

Introduction: Dismiss kids. Welcome Guests. Pg. [redacted] Thank God for how he's growing our church family... Then announcements...

1) **Labor Day Cookout** 9/2 @ West Medford Community Center from 5-8p A-M dessert N-Z side
2) Experience the Power of We by connecting with a **group** this fall. Attached to your worship guide is a way to indicate interest in groups that you might want to attend. This will allow us to give our leaders a heads up. You can also express interest in the lobby at our connections center or online!

Quick sabbatical recap... Thank you!

"Resound"
Romans 15:1-7

This morning I want to help us think about the idea of a voice "resounding." Can you say: "resound!" A little louder: "Resound." Louder: "RESOUND!" Now, you're getting it, in more ways than one. Let me show you where we're going...

Let's try something here. (Even though you are brilliant - I need you to pay very close attention):

"Welcome" "Back" "Pastor" "Tanner" (2 sections. Then 4.)

"Why thank you? You're too kind! It's great to be back."

You see that? Dissonance occurs with the presence of competing voices. The greater the number of competing voices, the greater the distortion and dissonance, BUT

When two voices become one or four voices become one, there is great power in that ONE VOICE!

Have you ever been at the Garden for a concert or perhaps a conference or maybe a sporting event (maybe Fenway) where the song or the shout was so unified by the thousands of people that you could literally hear the chant: "So good. So good. So GOOD!" Blocks away - That is what it means for ONE VOICE to RESOUND!

Our great assignment in life...

The Point: Let your voice resound to the glory of God!

Listen to the words of Romans 15 as it shows us the way to produce a beautiful, RESOUNDING voice that echoes through our neighborhoods, and relationships and city to bring praise to God,.

Romans 15:1-7

I want to focus on three ways Paul says we can create this resounding sound. He says it will come through selfless love, open arms, and one ambition. First...

1. Selfless Love.

There's an issue going on with the people in Rome. How many of you know: people have issues? :) How many of you know: churches have issues?

- The ultimate issue here was disunity, and the genesis of that disunity had to do (are you ready for this?): food!

- Just so you know, this went deeper than one group saying, let's go to Oasis after church while another group is saying Tenoch.
 - Both groups were cool with Oasis. It's just that one group only thought it was permissible to eat the salad bar and veggies, while the other group was like, you're gonna find me with the sirlion, bacon wrapped chicken, pork sausages, etc etc etc.
 - Their varying practices were driven by differing perspectives.
 - Look back at Romans 14:2: "One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables."
- "The weak" brothers and sisters, due to their previous religious experiences, thought they were honoring God by abstaining from meat.
- "The strong," whose faith allowed them to eat whatever they wanted, said, "We're free! God has given it all as a gift. Bon appetite!"
- Both groups were guided by conviction. That's good! That's great! BUT both groups were led into sin, because their convictions were not covered in love. Let me show you how I know that...
 - Verse one says they were pleasing themselves, doing whatever they wanted to do, rather than practicing...
 - Verse two says they should have been seeking the pleasure of their neighbor (in other words, putting their needs above their own), in order to build them up.
 - That's LOVE! Love is giving of yourself for the sake of another.
- The crucial issue was not simply what they put in their mouth but what came from their heart! And listen: Unchecked sin multiplies. Unconfessed sin multiplies.
 - What was happening? The lack of love and the presence of selfishness led to more sin.
 - Romans 14:1 - they were quarreling over these views.
 - Romans 14:3 - they were despising one another and passing judgment (we are better than you, therefore we will look down on you)
- If our liberty leads us to harm someone else, our apparent insight has proved us to be a fools!

T: God has a better way.

His vision and our assignment is to pursue relational unity!

- Verse 2: "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up." We want to strengthen one another, encourage one another, see one another grow in God's design for them!
- Verse 5: "live in such harmony with one another." It literally means "mind the same thing among one another." WHICH does not mean to agree about everything but to not allow a grey area, where we're both seeking God's honor, to cause division.
- Verse 6: "that together [we] may with one voice"

T: We pursue this by... Practicing the obligation of selfless love.

- It's what I have to do! Now, I know, most of the time when we hear the word "obligation," we hear *joyless duty - have to but don't want to.*
- But this obligation reflects something we've committed to. As someone who follows Jesus, I have committed to love God and love you with every fiber of my being.
- That "obligation" I LOVE AND DESIRE. WE should RUN TOWARD THEM WITH JOY.
- "I will forsake my right to watch that movie, listen to that song, purchase that item, drink that drink, visit that establishment, if it IN ANY WAY hinders your relationship with God. I will forsake my freedom for YOUR SAKE."

