

Sermon Notes for May 19th. "A Humble Intro"

Some scholars think that because Paul was old when he wrote Romans, and because of its length and depth, it is sort of his theological last will and testament. But the authors of the book, *The Authentic Letters of Paul*, have this to say: "Romans was not written by Paul as his final word. For Paul all roads did *not* lead to Rome. Rome is not his destination; it is just a stopover for further work (in Spain.) Now the task is to extend the mission to the western end of the known world. Paul invites the Roman communities to explore (this new mission.)"

As we are starting at the beginning of this "letter", we have Paul introducing himself as the author, we have a salutation, we have an introductory blessing and the beginning of the purpose. This kind of formal structure was in use at the time. It is meant to be, "A Humble Intro."

Romans 1:1-17 (Voice)

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus the Anointed called by God to be His emissary [or apostle] and appointed to tell the good news **2** of the things promised long ago by God, spoken by prophets, and recorded in the Holy Scriptures. **3** All of this good news is about His Son: who was (from a human perspective) born of David's royal line **4** *and ultimately* designated to be the *true* Son of God with power upon His resurrection from the dead by the Spirit of holiness. I am speaking of Jesus, the Anointed One, our Lord.

(Voice) The prophets express God's mind and will. Sometimes their messages are to the people and powers of their day; at other times, they see and speak about the future. Their words are the Lord's! which creates reality and shapes the future.

Paul describes the gospel on two levels: On a human level, the good news is about God's Son, David's descendant, entering the world to begin the task of restoring it from the damage sin and death have left behind. But the resurrection of Jesus from the dead takes Jesus' sonship to a new level. Now He is the Son-of-God-in-Power, the One called Lord and Master.

5 *And here's what He's done:* He has graced us and sanctioned us as His emissaries[b] whose mission is to spread the *one true and obedient* faith to all people in the name of Jesus. **6** This includes you: you have been called by Jesus, God's Anointed.

7 To all those who are God's beloved saints in Rome:
May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, surround you.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus the Anointed for all of you because *we are joined by faith as family, and* your faith is spreading across the world.

9-10 For *I call* God as my witness—whom I worship in my spirit and serve in making known the gospel—He alone knows how often I mention you in my prayers. I find myself constantly praying for you and hoping it's in God's will for me to be with

you soon. **11** I desperately want to see you so that I can share some gift of the Spirit to strengthen you. **12** Plus I know that when we come together *something beautiful will happen* as we are encouraged by each other's faith.

13 If, my brothers and sisters, you did not already know, my plans were set to meet you *in Rome*, but time and circumstances have forced every trip to be canceled until now. I have deeply desired to see some good fruit among you just as I have seen with so many non-Jewish believers. **14** *You see*, I am in *tremendous* debt to those of various nationalities, from non-Jews to barbarians, from the wisest of the wise to the idle wanderer. **15** So you can imagine how eager I am to join you and to teach the good news in *the mighty and diverse city of Rome*.

16 For I am not *the least bit* embarrassed about the gospel. *I won't shy away from it*, because it is God's power to save every person who believes: first the Jew, and then the non-Jew. **17** You see, in the good news, God's restorative justice is revealed. *And as we will see*, it begins with and ends in faith. As the Scripture declares, "By faith the just will obtain life." [Habakkuk 2:4]

THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD!

Thanks be to God! Amen

According to Paul, in and by itself, the gospel is power—God’s power. The simple message of Jesus brings healing and rescue to all people. It starts with God’s people, the Jews, but does not end until *all people* hear and respond to its call.

The gospel reveals how faithful God has been. It begins with God’s faithfulness to His creation and His covenant people. Then God acts, finally and decisively, in the cross of Jesus. For Paul the cross, more than any other event, displays Jesus’ faithfulness to God the Father. As the Gospels tell us, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus entrusts Himself completely to God’s will. As a result, this good news brings faith and hope to those who hear and respond to its elegant message. Because God is faithful, He acts in a most extraordinary way. Somehow in the scandal (with attending shame) of the cross, He offers His own Son in order to redeem the fallen world.

(Brene' Brown paraphrased and condensed) Shame, which is often referred to as “the master emotion” by researchers, is the *never good enough* emotion. It can stalk us over time or wash over us in a second—either way, its power makes us believe we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love, belonging, and connection. Shame drives two tapes: Never good enough. Who do you think you are?

If you put shame in a petri dish and cover it with judgment, silence, and secrecy, you’ve created the perfect environment for shame to grow until it makes its way into every corner and crevice of your life.

If, on the other hand, you put shame in a petri dish and douse it with empathy, shame loses its power and begins to wither.

To be able to stand in discomfort with people who are processing shame, or hurt, or disappointment, or hardship, and to be able to say to them “I see you, and I can hold space for this” is the epitome of courage.

So what does courageous empathy look like? There are five empathy skills:

1. Recognizing and honoring other perspectives.
2. Being non-judgmental.
3. To understand the other's emotions -----
4. Combined with communicating you understand their emotions; and
5. Paying attention so that one doesn't amplify or denigrate THEIR emotions.

Look for the five as Jesus models this:

John 8:1-11 (Voice)

8 Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **2** He awoke early in the morning to return to the temple. *When He arrived*, the people surrounded Him, so He sat down and began to teach them. **3** *While He was teaching*, the scribes and Pharisees

brought in a woman who was caught in the act of adultery; and they stood her before Jesus.

Pharisees: **4** Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. **5** Moses says in the law that we are to kill such women by stoning. What do You say about it?

6 This was all set up as a test for Jesus; His answers would give them grounds to accuse Him *of crimes against Moses' law*. Jesus bent over and wrote something in the dirt with His finger. **7** They persisted in badgering Jesus, so He stood up straight.

Jesus: Let the first stone be thrown by the one among you who has not sinned.

8 Once again Jesus bent down to the ground and resumed writing with His finger.

9 The Pharisees who heard Him *stood still for a few moments and then* began to leave slowly, one by one, beginning with the older men. Eventually only Jesus and the woman remained, **10** and Jesus looked up.

Jesus: *Dear woman, where is everyone? Are we alone?* Did no one step forward to condemn you?

Woman Caught in Adultery: **11** Lord, no one *has condemned me*.

Jesus: Well, I do not condemn you either; *all I ask is that you go* and from now on avoid the sins that plague you.

Jesus doesn't forgive her, nor have the Pharisees. Jesus has splashed her shame with empathy...and shhh, Jesus has also splashed empathy over the shame of the Pharisees. With the bonds of shame broken, all are now free to accept love, belonging and connection.

It's a humble intro....

AND THAT'S THE MESSAGE!