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Godly Diversity

Romans 12.4-8

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

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- I. Introduction
 - A. I wonder – what is your favorite movie genre
 - 1. There’s a lot to choose from, of course
 - B. Maybe you like comedies
 - 1. Sheer entertainment
 - a. In our world of chaos, confusion and conflict, it’s nice to escape into the world of hilarity
 - C. Or perhaps it’s fantasy
 - 1. Fans of Tolkien have become devotees of the Lord of the Rings
 - a. Debating how much liberty Peter Jackson took with his trilogy in departing from, or omitting important aspects of Tolkien’s masterpiece
 - D. Or maybe you still love the great westerns
 - 1. John Wayne is still your hero, to this day!
 - E. Or how about science fiction?
 - 1. How many Star Wars movies are in the franchise?
 - F. Then of course there are the romantic comedies
 - 1. I think someone in our household gravitates toward romantic comedies
 - a. And it’s not me!
 - G. Then there are musicals
 - 1. My dear wife, and my daughter who came down for Mother’s Day, have both watched Sound of Music dozens of times
 - 2. They know the dialogue by heart!
 - H. Now then, you may be of the view that no movies are good movies
 - 1. And it’s certainly possible to make a case for that view
 - I. But I’ve lately been wondering what movie genre is favored by the apostle Paul
 - 1. Ok, I know, they didn’t have movies back then
 - a. But they did have stage dramas which dated back to the Greeks
 - b. And we don’t know whether Paul took in a play now and then
 - c. But we do know that he sometimes used images and metaphors from the world of drama
 - J. But I’ve begun to think that if Paul were here today
 - 1. And if he were to actually take a liking to any particular kind of cinematic experience
 - 2. I think that his favorite genre might be horror!

- K. Really – horror!
1. Just think of this little excerpt from his letter to the Corinthians
 - a. (The Corinthians – a bit of a horror show in itself – but that’s for another day!)
 2. **1 Corinthians 12:17** (ESV) —
 - a. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing?
 - b. If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?
 3. Look where his imagination has taken him!
 - a. Think of a human body that is only one huge eye!
 - b. That’s a grotesque visual image, isn’t it?
 - c. Or think of the human body as one big ear!
 - d. If you allow your imagination to go there for any length of time, it gives you the willies!
 4. Kind of reminds me of some of those old foreign horror films, like “The Eye that Ate Manhattan” or something like that
- L. 1 Corinthians 12 is a parallel passage to the passage we’ve exploring lately in Romans
1. It’s a passage about spiritual gifts
 - a. True enough – but it’s really about the body of Christ
 2. And when the church doesn’t function like the body is designed to function, it can turn out quite grotesque
 - a. Ugly, in fact
 - b. Dysfunctional, to be sure
 3. Like imagining a human body as just one body part, like an eye
 - a. With no other balancing organs to make a functional human
 4. It’s a horror movie!
 - a. And at least for a moment, the image has captured Paul’s imagination

II. **Thinking About the Church**

- A. We’re back this morning in our study of Romans: The Pure Gospel
1. We’ve been at it for quite some time
 - a. Having seen the critical elements of the gospel expounded for the first 11 chapters
 2. The sinfulness of humankind; our desperate need for righteousness
 - a. God’s remedy of providing His righteousness through His Son Jesus
 - b. Whom He sent to our planet, taking upon Himself our human nature
 - c. So that, by faith in Him, God would give us His righteousness by grace
 3. And having imputed to us – transferred to our account – God, through the Spirit of Christ goes about transforming us into His image
 - a. Paul having instructed us in how that sanctification process works

