

Called To Belong

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 August 2024

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing this morning our series in the book of Romans. And you'll remember that the book of Romans is a letter. It's a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s AD.

And it's called Romans for a very simple reason, which is that it's written to the churches in the city of Rome. This letter is about the gospel. It's about the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

[1 : 04] And Paul's hope in writing it is that these churches would be established in the gospel.

That's what he goes on to say just a few verses later in chapter 1, verse 11. And there are many applications that show up throughout this book, but Paul has a special focus on the mission and the unity of the church.

There are many spokes that are going to shoot out, but as we've seen before, and we'll see again this morning, those spokes are constantly returning back to the hub of the gospel. And as I've told you many times now, if you're nervous about the fact that we're moving so slowly through the book of Fear Not, we will speed up a little bit, especially next week.

We're just working slowly through the introduction because there's so much for us to unpack here. You'll remember last time we were in the book of Romans, we took a look at verse 5 and we asked this big question, what does success look like?

What does it look like when it comes to the mission of the church in God's people? And we saw that the success was to bring about the obedience of faith. Paul also gave us the why, why that actually matters, and it matters because it's for the sake of his name.

We discussed the fact that it is in God's glory that we discover our good. And then Paul gave us the scope that this is for all the world, that it's for all people everywhere.

[2 : 29] As we turn from verse 5 to verses 6 and 7, we're asking a different question, which is, who are you? What is the basic definition of the Christian?

And if I ask you, who are you, really what I'm asking you is this, what is most important? What is the thing in life that matters more than anything else?

Now this might sound a little coming out of left field, and that's because it is. I'm going to ask you another question. If you were going to get a tattoo, what would you get it of? Now in asking that, I realize some of you already have tattoos, and so you can already answer, oh, I already know.

I already have it. Okay. With that in mind, I'm going to invite you to turn with me to Romans 1. For the sake of context, we're going to start at verse 1. And as we do this, remember that this is God's word.

And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

[3 : 32] And that's why we read it now, Romans 1, starting at verse 1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his son who was descended from David, according to the flesh, and was declared to be the son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received

grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name, among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we do thank you, as we do every week, for your word that you've given to us. You haven't abandoned us to figure things out on our own, but instead, you make good on your promise.

You tell us that we belong to you, and so you give us everything that we need. We ask that you would do that this morning by your word, that you would instruct us, you'd guide us, you'd shape us. More than all of that, you'd show us Jesus, that we would see his beauty and his power and his holiness and his majesty and his glory. We'd be able to grow in knowing his mercy and his grace and his love.

[5 : 17] And we thank you that we don't worry this morning about whether we've earned or deserved these things. We know, in fact, we haven't. And so we simply ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. If you pay attention to things like this, you may have noticed exactly three weeks ago today, the Postal Service did what it does, if not every year, every few years, which is they raised the price of first-class stamps from 68 cents to 73 cents.

It's about double what postage was back in 2002. And it's no secret that the USPS is struggling and has been struggling for some time. struggling both with financial problems and also slow delivery. In 2023, they had a net loss of \$6.5 billion. Now, there's many factors.

The most obvious factor in all of these things is the emergence of email, which is replacing much of snail mail. And so there's just less volume in the Postal Service because now, instead of sending each other letters, we send each other texts and emails.

[6 : 28] The current Postmaster General is a man named Louis DeJoy. And in April of this year, he was interviewed, and he said, the Postal Service across the board is facing a crisis. We have seen a dramatic decline in first-class mail delivery as more and more people communicate online.

And so there's a dramatic shift that's happening in our world, as all of us know, dramatic changes in communication. And in the midst of those changes, there are some things that never change. Whether you send an email or a letter, you do something that people have done for millennia, which is this. You've got to say who it's to.

You have to say who it's from. All right? Some things never change. And that's what's happening in this letter that Paul is writing to the Romans.

We are finishing this week his introduction, which takes up verses 1 through 7. Verses 1 through 5 are Paul's introduction. Paul has been saying in these last five verses, here is who the letter is from.

