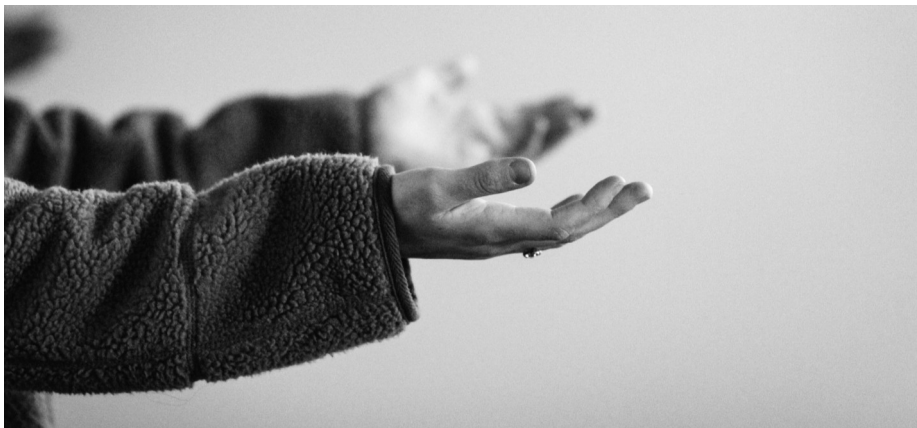


THE WORD FOR TODAY

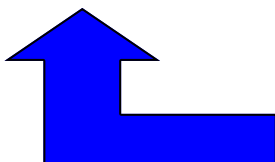
LIVING SACRIFICES (Romans 12, 1-8)

When Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome it was a time when Jewish religious practices (and those of other religions too) included sacrifices of animals or birds as offerings to God, often “burnt offerings”. These could become all-important, over-riding any meaning as symbols of an offering of obedience to God’s commandments. When a teacher of the law responded to Jesus by saying “To love God with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices” Jesus said to him “You are not far from the kingdom of God” (*Mark 12*). Here Paul is reiterating God’s desire, saying that the best offering or sacrifice is ourselves. If we live our lives in the way God wants us to—the way we are taught by Jesus—then that is the best offering God could possibly receive. It would also make our society a better place—a foretaste of God’s Kingdom! And It would also make our own lives richer—that “life in all its fullness” Jesus came to bring to all who follow him.



Follow the words of this passage round the church, beginning on the north wall of this little building. We use the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway.

The whole “Word for Today” can be found on the church website, www.libertonkirk.net You can also find there previous “Words for Today”, meditations and prayers on other Bible passages.



Turn immediately left to find the first Bible extract on the bench

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God— this is your spiritual act of worship.”

1



What can we do in the light of God’s sacrifice for us of his only Son so that we might be forgiven for our sins? We must try to do something which would be just what God wants.

Jesus said: “This is my command: Love each other.” (*John 15*) The thing that would please God most would be if we followed that commandment. That is not easy. There are people who are not particularly lovable; there are so many needy people it can be overwhelming. It’s true we can feel inadequate, but we know it’s the right thing to do!

***Lord, thank you for the promise of forgiveness
through Jesus’ death on the cross.
I pray that in the way I live my life
I can show you my gratitude and my worship.***

(No. 2 is on the bench just round the corner of the church building you are looking at)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Do not conform any longer 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”

2



The present-day world is very focussed on self, but if we are to live the lives God wants we need to be focussed on Jesus. It’s so easy to slip into the ways of the world around us—so many temptations at every turn. How do we “renew our minds” to think differently? Only by spending time with God every day, praying, listening, reading his Word. Subscribe (free!) to Liberton Kirk’s daily devotions and find out what a difference it makes.

***Lord, help me to resist the temptation to go along with everybody else.
Draw me closer to you day by day.
Let me treasure your Word in the Bible and your listening presence.***

(Continue along this side of the church to find No. 3)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“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 judgement,
in accordance with the measure of faith
God has given you.”***

3



There are a lot of self-opinionated people on the world stage at the moment—no doubt they enjoy looking at themselves in the mirror and thinking how well they are doing! Here we are asked to use “sober judgement”. We need to be honest. Everything we are is a part of God’s creation and is a very small part in his scheme of things. Nevertheless that small part is important to God, and that is all that matters.