4. Then Paul has gone about addressing the issue of why the Jewish people have largely rejected the Messiah Jesus
 - a. And how God's eternal plan for redeeming a lost humanity has Paul's kinsmen, his beloved Jewish countrymen, figuring prominently in the salvation story
 - b. Both now, and especially in the last days
- B. Then once we get to Chapter 12 we have the grand **"Therefore"**
 1. You remember the "therefore", don't you?
 - a. Whenever you see the "therefore" you're to ask, "What's the 'therefore' there for?"
 2. So Paul wants us to understand what this gospel means for us
 - a. How it should transform our lives
 - b. Our values
 - c. Our behavior
 - d. Our relationships
 3. And he starts with our bodies
 - a. Presenting our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God – our spiritual worship (or our logical service)
 4. And then he zeroes in on our minds
 - a. We're to be conformed by the renewal of our minds
 - b. And we spent a good bit of time on what that looks like
- C. Then in v. 3 Paul takes the mind stuff even farther
 1. He talks about how we are to think about ourselves
 2. Remember, the word for think – **phroneo (Gk)** – occurs four times in one form or another
 - a. We're not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think
 - b. But when we think, we're to think soberly, accurately
 - c. According to the measure of faith that God has assigned
- D. But, when you get right down to it, a lot of this thinking is thinking about the Church
 1. About what constitutes the Church
 - a. What it looks like
 - b. How it can be described and understood
 - c. And how it's supposed to function
- E. Let's look at our text this morning
 1. Beginning with v. 3 to put it in context, then moving into vv. 4-8 for the message
- F. **Romans 12:3-8** (ESV) —
 1. 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
 2. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,
 3. 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

4. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;
 5. 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;
 6. 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.
- G. So, Paul follows his admonition about how we think about ourselves with the next logical thought, for he says...
1. “*For* as in one body we have many members...”
 2. Thinking accurately and soberly about ourselves compels us to think a certain way about each other also
 - a. And that carries us into our text beginning with v. 4

III. **The Body**

- A. The first thing we notice is that the Church is not called the Church in this passage
 1. In fact, Paul doesn’t use the word for **Church (ekklesia – Gk)** until Chapter 16 when starts talking about specific churches and the people in them
 2. And the Church is most often spoken of as a metaphor
- B. Now, even though we often use the word “church” to refer to a building...
 1. Like when we’re walking on the island and a neighbor says, “Where are you heading?” and you say, “Oh, we’re going to The Village Church” – we are telling them we are heading to a building
 2. But we all know this building is really not the Church in the biblical sense
- C. Pastor Don frequently reminds us of this fact when he greets us on Sunday morning by saying “Good morning, Church”
 1. He’s not saying hello to this structure
 - a. He’s greeting you and me!
 - b. For the Church is it’s people
- D. That’s one of the things that distinguish New Testament worship from Old Testament worship
 1. In the Old Testament they went to the sanctuary to worship
 - a. In the New Testament we bring the sanctuary with us
 - b. For individually, we are temples of the Holy Spirit
 - c. We are all sanctuaries!
- E. One of the chief metaphors the NT uses to describe the Church is the body
 1. The body is an apt descriptor
 - a. It conjures up some important ideas
 2. The body is a living organism
 - a. It grows and matures like human bodies do
 - b. It changes
 - c. It has potentialities and possibilities
 3. It also speaks of activity, of movement
 - a. The human body is designed for movement
 - b. Purposeful movement – for work; meaningful work
 4. The idea of the body as the Church distinguishes it from a mere institution

- a. Even though institutions are valuable in how they enable the body to organize itself
 - b. The body is not an institution
 - 5. The body is also inhabited by a Spirit
 - a. That's what sets apart the Church from all other social groups
 - b. We are united together, as Paul has so clearly taught earlier in Romans, by the Spirit of God
 - c. We are all spiritually united to Jesus Christ by faith in Him
 - d. And if we are united to Christ, we are bound to each other as well
 - 6. John Stott: "The church is a people, a community of people, who owe their existence, their solidarity and their corporate distinctness from other communities to one thing only—the call of God."
- F. And the way Paul describes the Church here, he's not talking about individual local churches
 - 1. He's talking about all of us who are united to Christ by faith
 - a. What I often call the "Big C Church"
 - 2. When we say the Apostles' Creed, we say "I believe in the holy catholic church"
 - a. The word "catholic" doesn't mean the Roman Catholic Church
 - b. It means "universal" – all who trust Christ by faith are members of the one true Church
 - 3. Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV) —
 - a. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—
 - b. 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
 - c. 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
 - 4. So, everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their only means of salvation, belongs to this Church
 - a. This One Church
 - b. Bound together by the One Spirit
 - c. Called to the one hope
 - d. In the One Lord
 - e. By one faith and one baptism
 - f. All from the one God and Father of all
- G. Such is the body of Christ
 - 1. "For as in one body..."