[7 : 42] It's from me, Paul. And now if that surprises you, remember, because we've talked about a lot of things that are not related to Paul, right? We've talked about Jesus Christ and the fact that he was descended from David and that he's here to bring about the obedience of faith.

That's because Paul has used the introduction about himself as an excuse to talk about Jesus. So he says, hey, this is from Paul, and here's all these things you need to know about me and my mission in Jesus.

Okay? So verses 1 through 5, that's the from part of the letter. Verses 6 through 7, we turn to the to. Verses 1 through 6 then, or 1 through 5, who is Paul?

Who is the letter from? Verses 6 through 7, who is it to? Who is Paul writing to? And we're asking not just the name of the recipients here, we're also asking about their identity.

And the very first thing he tells them about their identity is this. Verse 6, you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. This shouldn't sound new to you at all if you've been here the last several weeks in the book of Romans because Paul has been circling around the same themes over and over.

[8 : 57] He is again saying something that he has said before. We already knew that Paul belonged to Christ, right? What did we see in verse 1? Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.

And then we talked about it again last time when we were at verse 5. We talked about the why of Paul's mission, that it is for the sake of his name. In other words, everything should lead back to Jesus Christ.

Everything revolves around and centers on Jesus Christ. That's why I've been telling you that there are many spokes that tie back to one hub.

And so I'm going to tell you the same thing I told you in verses 1 and 5. There are three different options for who we belong to. Remember, option one, you can belong to another person.

And I don't need to convince you that that's probably not a great idea. Because what you know is that at the end of the day, any human in this world will ultimately choose themselves over you.

[10:04] So option one, belong to another person or an institution, not great. Option two, this is the option that is tempting, appealing, alluring. We can belong to ourselves.

And as we talked about in verse 1 and verse 5, that is not as good as it sounds. And it's not as good as it sounds for a variety of reasons. First, we think we know what's best for us.

We actually don't. Second, even if we do find out what's best for us, we don't actually do it. And so each time we've discussed this, I've given you a different quote, looking at a different angle of why it is in fact a terrible idea to belong to yourself.

And I'm going to give you another one this morning. Page 8 of your worship guide, Third, autonomy offered us freedom and gave us alienation. Belonging to yourself actually doesn't end very well.

Option three, belong to God. Belong to someone who loves you more than you love yourself.

[11:14] And that's what we discussed back in verse 5. Last time we said, it is in God's glory that we discover our good. It's in God's glory that we discover our good.

That's actually what leads us to the good life. That brings me back to the question I asked you just a few minutes ago. What would you get a tattoo of?

And why? If you've been paying attention the last number of years in our culture, tattoos have been skyrocketing. We now are at a place where roughly one-third of American adults have a tattoo of some sort.

I've actually noticed over the last couple years, if you look at advertising from clothing companies, more and more you'll see models that are covered in tattoos. I don't remember that being the case five years ago.

So this is increasingly a factor in our culture. There was an article in World Magazine that quoted Kevin Dougherty, a professor of sociology at Baylor University, and he said, Americans have embraced tattoos as a way to say, I get to choose for myself who I am and who I declare myself to be.

[12:31] Think about that. I get to choose for myself who I am and who I declare myself to be. Now, there are lots of different places you might get a tattoo.

There are lots of different types of tattoos. Some tattoos are about memories and experiences. Some of them are about family members, those we love, those who have passed. There's one type of tattoo that typically shows up on someone's forearm or their wrist.

And the forearm or the wrist tattoo is often meant as a reminder of a core value. It's a core value or a guiding principle, a north star, a first principle.

There's a phrase or a word that someone will pick and it will remind them, oh yes, this is how I want to live life. This is the thing that I want to guide me in every decision.

Why the forearm or the wrist? Because I can always look and see it. Right? When I'm faced with a challenge in life, when I'm faced with a decision, when I don't know which way to go, I can just pull out my arm and be reminded what it is that guides me most of all.

