

"Assume You're It"

Text: Romans 12:1-8

May God our Father shower you with his gifts of grace, mercy and peace through our Savior, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, I assume pretty much everyone is familiar with the game "Tag." Great childhood game. Outdoors, unavoidable exercise, no screens, no special equipment needed, no referees, simple rules. Whoever is "it" has to tag someone else. The "it" is transferred like a communicable disease to whoever is tagged. No one wants to be "it" – which is pretty much necessary for the game to work. The alternative would be to stand around in a clump and smack each other on the shoulder. Speaking of standing around, sadly I see there are now multiple "Tag" phone apps – which, of course, you play sitting down. By yourself. Indoors. Sigh.

In the original, old school game, you have two choices when you're "it." You can protest, whine, and complain, or you can start running. Our text for this morning carries the whole concept of "it" into the spiritual realm. That text is found in Paul's Letter to the Romans, the Twelfth Chapter:

^{ESV} **Romans 12:1-8** *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. 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. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 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.*

This is the Word of God. Remind yourself each time you hear or read words from the Bible that these are God's own words. Since God himself has told us, **"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and**

treasure it!" so also we *treasure* his Word this morning by giving it our undivided attention, as also we pray, **"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

Reading God's Word effectively often requires reading more of God's Word. Our text for this morning, for example, begins: ***I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God...*** Do you see the problem, the challenge? The **"therefore"** requires additional reading. You need to know what Paul is referring to by that **"therefore"** because whatever he says next is based on what came before. To put it another way, you can't fully understand what you are going to read next if you don't know what came before. What came before, in this case, is more than just background information. It's the foundation – the cause or reason – for what the Holy Spirit says next in our text.

So what, exactly, is Paul referring to by his **"therefore"**? While some might point to the immediate context of the previous chapter, the only safe way to proceed is to go all the way back to the beginning and to assume that he is referring to everything that he wrote prior to this point in his letter.

What you will then find is that Paul spent the first eleven chapters of Romans explaining what he refers to in the first sentence of our text as **"the mercies of God."** By the time he gets to the point of our text, he has told us about our sin (**"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** ^{ESV} Romans 3:23), God's grace (**"And are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."** ^{ESV} Romans 3:24), justification by faith (**"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."** ^{ESV} Romans 3:27-28), our new life in Christ (**"But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code."** ^{ESV} Romans 7:6), and the work of the Holy Spirit (**"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."** ^{ESV} Romans 5:5).

And then, in Romans 12:1 (the beginning of our text) Paul turns a corner. After all that precedes it, Paul says in the first verse of our text, ***I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*** In other words, because of

everything God has done for you, *now assume you're it*. God has saved you. God has shown you mercy. God has given you grace. God has made you part of his body. God has given you gifts. So don't sit on the sidelines waiting for somebody else. *Assume you're it*.

Assume you're it because God has been merciful.

It's important to notice that this is where Paul begins: “***I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God ...***” That word “therefore” matters. Paul doesn't begin by saying, “*Get busy serving God so He'll love you.*” He doesn't say, “*Work hard enough and perhaps God will forgive and accept you.*” He begins with mercy – God's mercy. That's important because Christian service doesn't begin with guilt. It begins with gratitude for what God has already done. We don't serve God so that He will become merciful toward us. We serve because *he has already been merciful toward us*. The Christian life is not, “*If I do enough, God will love me.*” The Christian life is, “*God has loved me, therefore I want to give myself to Him.*” That's the difference between religion as performance and obedience as worship.

Paul then goes on to say, “***Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.***” Think about that phrase. You would be hard pressed to find a better mantra for your life on earth. A sacrifice is something placed on the altar and given completely to God. But Paul says we're to be “***living sacrifices.***” In the Old Testament, the sacrifice was dead. What Paul is saying is “*God wants you alive on the altar.*” Not others. You. Assume you're it.

God wants each of your days, not just Sundays. He wants your conversations, your work, your relationships, your money, your talents, and your time. He wants your whole life – which is again where our theme comes in:

Assume you're it. Don't wait for somebody else to live faithfully. Don't wait for somebody else to pray, someone else to encourage the discouraged, somebody else to forgive, somebody else to serve, and somebody else to use their gifts. You are the only one you can present to God as “***a living sacrifice.***” Assume you're it.

Why? Because of the mercies of God. Every morning you wake up breathing because of God's mercy. Every time you confess your sins and are assured of God's forgiveness in Christ you are experiencing God's mercy.

Every time you remember that Christ died for you while you were still a sinner you are reminded of God's mercy. That's why Paul says, in effect:

“Consider God's mercies, and then present yourself to him as a living sacrifice.”

Fully aware that it will be sinful human beings who will read his letter, Paul then adds a warning in our text: “***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.***” In other words, “*Assume You're It, but don't assume you're everything.*” That's an important distinction. “*Assume you're it*” doesn't mean “*assume you're the most important person in every room.*” It means “*assume you have a part to play.*” There's a difference. True Christian service requires humility. You don't have to be the best, the most visible, the person everybody notices. You don't have to have somebody else's gift. You simply need to be faithful with what God has given you. That's freeing, because sometimes we don't serve because we're too proud. Sometimes we don't serve because we're too insecure. Pride says, “*I should be doing something bigger than that.*” Insecurity says, “*I don't have anything valuable to offer.*” Paul speaks to both. To the proud, he says, “*Don't think too highly of yourself.*” To the insecure, he says, “*God has given you gifts. Use them.*” The body of Christ needs both the highly visible and the almost invisible.