IV. The Members

- A. But in that one body, we are made up of many members
- B. Romans 12:4–5 (ESV) —
 - 1. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,
 - 2. 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

- C. This is really an astonishingly wonderful statement
 - 1. It speaks of godly diversity within the unity that we've already seen
 - 2. We have one body
 - a. One Spirit
 - b. One hope
 - c. One Lord
 - d. One faith
 - e. One baptism
 - f. One God and Father
 - 3. But many members!
 - a. And the members are all different
 - b. There are no clones in the body of Christ
 - 4. And those many members do not all have the same function
- D. Ah, yes, the same function
 - 1. That's the horror scenario that we opened with
 - a. When the whole body were an eye
 - b. Or the whole body were an ear!
 - 2. No, instead, there are a variety of functions
 - a. And each member plays a role
- E. Paul goes into even greater detail – memorable detail – in the Corinthians passage
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 12:14–16** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many.
 - b. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
 - c. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
 - 2. **1 Corinthians 12:21** (ESV) —
 - a. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”
- F. And then, Paul goes on to make another important observation
 - 1. Some of the body parts are more attractive and presentable than others
 - a. And other body parts, while less presentable, are the really indispensable members
 - 2. **1 Corinthians 12:22–25** (ESV) —
 - a. 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,
 - b. 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,
 - c. 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,
 - d. 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

3. In other words, God honors the less presentable members of the body of Christ even more than the presentable members
 - a. We value our faces
 - b. But more and more of us are having parts of our faces cut off!
 - c. But it's a much more serious matter if we didn't have a liver
 - d. Nobody likes to look at, or admire, a liver
 - e. We all appreciate the faces
 - f. But God values all the members of our bodies
 4. So that, Paul says, we "may have the same care for one another"
- G. Now, it's human nature to value the people we have up front
1. Hopefully, I deliver some value on Sundays when I'm speaking, as do others
 - a. And the music and worship leaders are exceptionally gifted
 2. We are all the visible presentations of TVC on Sunday mornings
 3. But the real heroes of TVC are the people who are heart, liver, kidneys and stomachs of our church
 - a. The people who prepare the Lord's Supper
 - b. The people who help decorate the sanctuary or tables for special events
 - c. The people who sing their parts in the choir, or play their instrument in accompanying the singing
 - d. The people who, with great effort, come to worship just so they can be present with one another
 - e. The people who sense when it's the time to give someone a hug
 - f. The people who are good listeners to those who need to share either joys or sorrows
 - g. The people who greet you when you come in
 - h. The people who work in the audio-visual area, hoping they're not noticed
 - i. The people who pick up cards from the seats each Sunday morning
 - j. The women who pray for missionaries on Tuesday afternoons
 - k. The men and women who come to Wednesday evenings to pray for one another and for our international workers
 4. You get the idea, don't you?
 - a. Those are the heart and soul of TVC – as they are of any other local church
 - b. But they are also the heart and soul of the Big C Church – the One true Church of Jesus Christ

V. **The Gifts**

- A. Well, our text continues
 1. **Romans 12:6–8** (ESV) —
 - a. **6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;**
 - b. **7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;**

- c. 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.
 2. The members of the body, the Church, all have gifts
 - a. And as Paul says in 1 Corinthians, they are distributed by the Spirit of God just as God wills
 - b. God is sovereign over the gifts He gives
 - c. You want someone else's gift? You have a problem
 - d. God has determined who gets what gifts
 3. And Paul also indicates in the Corinthian passage that the gifts are designed to be used for the common good
 - a. They aren't for our personal aggrandizement, or to serve our own interests
 - b. They are designed for the life and function of the body as a whole
- B. Exemplary Gifts
 1. In this passage there are seven gifts mentioned
 - a. Prophecy
 - b. Service
 - c. Teaching
 - d. Exhortation
 - e. Giving
 - f. Leadership
 - g. And Mercy
 2. Now, do you see yourself in any of those gifts?
 - a. No? Well, don't worry!
 - b. Because those are not the complete list of gifts
 - c. In fact, there is no complete list of gifts
 3. There are four passages of scripture where gifts like these are mentioned
 - a. And they all have different lists
 - b. This passage has seven
 - c. The 1 Corinthian 12 passage has nine gifts – and most of them are different than the gifts in Romans
 - d. And Ephesians 4 has a list as well, and there are five in that list
 - e. And again, most are different than the other two lists
 4. And then there's one final passage that mentions gifts – it's in 1 Peter 4
 - a. And in that passage the list is short – it boils it all down to two
 - b. Serving and speaking
 5. All of this means that the list of gifts in any one of these passages is not comprehensive, but exemplary
 - a. They are merely examples of different gifts people have
 6. So it's more important to know you have at least one gift
 - a. Put yourself in a position in the body to serve in some way so you can discover your gift
 - b. And no matter what you call it, use it!
- C. Grace Gifts

