

On Mission Together
Romans 12.3-21
Series: Mobilizing the Mission
January 10, 2021
The Village Church at Shell Point

- I. Introduction
 - A. The future of the free world was at stake
 - 1. Germany had occupied most of western Europe
 - a. The Third Reich had established a dominant presence on the continent
 - b. And seemed poised to solidify and extend its National Socialist dictatorship all the way into Russia
 - 2. Continual pressure on Britain through air and through submarine warfare was taking an enormous toll on Allied capacities and will
 - a. It was clear that only an Allied invasion of monumental proportions could save freedom for the western world
 - B. And so a mission was planned
 - 1. A mission unlike anything ever devised in military history
 - a. A mission to land more than half a million Allied troops in France
 - b. And then to pursue strategic targets, with the ultimate goal of penetrating Germany itself, freeing Europe from the devastating impact of Hitler's sinister ideology
 - C. The mission was called Operation Overlord
 - 1. The first phase was the amphibious assault on the French coastline and was termed Operation Neptune
 - D. The mission involved a great deal of deception
 - 1. Operation Bodyguard was undertaken to convince the Germans that the invasion was likely to take place north of Normandy at Pas de Calais
 - 2. The Allies even created a fake army in England to convince the Germans that preparations were set further to the north
 - 3. The deception had at least some intended effect against the Germans – forcing the Germans to dilute their defenses throughout a much longer coastline
 - E. On July 6, 1944 the invasion was launched – D-Day it was called
 - 1. Almost nothing, however, went as planned
 - a. Weather caused the postponement of the invasion by one day; delaying further would cause even more problems
 - b. So the invasion was launched – and the weather was horrible
 - c. Ships were blown off course
 - d. Soldiers were forced out of their landing craft prematurely
 - 2. The more difficult landing set soldiers up for a veritable massacre on the beaches of Normandy – especially on Omaha Beach
 - 3. The aerial bombardment meant to soften German emplacements were largely ineffective due to weather

- a. Most failed to hit their objectives
 - 4. The airborne infiltration of paratroopers was fraught with difficulty
 - a. Immediately encountering bad weather and armed counterattack, many were struck down before ever hitting the ground
 - b. Most were disoriented from their original targets, struggling to meet their units intact
 - c. And did not have the intended effect of diverting German resources from the coastal defenses
 - F. All in all, more than 160,000 Allied troops crossed the English channel on D-Day
 - 1. Three quarters of a million had disembarked by the end of the month
 - 2. But the Allies suffered 10,000 casualties
 - 3. Landing craft for tanks were destroyed; nearly none of the tanks which were to provide support and cover in advance for the troops ever made it; many sank in the channel
 - 4. The Allies lost more than 200 ships and landing craft
 - 5. None of the objectives of D-Day were achieved
 - 6. Carentan, St. Lo, Caen, and Bayeux were to be taken on the first day – they remained under German control
 - 7. All five Normandy beaches were to be joined in a united beachhead giving the Allies a firm foothold on the continent
 - a. Only two of the five were joined
 - b. The others were barely occupied and under assault
 - G. And yet – the invasion was a great success!
 - 1. How could anyone deem D-Day a great success?
 - a. Only when we realize that that precarious foothold would launch an invasion which would wrest control of western Europe out of Nazi domination
 - b. And eventually securing anything like the freedom we now enjoy in the US and in Europe
 - H. The mission was costly
 - 1. In terms of equipment
 - a. In terms of material resources
 - b. In terms of life
 - 2. But the mission would go on
 - a. We would not be deterred
 - b. We would not be distracted
 - 3. And eventually Allied soldiers would enter the belly of the beast
 - a. And even our current way of life, distressed as it is, but preferable to the alternative, would be possible
 - b. All because we persevered in the mission
- II. **The Greater Mission**
- A. The Church of Jesus Christ is on a mission
 - 1. An even more important, more critical mission
 - a. Not to preserve a superior form of human government and way of life