[13:43] I can remember what's more important than anything else. I had a pastor in college who said if he were going to get a tattoo, he would put it not on his wrist or his forearm, he would put it on his forehead right here, which is a place that you can put a tattoo.

It's a bold move. And he said he would do one thing and one thing only. He would get the Hebrew word that shows up in the Old Testament and means treasured possession.

The Hebrew word *segula*, which is the word that God uses to talk about his people Israel. He tells them over and over, this is how I think of you.

This is how I consider you. You aren't just my possession, you're my treasured possession. And you're not just treasured, you're my possession.

Now, I'm not endorsing tattoos this morning. I'm not saying you should or should not get one. I am simply bringing this up to say one thing. If you are a Christian, I can tell you right now what your North Star should be.

[14:56] I can tell you this morning what your guiding principle is. And it is this.

You are a treasured possession. What should you pull out to remember your way when you think you've lost it?

What is it that determines your decisions when they're difficult? what is it that is your first principle? Paul tells us right here in verse 6. You who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. I get to choose for myself who I am and who I declare myself to be.

No. You actually don't. You in fact belong to Jesus Christ. He has already decided who you are and who you will be.

[16:09] Now you don't need to get a tattoo of that. One of the reasons is this. God already has one. He tells Israel in Isaiah chapter 49, behold, behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

That's where the reminder is. You don't need to write me on your body. I've already written you on mine.

Christian, that is your first principle. that is your north star. Jesus says this in John chapter 10, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

Brothers and sisters, this is radically different than what the world around us is saying at this moment in 2024. This is on page 8 again of your worship guide.

Taylor Swift gave a commencement address at New York University in 2022 and she had many things to say. One of the things she had to say was this, I have some good news. It's totally up to you.

[17:27] I have some terrifying news. It's totally up to you. One of those statements is correct. She has some terrifying news.

That's what our culture is telling you right now. It is entirely up. It's up to you to figure out what exactly your sexuality or your expression should be.

It's up to you to determine what is right or wrong. It's up to you to decide ultimate reality through whichever political party you affiliate with. And that is a crushing weight.

In fact, I would tell you it's more than a crushing weight. weight. It's a weight that humans are not designed to bear up under. It is in fact too much.

We should not be surprised that anxiety and depression spike the more we tell people it's totally up to you.

[18:33] And Paul here has a radical and transformative word. you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. That is the fundamental reality of the Christian.

That is the foundation. Why is it as Christians that we should turn the other cheek? Why would you not vindicate yourself and get the revenge that you need, right?

You're not going to get perfect justice anywhere else. why not take it all up into your own hands?

Because you belong to Jesus Christ and therefore you know that he will defend you.

Even more than that, bringing ultimate justice is his job, not your job. And he will do it for his children.

Why would you be generous with your money when the future is filled with all sorts of unknown and frightening things? You do it for one reason and one reason only, because you belong to Jesus Christ.

[19:59] And Jesus Christ takes care of and preserves and upholds those who belong to him. Why should you embrace hope?

As you survey the shameful moments and the failures and the mistakes of your life. and as you realize that the older you get, the more of those there are to review.

For one reason and one reason only, because you belong to Jesus Christ. And because you belong to him, you have a future and a hope.

It is in fact not all up to you. he has written your story. He is still writing your story. We already sang this this morning.

If you go back to page four of your worship guide, look at verse four. I am not my own and now my heart is free. O maker, come and make what you will of me.

[21:11] There is nothing broken that you cannot repair. So Lord, I leave my life in your loving care. We embrace hope because we belong to Jesus Christ.

Why are we stingy with our bodies? Why is it that we only have sex with people we're married to? Because and only because you belong to Jesus Christ.

your body is his, it is not your own. We sang that too. We sang that in the second verse. My body is a temple of the living God.

I'll worship in this house that his blood has paid. As I bear his image, oh may I not profane the holiness I hold in this earthly frame.

what was the lie that Satan told Adam and Eve in the garden? The lie was that they belonged to themselves. The lie was that God did not want the best for them.

[22 : 28] The lie was that God was not looking out for them. It was all up to you. I have some good news. It's totally up to you.