Paul says in verse 4: “***For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function...***” and in verse 5: “***...so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another...***” That's the picture. One body. Many members. Different functions. One Lord. You don't have to be somebody else. You don't have to have somebody else's gift. You don't have to imitate somebody else's calling. God has made you part of His body. You're “it.” Then Paul gets very practical. Verse 6: ***Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...*** Different gifts. Different people. Different assignments. Different opportunities. But the same God.

Paul then begins naming some of those gifts. His point isn't to give us an exhaustive list of every spiritual gift. Nor is he telling us that each of us has only one gift. His point is: “*Whatever God has given you, use it.*” That's where “*Assume You're It*” becomes very practical. If one of your gifts is the ability to teach, then teach. If you have a gift for encouraging, then encourage somebody. Everyone can give, but maybe God has blessed you so that you can give more generously. There are God-given gifts of leadership, showing compassion,

organization, listening, praying, welcoming visitors, serving children, visiting the sick or lonely, making a meal, courage to witness. The question isn't: *"What can somebody else do?"* The question is: *"What has God given me to do?"* And then do it. Assume you're it.

You can fully expect the devil to resist, to throw up roadblocks at every turn. Since Satan hates whatever God loves, expect a fight, a continual struggle. Because the time will almost never seem right. You will almost always be too busy. You won't have more time when you are older. There will always be something else more fun to spend your money on. You will never suddenly feel more confident. In your eyes, someone else will always seem better or more qualified.

"Assume You're It" is good advice, but in the body of Christ, there is no such thing as just me. In verse 5 of our text Paul writes: ***"We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."*** Your faithfulness (including your faithful church attendance) affects other people. Your encouragement affects other people. Your generosity affects other people. Your service affects other people. Your willingness to show mercy affects other people. So assume you're it, not because you're the center of everything, but because you are part of something bigger than yourself. You are part of the body of Christ.

You can expect other things from Satan. When, for example, you simply put to use what God has entrusted to you, the devil will try to convince you that you are earning something, rather than thanking God for what his Son Jesus has already earned for you. That is, again, why Paul began our text where he did, with ***"the mercies of God."*** What comes after can never be the cause of what precedes. As John put it in his First Epistle: ***"We love because he first loved us."*** ^{ESV}(1 John 4:19) Recognizing that God, in Christ, has already earned the payment for the debt of sin that we owed, the new man that he has created in us naturally looks for ways to thank him. This is part of Christian sanctification. In our text, Paul, in effect, is saying, *"You want to thank God for the mercies he has already shown you? Here's how: Use the gifts he himself has already given you."*

"Thank you, Lord, for all that you have already done for us and for all that you have given to us. Help each of us to use your gifts to your glory, and for the good of our neighbor. Amen."

ESV **Isaiah 51:1-6** "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. ² Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. ³ For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. ⁴ "Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. ⁵ My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. ⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

ESV **Matthew 16:13-20** Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

ESV **Romans 12:1-8** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. 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. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 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.



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

ST PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

The 13th Sunday after Pentecost – August 23, 2026

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 384

"Let All Things Now Living"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 31ff. *(Blue Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The First Lesson: (Isaiah 51:1-6) Eyes blinded by unbelief will never be able to recognize the fact that Old Testament readings focus not on the physical nation of Israel but on what Scripture refers to as the "Spiritual Israel." Israel today refers to those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This knowledge opens the Christian to a whole new level of understanding in connection especially with the Old Testament scriptures, as it will help us to understand our first reading this morning.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 100 (Hymnal Page 90)

The Second Lesson: (Matthew 16:13-20) Jesus told us that He would build His Church on the confession of Peter: **"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."** Jesus told Peter that he was blessed by God to have received this understanding and conviction, for it was given to him by God himself. Do you now also know Jesus to be the Christ? You too then have been blessed in the same way by God himself.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed *(Projected on Screens)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 648 *(Blue Hymnal)*

"O God, My Faithful God"

The Sermon – Text: Romans 12:1-8 *(Printed on back page)*

"Assume You're It"

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 646

"Take My Life and Let It Be"

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Preparation for Holy Communion *(Hymnal page 38)*

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving *(Hymnal page 41)*

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 152

"Thanks to You, O Christ Victorious"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time.

A note on Communion: It is a matter of conscience among us, drawn from God's Word, that communing together is an intimate expression of confessional fellowship based on shared beliefs. We therefore ask those who have not publicly declared their unity of faith with us to first meet with the pastor for the information you would need and want before communing. Please understand that we seek only to follow the Word and will of God and are in no way judging your Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (35) Average (35)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Annual Church Picnic
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Joe Naumann has returned the call to Mt. Zion of Madison Heights (Detroit), MI. Pastor Emeritus Paul Tiefel has returned the call to Living Hope of Appleton, WI. Pastor David Pfeiffer is considering the call to Holy Cross of Phoenix, AZ. ILC opening service is this weekend, with classes beginning on Monday. Please keep Immanuel in your prayers.

Church Council Notes – The Council met on 8/16. Joshua Naumann was received into communicant membership by transfer from Our Savior's of Jamestown. At their request, Myron Schierneister and Tracy Kreitel were released from membership at St Paul. Offerings for July were \$1,878 short of budgeted needs, which increased our YTD shortfall to \$8,072. Approval was given to host the ILC Tour Choir on March 22. The Council is investigating loaning our current Property Maintenance funds to the CLC Church Extension Fund once our current CDs reach their maturity date. Next Council meeting: 9/27.

Church Picnic – The Annual Church Picnic has been scheduled for Sunday, August 23rd. Please consider attending even if you were not able to bring a dish to pass. There is always more than enough to eat.