2. But a mission to free a humanity bound in slavery to sin and Satan, the great enemy of our souls
 - a. A mission to penetrate with the gospel through enemy-occupied territory
 - b. A mission that will not be deterred, in which we will persevere
 - c. A mission for which we have this promise: “I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!”
 3. A promise that comes from none other than the mouth of Jesus Christ, King of kings
- B. It’s easy to be discouraged while we are on mission
1. The mission is costly
 - a. Certainly costly in terms of treasure, of monetary resources
 - b. It costs a great deal to take the gospel through enemy territory, territory where the messengers of the gospel are not welcome
 2. It’s also costly in terms of lives
 - a. Many missionaries are martyred along the way
 - b. In the early days of the C&MA movement, they used to say we had more dead missionaries on the field than live ones
 3. But all of the missionaries went, knowing that He who is in them is greater than he who is in the world
 - a. That they are citizens of a “better country, a heavenly one”
 - b. That Jesus Christ is worth the sacrifice
- C. Lately, it’s been easy to be discouraged in our mission
1. The past 10 months have been the pits
 - a. There has been loss of life
 - b. Contention in the nation
 - c. Division in the church
- D. But like the Allies on D-Day – we dare not be distracted from the mission
1. We shall not turn away from our objectives
 - a. We will continue to pursue the penetration of the gospel into the throes of enemy territory whatever it takes
 - b. Whatever the difficulties
 2. Whether those difficulties are on the other side of the globe
 - a. Or whether they right in our own back yard
- E. Our Greater Mission is determined by Jesus – our commanding officer
1. It’s called **the Great Commission**
 - a. **Matthew 28:18–20** (NASB95) — 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
 - b. **Acts 1:8** (NASB95) — 8 “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both

in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

2. We at TVC are invested in the Great Commission
 - a. We have made our commitments
 - b. We have determined that we will not give up our pursuit of the Greater Mission until it is complete, until Jesus returns, or until He takes us home
 - F. That Great Commission has a special application here in TVC, here in this community
 1. So that in participating in The Great Commission we are called to express our commitments in a particular way
 - a. A way reflected in our own mission statement
 2. A statement generated several years ago through prayerful engagement, a thorough knowledge of our community, an understanding of our specific role and opportunity, and strategic planning
 - G. **We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ**
 1. We adopted that mission statement a few years ago
 - a. I have been especially appreciative of the way that our community has embraced it
 - b. It is rare that a committee meeting or a ministry or a board meeting doesn't, in one way or another, explicitly mention it
 2. It is the driving force through which we evaluate how we use our monetary and personal resources in pursuing the overall mission of the Great Commission
 - H. But from time to time, it's important to remind ourselves of that mission
 1. We always have new people
 - a. We always have new opportunities
 2. And even those of us who have been here a while can drift away from our commitments and get distracted from the goal
 - I. So in these next three Sundays we will remind ourselves of who we are at TVC
 1. What drives our aspirations
 - a. What gets us up in the morning
 - b. What excites our energies
 - J. We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ
 1. Let's explore the essence of that mission together in these weeks
 - a. So that our beachhead expands, the kingdom gets established
 - b. And the final advance of gospel will be fulfilled
- III. **The Mission of The Village Church**
- A. **We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ**
 - B. The core of the mission are the three central elements
 1. **Forgiveness, purpose and hope**
 - a. Each one of them has a particular application in our congregation and community
 2. **Forgiveness** – we are called to be a forgiven and a forgiving people

- a. In order for us to be effective participants in the Great Commission, we need to have a right relationship to God through the finished work of Jesus Christ
 - b. Only through trusting Christ can we be saved, and be a forgiven people
 - c. But that means we also need to be a forgiving people
 - d. Only a forgiven people can be truly forgiving to others
 - e. So we seek to be a community that can find healing in broken relationships – whether friends, family, whoever
3. **Purpose** – we are here for a purpose
- a. And in a community like ours, a retirement community – we often have to reimagine our purpose
 - b. What got us out of bed 20 years ago is in our rear view mirror
 - c. So why are we here?
 - d. What does God have for us to do?
 - e. What kind of kingdom servants are we to be?
 - f. So discovering our purpose is a central feature of our mission
4. **Hope** – finally, we need to be a people of hope
- a. We are fast approaching eternity
 - b. Do we have the kind of anticipation of life in the immediate presence of God that will carry us into eternity with joy and expectation?
- C. The end of our mission statement is simple
- 1. But the most important
 - a. **“In Jesus Christ”**
 - 2. Forgiveness, purpose and hope cannot be fulfilled apart from our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ
 - a. He is the central and supreme Being in which find forgiveness, purpose and hope
 - b. So we will explore the supremacy of Christ in our mission
- D. But the first part of the mission is what we will consider this morning
- 1. **“We are building a community”**
 - a. We cannot find forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ by ourselves
 - b. We are on mission together
 - c. We are on mission as a community
 - 2. And this morning we’ll take a glimpse at what that looks like
- IV. **What does a Christian community look like?**
- A. Many places in the scriptures to which we could turn
 - 1. **Romans 12:3-21** is a wonderful description of what a community looks like when it’s on mission together
- V. **Understanding of Ourselves**
- A. **Romans 12:3** (NASB95) — 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

