This is significant because prophecy must never compete with or replace God's authoritative revelation in Scripture.

Revelation 19:10 gives us the ultimate focus: **"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."** True prophecy therefore **exists to speak God's truth, build up God's people, and point people to Jesus.** So, if you have the gift of doing just that, then use it!

But not many of us will be prophets, but probably all of us can serve others in some way, we can find a need and then help to meet that need. Churches can survive without a lot of upfront people but they can't survive if there aren't lots of people cooking, cleaning, praying, driving, babysitting, and caring.

Then there is the gift of teaching. All of us have so much to learn, even the godliest, oldest Christian should still be learning and to help us learn we need people who will teach us. As well as people who encourage us. The Christian life has so many ups and downs. Which means we need more than professional counsellors we need advisors, supporters, friends, people who will put their arm around us and help us to keep going no matter what.

Then there is the gift of giving, those who have the ability to contribute and fill the needs of others. Not just in money but in time and effort and if that is you do it generously, liberally, without wanting anything in return. Then we all need leaders who are worth following and lastly, we need people with the gift of mercy

who are specifically moved to get alongside the poor, the sick, the weak, the prisoner, the addict, the elderly and so on.

Now have you worked out which gift God has given you? Then use it. And do it now. Don't hang back because someone else will do it better than yourself, no use your gift cheerfully, be an encouragement to the one next to you, be generous in how you serve, teach clearly, testify to Jesus in all your words and actions.

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But have you noticed we have ended almost where we have started? In verse 1, Paul says, "in view of God's mercy" and here we end with the gift of mercy. Our passage is a mercy sandwich where what God has done for us bleeds into what we do for others and affects our whole lives, our bodies, our minds, our identity, our membership and our gifts.

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Friends, this morning, instead of coming to the temple with an animal in your hands to offer to God as a sacrifice, what we need to do today is to **offer ourselves as living sacrifices**. We need to bring our **bodies** — the things we do, the places we go, the way we move. We need to bring our **minds** — our thoughts & desires and allow God's Word to reshape the way we think. We need to bring our **identity** and our membership – we belong to Christ and to his people. And lastly, we bring our gifts with us today to use all that we have been given for the glory of God and for the good of his people.

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And why would we do this? Not to make God love us. Not to earn his favour. **We do it because of God's mercy.** For after eleven chapters of telling us what God has done for us in Christ, Paul says: *"In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice."* You see the gospel doesn't call us to give God something. It calls us to give God everything, our whole selves.

Song – When I survey https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDkuxEIcpdI

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
   On which the Prince of glory died,
   My richest gain I count but loss,
   And pour contempt on all my pride.

2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
   Save in the death of Christ my God!
   All the vain things that charm me most,
   I sacrifice them to His blood.

3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,
   Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
   Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
   Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
   That were a present far too small;
   Love so amazing, so divine,
   Demands my soul, my life, my all

Closing. *"Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer yours bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)*