I have some terrifying news. It's totally up to you. And of course, it's only terrifying news. It's the lie that Adam and Eve believed so many decades ago, millennia ago, in the garden.

It's the lie that you and I continue to believe today. I belong to the Lord. I am not my own. I will honor him for this I know.

Now, you might be thinking, thanks a lot, pastor. Of course, you're going to say that. Realtors always believe it's a good time to buy. Pastors always believe it's a good time to belong to Jesus. Why? Why? Why is this the touchstone above all other things? Why should this be the north star?

[23 : 42] Even more than that, is it safe? Is it good? Will I regret belonging to Jesus Christ?

Thankfully, Paul doesn't leave us to wonder.

He tells us many other things. He goes on in verse 7 to tell us this. to all those in Rome who are loved by God.

Remember, treasured possession. Verse 6, what we've talked about is possession. Verse 7, what we're going to talk about is treasured. And what does he mean here that we're loved by God?

We talked about this back in verse 1. This gets us back from the spoke to the hub. This ties us back down to the heart of the gospel. The one who died for us is the only one we can give ourselves over to completely.

The one who died for us is the one we can trust more than we trust ourselves. Why is it good that we belong to God?

[24 : 52] It's good that we belong to God because we are loved by God. God says, whether you're a Christian or not a Christian, there is one thing that I know that you need.

You need to be cared for and protected by someone who loves you more than you love yourself.

Jesus says this, John chapter 10, I am the good shepherd.

I know my own and my own know me. Just as the father knows me and I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep. That's what you need.

You need a shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. You won't find that in a human institution. You won't find that in another person.

And I can guarantee you will not find it in yourself. You cannot be your own shepherd. At least not very well.

[26 : 07] And so Paul is reminding us at the very beginning of the letter of this. You need to belong not to someone else. You need to belong not to yourself. You need to belong to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

the one whose love led him to lay down his life for you. Now how do you get that kind of shepherd? How do you get the care and protection that you need? If it's true that non-Christians and Christians both need someone who loves them more than they love themselves, what is it that you need to do?

Wrong question. verse 7 of your worship guide. We are Christians for one reason only and that is that God has set his love upon us.

That is the thing that brings us out of the world and out of the dominion of Satan. We are what we are, not because of our goodness, not because of our lives, not because of anything in us.

[27 : 18] it all comes from the love of God. There is nothing to do. There's nothing to do except to accept and follow Jesus as your Lord and King.

To know what Paul tells us at the end here, he says, called to be saints, grace to you and peace.

Grace, Paul is reminding us of God's undeserved mercy and favor on his people, that he has given us what we do not deserve.

And the peace reminds us that while at one point we were at enmity with God, we were at war with him, we have now been granted reconciliation through Jesus Christ. In other words, you cannot pull yourself up by your bootstraps.

You cannot do anything to prove something to God or earn anything from him. No, it's rooted and grounded in the love of God, the grace and peace of Jesus Christ. that's what results in them. This is verse 7, called to be saints. I was talking to someone about a month ago at a coffee shop and this person said, hey, I've really started to study the saints recently. [28 : 32] And I said, you're a saint. Everyone who is a Christian is a saint. How do I know? Paul tells us right here. Saint simply means set apart for God.

Does it mean that we live in a certain way? Yes, because first we've been set apart. God's unmerited favor, his grace, favor we didn't earn.

God's peace, reconciliation, we don't deserve. We are Christians for one reason only, and that is that God has set his love upon us.

That is the thing that brings us out of the world and out of the dominion of Satan. I belong to the Lord. I am not my own.

I will honor him for this I know. I belong to the Lord. I am not my own. Let's pray.

[29 : 39] Our Father in heaven, we thank you and we praise you that you have called us to belong to Jesus Christ. We thank you you don't do it for anything we've done, to earn it or deserve it.

You do it because you have set your love on us and you've called us to be saints. We ask that you would remind us of that, that we would give up other belongings and that we would embrace our identity in you.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.