1. It seems ironic that as we begin to explore what building a community looks like, and what it means to be on mission together, we would begin by seeking to understand ourselves
 - a. But that is, in fact, where Paul begins in this passage
 2. And it also seems ironic that as we begin to understand ourselves, we start with our minds
 - a. With how we think about ourselves
 3. But as we will see in a moment, how we think about ourselves is the key to responding to the rest of Paul's admonitions in this passage
- B. This text is actually a play on words in the Greek
1. You can start to get a sense of it even in English
 - a. See if you can figure it out
 2. **Romans 12:3** (NASB95) — 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to **think** more highly of himself than he ought to **think**; but to **think** so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.
 - a. What's the key word in this passage?
 - b. **"Think"**
 3. But it's even more pronounced than that in the Greek
 - a. The **Greek** root for "think" is **phroneo**
 - b. That's the word that is translated in this verse into the English word "think"
 - c. But it actually appears, not just three times, but four
 4. Romans 12:3 (NASB95) — 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to phroneo more highly of himself than he ought to phroneo; but to phroneo so as to have sound phroneo...
 - a. Even the term "sound judgment" uses the root phroneo, the Greek word for "think"
- C. When it says not to think "more highly of himself" the Greek word is **"hyperphroneo"** – or **hyperphroneo**
1. Hyper – as in hyperactive
 - a. Hyper is derived from Gk; Latin equivalent is "super"
 2. So in other words, don't hyperthink of yourself, don't superthink of yourself
 - a. Don't have an excessively high opinion of yourself
- D. Then, when it says "so as to have **sound judgment**" the word is **"sophroneo"**
1. Sophroneo – sober judgment; accurate judgment
 - a. Not a self-demeaning, "oh, I'm a nobody" kind of judgment, kind of thinking
 - b. But an accurate, self-aware kind of thinking
 - c. An accurate self-appraisal of your own strengths and weaknesses, inclinations and abilities
- E. Romans 12:3 (NASB95) — 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think

so as to have sober and accurate thinking, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

- F. There is a balance here
 - 1. **Fundamental humility**
 - a. Not to have an exalted opinion of oneself
 - b. You can't function in community when you hyperthink of yourself
 - c. You can't be on mission together when you think of yourself more highly than you ought to think
 - 2. Recognition of the **capacity to contribute**
 - a. To know your strengths, to be aware of the fact that you are gifted by God to contribute to the mission
 - b. That you have something to offer
- G. You may need some help in making that kind of appraisal
 - 1. That's where godly counsel comes into play
 - a. That's how iron sharpens iron
 - b. And we learn from one another what our limits and capacities are
- H. So, to be on mission together
 - 1. Think with humility
 - 2. Think with accuracy
 - a. And so learn about yourself and how you can contribute to the mission

VI. **Understanding of the Body**

- A. **Romans 12:4–8** (NASB95) — 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
- B. Once we have a humble and accurate understanding of ourselves we can begin to see how we fit into the body of Christ
 - 1. Body – one of the chief metaphors for the church
 - a. Conveys an organic unity of function and purpose
 - b. In which all the members have their own unique gifts and abilities
 - c. But they all work together to fulfill the function as one
 - 2. In a body, you can't have hands and arms and legs and kidneys and livers and lungs and bones all going in different directions, doing their own things
 - a. A healthy body is coordinated
 - b. A healthy body has members that work together
- C. So having a humble and accurate understanding of what our gifts and abilities are, we can value one another
 - 1. And see in others the unique gifts they bring to the body
 - a. And what we all can contribute to the mission
- D. We could go into great detail about all the gifts listed here