1. The second thing we notice in this passage in Romans 12 is that the gifts come to us by the grace of God
 - a. They're not some reward for work accomplished
 - b. They are given "according to the grace given to us"
 2. In fact, the very word "gift" means grace
 - a. **Gift = charisma (Gk)**
 - b. Charis is the word for grace
 - c. So, literally, these are "grace gifts"
 3. As such, they are not something to boast about
 - a. We didn't earn them
 - b. We received them
 - c. Sovereignly
 - d. By grace!
 4. So, how should we respond to this gracious outpouring of the gifts from our benevolent God?
 - a. Here's where the imperative shows up:
 5. **Romans 12:6** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,
 - b. **let us use them**
 6. In other words, get with it! Get to work
 - a. You're a member of the body
 - b. Find your gift
 - c. Use your gift
 - d. Or, as Nike would say, "Just do it!"
 7. Now, sometimes your circumstances determine what gifts you're able to give
 - a. I've known people who have declined to the point where they are essentially bed-ridden
 - b. And yet, they have discovered the gift of intercessory prayer
 - c. A gift they never knew they had
 - d. Never knew it until their circumstances gave them that avenue to contribute to the welfare of the body
 - e. And I've been the recipient of the benefits of those dear brothers and sisters who have prayed for me
 - f. Sometimes when they couldn't do anything else
 8. So, dear friends, put yourself in a position to serve the body
 - a. Discover your gift
 - b. And use it!
 9. So, what gifts are listed in this passage that serve the body?
 - a. Discover your gift
 - b. And use it!
- D. **Prophecy**
1. The first one listed is prophecy
 - a. Prophecy is the inspired proclamation of the Word of God
 - b. When true prophets speak, they speak with the authority of God Himself
 2. **2 Peter 1:21** (ESV) —

- a. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - 3. Now, I don't believe this specific gift continues in the sense Paul uses it here
 - a. For the NT is complete
 - b. All authoritative prophecy is finished
 - 4. But when Paul was writing there were still NT prophets, in addition to the apostles who also spoke prophetically
- E. **Service**
 - 1. Service is one of those behind-the-scenes kind of gifts
 - a. The ability to recognize needs that our brothers and sisters have, and that our neighbors have
 - b. And know what to do about it
 - c. And go about doing it
 - 2. The text says, if our gift is in serving, use it in our serving
 - a. Simple as that
 - b. Use it!
 - c. Don't let your service gift sit on the shelf
- F. **Teaching**
 - 1. Next is teaching
 - a. Teaching is the systematic instruction of the Word of God
 - b. The teacher uses the prophetic word, seeks to understand it, and then communicates it to the people of God
 - c. And so feeds the sheep
 - 2. Teaching is critical for the life of the church
 - a. And we are blessed to have wonderful teachers in our midst
 - 3. The teacher's responsibility is to teach!
 - a. That's what the text says
 - b. "The one who teaches, in his teaching"
 - c. So, if you're a teacher, and you're not teaching, talk to me!
 - 4. It might be in teaching a CLS class
 - a. It might be in speaking in a devotional
 - b. It might be in leading and facilitating a small group
 - 5. Whatever it is, teach!
- G. **Exhortation**
 - 1. Exhortation is the timely application of wisdom to encourage the saints
 - a. Especially the saints who are struggling
 - 2. Barnabus is called a "son of encouragement" in the NT
 - a. He was one who helped Paul get established with the apostles after his conversion
 - b. And he was the one who came alongside young John Mark, and helped him become a leader even after he had gone AWOL on Paul's first missionary journey
 - 3. Many of you have the gift of exhortation
 - a. Sometimes a kind word to lift someone up