***Lord, save me from too much pride in my own achievements.
You, Lord, made me and give me everything I have.
I bow before you and humbly ask for your help
to be the best that I can be.***

(Walk along the back of the church and turn right to find No. 4 on the Prayer Bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“Just as each of us has one body
with many members, and these members
do not all have the same function,
so in Christ we who are many form one body,
and each member belongs to all the others.”***

4

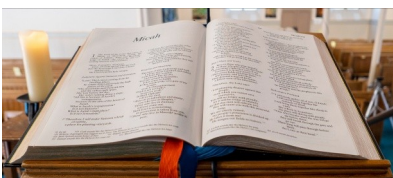


At Liberton Kirk people often talk about the church family, and that is what we are—a family with a mixture of people who all contribute to the church in some way, and who all belong. We believe that the church is the body of Christ in this place. Together we can do so much more than we could do alone, and we support each other. The same applies to the church, the body of Christ, in South East Edinburgh (and indeed round the world). In Holy Week we had wonderful services with Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Evangelicals, all worshipping and witnessing together.

Individual Christians can feel overwhelmed by the state of the world—how can we make any difference at all? We are not alone! We are part of something much bigger and we all belong together.

***Lord, help me to appreciate being part of
a big community of Christians.
Thank you for the support and friendship that provides.
Help me to play my part too.***

(Turn left to find No. 5 on the bench at the side of the church)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

*“We have different gifts,
according to the grace given us.”*

5



Paul doesn't say "most of us have gifts". He's quite clear that we all have them. So many of us think we are not at all gifted. We fail to see that such mundane things as a listening ear, hospitality, keeping in touch, are gifts—and so precious in today's high-speed world where there is a lot of loneliness. These are just a few examples.

Take a few moments to think what the gifts are that God has blessed you with. Then ask yourself if you are using them to the full—could you do more?

*Lord, thank you for blessing us all with things we do well.
Help me to recognise what my gifts are and to appreciate them
and the opportunities they give me to serve others.*

(Walk towards the front of the church and find No. 6 on the bench beside the cairn.)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

*“If a man’s gift is prophesying,
let him use it in proportion to his faith.
If it is serving, let him serve;
if it is teaching, let him teach;
if it is encouraging, let him encourage; . . .”*

6

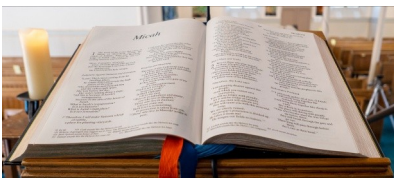
Perhaps not many of us are able to prophesy or to teach, although I can think of people in Liberton Kirk who are very gifted in this way. Surely, however, we can serve—help others in some way, be kind. Surely we can encourage—tell people how well they are doing, say they are making a difference, find something good to say.

Paul’s words remind us that gifts are to be used so that they benefit others. Volunteers are always being sought in churches and community—perhaps those appeals are directed to you?



*Lord, help me to find ways to use the gifts you have given me.
Thank you for the joy that can give.
Thank you for the opportunities there are.*

(Walk round the corner of the church to find No. 7 on one of the benches)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

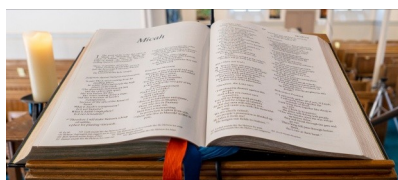
*“ . . . if it is contributing to the needs of others,
let him give generously;
if it is leadership, let him govern diligently;
if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

7



Have another look at Paul's advice on how to use our gifts: "generously", "diligently", "cheerfully". How much better you feel when you are collecting money for a good cause when people are generous, when they want to give. How good it is when somebody takes on a job as secretary and always keeps things in good order, produces papers on time, keeps things running smoothly. What a difference a smile makes if someone is being kind to a needy soul. We only need to think of God's care for us to realise that half-heartedness in response is not good enough!

*Lord, you are so good to me—thank you!
Help me to be wholehearted in everything I do
as I use your gifts for the benefit of those around me.*



THE WORD FOR TODAY

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