1. Not the time to do that
 - a. There are several lists of gifts in the NT
 - b. They are all different
 - c. Leading me to believe that the lists are exemplary – just examples of the full range of gifts God has given to local congregations
 2. The bottom line is that we all have something to contribute; we all have gifts that will help advance the kingdom, fulfill the mission
- E. And contrary to what many people teach about these spiritual gifts, I believe they are fluid, and are often expressed uniquely in different congregations and in different stages of life
1. Breaking News: You may not be able to do the things you used to do
 - a. Is that shocking?
 2. But that doesn't mean that God doesn't have something unique for you to do in this congregation at this time in your life
 - a. Some of you are actually discovering gifts that you never knew you had
 3. We had a meeting this past week with people interested in Crossroads Prison Ministry
 - a. Some of you are finding a spiritual gift that you have never before used!
 - b. But at this stage of life you've discovered a way to participate in the Great Commission and extend His kingdom
 - c. Even among the outcast, the disenfranchised
- F. So understand the body of Christ
1. Seek to find your gifts
 - a. And use them as God intended
 2. In community, on mission together

VII. **Understanding Love**

- A. Finally, Paul goes into great detail about how we need to love one another as we work on mission together
- B. This is one of those passages that I don't like
 1. It's a lot like 1 Corinthians 13
 - a. Sounds beautiful at a wedding
 - b. But when you actually unpack it, it's the most humbling passage in the NT
 - c. It always takes me apart
 2. That's what this passage is like
- C. Paul generates a list of what love looks like in a community which is on mission together
 1. Don't have time to unpack it
 - a. I'm just going to read it with little comment
 - b. Let it sink in, just the way it might have when this letter was read in the church in Rome in the 1st Century
 2. And see how it strikes you
- D. **Romans 12:9** (NASB95) — 9 Let love be without hypocrisy.

1. Can't say one thing and do another
 - a. Our words and our actions need to align
 - b. I wish mine did; I can't say they always do
- E. Romans 12:9 (NASB95) — 9 ... Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.
 1. Love does make a distinction between good and evil
 - a. Love is not just toleration of anything and everything
 - b. We cannot truly love apart from God's moral imperatives
- F. Romans 12:10 (NASB95) — 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
 1. Even when we have difficulty with one another, we don't give up on each other
 - a. Our devotion and care for one another includes valuing one another above ourselves
- G. Romans 12:11 (NASB95) — 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
 1. We need to bring an energy, a diligence, a passion in our love for one another as we are on mission together
- H. Romans 12:12 (NASB95) — 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,
 1. Our inward life, our life in the Spirit, needs to nurture our souls and fuel our passion for the mission
- I. Romans 12:13 (NASB95) — 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.
 1. Recognize one another, and how we can support, encourage, and supply one another as we engage in mission together
- J. Romans 12:14 (NASB95) — 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
 1. We even need to extend love to those who are opposed to us, even those who are opposed to the kingdom
- K. Romans 12:15 (NASB95) — 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
 1. We need to be in touch with our brothers and sister, their joys and their trials
 - a. And share in each of them
- L. Romans 12:16 (NASB95) — 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.
 1. There it is again – mind, phroneo
 - a. Humility of mind
- M. Romans 12:17–20 (NASB95) — 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. 20 “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM,

AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.”

1. Love extends even to our enemies
 - a. We are called to be blessings to those who are most opposed to us
 2. Even that's part of what a loving community looks like
 - a. That's what a community on mission looks like
- N. **Romans 12:21** (NASB95) — 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
1. A loving community, a community on mission for the gospel, will never allow itself to have its agenda coopted or kidnaped by evil
 - a. But will always seek to be redemptive in our engagement with the surrounding culture
- O. That's what a loving community looks like
- VIII. Conclusion
- A. Understand ourselves
 1. Humble, accurate appraisal of our gifts and limitations
 - B. Understand the body
 1. Learn how we fit in the body with our brothers and sisters
 - C. Understand love
 1. Learn how love is manifested within the body and in our engagement with the culture around us
 - D. These are elements which enable us to build a community
 1. A community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