- b. Or maybe occasionally, a timely rebuke to bring someone gently back onto the path
- 4. But if you have the gift, as the text says:
 - a. “The one who exhorts, in his exhortation”

H. **Giving**

- 1. Then there is giving, or as the text indicates, contributing
 - a. The gift of giving is not directly related to the amount
 - b. It’s more related to the ability to respond to opportunities for supporting the work of the Kingdom with whatever resources God has given you
- 2. The widow who put in her last two cents was as much a contributor as those who gave the most
- 3. We are so blessed to have a congregation filled with people who have this gift
 - a. We are a giving congregation
 - b. Willing, even delighting, to support our ministries, both locally and internationally
 - c. We praise God for this gift
 - d. For it is a give of God! A grace gift!
- 4. For the text says “the one who contributes, in generosity”
 - a. We are a generous church

I. **Leadership**

- 1. Then there is leadership
 - a. And the one who leads is to do so with zeal
 - b. With passion and purpose
- 2. We’ve been blessed with people who have leadership gifts
 - a. Leadership involves a couple of things
- 3. First, leaders understand the goal and how to get there
 - a. In addition, leaders have a sense of the best ways to get there
- 4. But finally, leaders actually have followers
 - a. People get behind leaders
 - b. Leaders who give the kind of gentle direction that a shepherd has with his sheep
- 5. So, if you look behind you, and you see followers, then maybe you ought to think about putting yourself in a ministry where you may be called upon to lead others

J. **Mercy**

- 1. Finally, there’s mercy
 - a. Mercy involves seeing what many people don’t see
 - b. Those who have the gift of mercy see people struggling in some dimension of their lives
 - c. Their heart goes out to them
 - d. And they find ways of coming to their aid
- 2. But when the merciful begin to get involved, the text says to do it “with cheerfulness”

- a. The true gift of mercy comes with the pleasure of ministry

VI. Conclusion

- A. So, those are the gifts in this passage
 1. But as we said, they are only exemplary
 2. You may have other gifts not listed
 3. And it doesn't matter if you can name it
- B. Put yourself in position to serve the body, and use your gift
 1. And you will find abundant pleasure in being the body of Christ
- C. I want you to realize how much of that happens in and through this local church
 1. We are a gifted church
 - a. A church that employs those gifts
 - b. And makes a real impact on the health of this local congregation
 - c. A real impact on the life of the Big C Church
 - d. And a real impact on the expansion of the Kingdom in completing the Great Commission
- D. A couple of years ago, prompted by the staff, we generated a list of all the ministries and activities that TVC is engaged in on a regular basis
 1. All the places where the grace gifts are employed
 2. All the ministries that take place here in this community
 3. And all the ministries that contribute to other ministries
 4. And do you know that when we brainstormed what all those were, there were more than a hundred ministry activities that this church – a moderately sized congregation – engages in, some weekly, some monthly, some several times a year, and some yearly
 - a. And we wondered how many of our own people were even aware of what this church accomplishes
 5. We put together a leadership forum – where our Elders and Ministry Council gathered to review all these ministries
 - a. And put them into categories
- E. There were
 1. Denominational outreach activities
 2. Community outreach activities within TVC
 3. Community service and benevolence activities
 4. Discipleship activities
 5. International ministry support activities
 6. Music and worship arts activities
 7. Community outreach into Shell Point
 8. Community outreach outside Shell Point
 9. Outside perspectives speakers and events
 10. Stewardship activities
 11. Worship and prayer activities
- F. It's amazing what you people do around here!
 1. You are a gifted community
 2. And a willing, gifted community

- a. And as you're able, you build each other up into the body of Christ
 - 3. Not perfectly
 - a. We still have areas in which we can grow
 - b. And maybe some we can do without!
 - 4. But it's hard to think of a more vibrant place to do ministry
- G. You know, Shell Point has this ad that's currently running on its billboards
 - 1. "Retired, but not retiring"
 - 2. I know that the kind of marketing and public relations Shell Point should do
 - 3. But I don't think Shell Point has any idea that you all live that out on steroids!
 - 4. You are no horror story!
 - a. You are the Church
 - b. Gifted beyond measure
 - c. And you are bearing fruit
- H. **Colossians 1:3-6** (ESV) —
 - 1. 3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,
 - 2. 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,
 - 3. 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.
 - 4. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,
 - 5. 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth...