

Bible reading Roman 12 9-21

Hymn 450 - Singing- Open Lord My Inward Ear

Love in Action

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^[c] Do not be conceited.¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[d] says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is

thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^[e]

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

New International Version (NIV)

Reflection

Paul continues with his encouragement to the church of Rome not to transform to the standards of the world. He realised that the standards of the world are destructive and poisonous to our lives. When I preached last week I said that what we feed our bodies with is visible in us. If we eat poison our lives will be filled with bitterness, anger and revenge. If we eat good food, which is the word of God our actions will be filled with fruits of the spirit. He reminded us that we should keep our lives as living sacrifices which are Holy and righteous before God. This week Paul is not just telling the church to conform but tells the church the things that demonstrate their conformity. Hallelujah! I like vs 9, Paul is saying let us be without hypocrisy. A conformed heart should not pretend but be genuine and abhor evil. I'm struck by Paul's honesty in talking about hypocrisy, yes hypocrisy a source of betrayal. Jesus was

betrayed by one of his disciples who pretended to love Jesus by kissing him. How disturbing is it to know that our lives are full of fake people. Paul is saying if we are conformed from the standards of this world our lives should demonstrate genuineness with other people and with God. Once we are genuine with God we will cling to what is good. Paul discouraged hypocrisy and encouraged clinging on to what is good. I like the way Paul used the word cling. Clinging is to hold tightly on to something and not let it go. This is what Paul is saying we should hold on to goodness with all our might and power and not let it go. Clinging on is a sign of desperation, fear of letting go. Hallelujah! I have seen people in desperate situations holding on to tree branches, rope or whatever it is because it was their hope of survival. So holding on to what is good pleases God. Paul is also encouraging the church to have genuine love for one another, being selfless and fervently serving God in Spirit. As a church we should rejoice in hope, patient in tribulation and pray without ceasing. This message to the church of Rome applies to us today. We are living in less stable environments where we need to love and support each other in truth and in faith. We should be anchored in hope and prayer as we serve God. We are encouraged to desist from evil but to provide for those who are in need. We are being encouraged to be hospitable and to be sensitive to other people's situations.

Paul is saying conformed hearts do not curse those who persecute them but bless them. Our transformation should be visible through our actions. Hallelujah! 🙏🙏🙏

Prayer

Dear Lord help us to cleanse our hearts from all sinfulness and live the life that pleases you. Your word has discouraged us from being hypocrites and live a genuine life. Help us Lord not to feed our lives with poison so that we may not hurt others by our actions. Our words and actions should show that we are your disciples. Open Lord our inward ear so that we may hear you and walk in the light. We repent of our sins. We pray all this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen!

*Prepared by **Rev Mary Sachikonye Methodist Minister for (Mile Cross, Costessey, Trinity Thorpe Marriott, Hosford and Drayton) for a time as this. We are a church without walls. We should therefore, continue to proclaim the good news. I will be sending **Words of Hope** every week so that we may continue to nourish our spirits and continue to live in HOPE!***