T: How countercultural! The strong serving the weak! Wow. That's exactly what Jesus has done for us "though he was rich, became poor, so that we through his poverty, might become rich." And that's where Paul goes in verse 3 and 5 and 7. Jesus' example calls us to live with...

2. Open Arms.

Look at the first two words of verse 3.

- "For Christ..." Paul says, "If you need a little motivation to seek the pleasure of others and to lay down your life for their good, look no further than Jesus."
- He then quotes Psalm 69:9... "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."
- This points us to the cross...
- Have you considered? The place of his greatest humiliation, the place where God received insult after insult and definitive rejection is the place where he opens up his arms to the world.

This is the central message of the Bible. I don't know what you see when you picture what God is like, but so many see some heavenly being with his arms crossed and a scowl on his face, just waiting for us to mess up so he can punish us. But the story of the Bible tells us that the reality is the reverse.

God has his arms open and he is just waiting for us to open ours! We are the obstinate ones. We are the ones who said, "God you messed up. I'm doing my own thing." That attitude and action is what has separated us from God, and for that attitude and the actions that follow is the precise reason Jesus went to the cross, opened his arms and screams: "Come back home!!"

Would you do it today? Cry out to God and say, "God, I realize that I have turned my back on your welcome. I have crossed my arms in obstinance, and I am running home to you!"

Paul points to Jesus for a very strategic reason. Jesus is not just our example. He is our motivation! What he started in verse 3, he continues in...

- Verse 5: "May the God . . . in accord with Christ Jesus" (our togetherness is fitting because it reflects the love of Christ!)
- And then in verse 7: "Therefore welcome one another AS CHRIST HAS WELCOMED YOU."

Everything that Paul is saying and doing in verses 3, 5, & 7 is designed to empower how we welcome one another.

- Why does he quote the Old Testament about Jesus? Verse 4 explains it...
 - When we open this book, when we show up again next Sunday to receive again, we are saying: "God, flood my life on the encouragement, enduring power, and hope!"
 - Testify! Sabbatical... (God is not done with me. Relationships, by their nature, are designed to go deeper!)
- But he doesn't simply quote Scripture, he also prays for them. He knows if encouragement and endurance come, they are coming because God gives it by his Spirit!

You remember the way God invited you and welcomed you in? Live like that! (Whisper it)

We are an open arms church!

We welcome everyone right here on Sunday mornings, but we don't stop there. We also welcome each other into our homes through our Groups.

Explain Groups.

This is where God does some of his greatest work! Why?

- Because we when two people or twelve or twenty people walk toward one another with open arms, we are saying, I'm sharing my life with you!
- God has made us for this.... He designed us for relationships (as those made in his image), but he also designed us to be defined by our relationships.
- This is what Richard Pless and James Cofield talk about in their book, *The Relational Soul*, when they talk about how God has made us as permeable beings. "We are not static, impenetrable beings. We are embodied souls, and our souls are permeable [all the time]."
 - Openness communicates vulnerability and trust and the kind of mutual giving that transforms who we.
 - Who we spend time with WILL, in varying degrees, influence us!
- "The Christ in you, stirs up the Christ in me."

We were never meant to do it alone... life is too hard to walk alone BUT life is also too good to walk alone.

- In the words of Romans 12:15: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."
- So I plead with you... make the very simple but incredibly smart decision to jump into a Group when we launch them in two weeks. Sign up today!

What is the ultimate purpose of our voice? Just one. We have...

• 3. One Ambition.

We see it stated twice in verse 6 & 7

- Verse 6: "that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- Verse 7: "Therefore welcome one another as Christ welcomed you, FOR THE GLORY OF GOD."

The ultimate aim and ambition of our unity, our harmonious relationship is the glory of God.

The glory of God. What is it?

The glory of God is the shining forth of his infinite worth.

This is why you exist.

"... bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory," (Isaiah 43:6-7)

- The guessing game is over. We are here to see and enjoy the infinite worth of God. He is the treasure! We are going to spend a lot of time considering this next week. Get. Ready!
- But not only do we get to see and enjoy, we also point back to his glory in everything!

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

- Do you hear how comprehensive that is? WHATEVER you do, DO ALL... Work. Phones. Food. Sex. Possessions. Sports. Relationships. DO ALL.
- If you can't do something for God's glory, it's not worth doing.

Whatever good we display is a reflection of his goodness. He gets the credit!

Now real quick...

In what sense do we glorify God?

1) We don't add to his glory. Why? You can add to that which is infinite.

2) But we do point to (in very small glimpses) how glorious he is!

Let's apply this to the harmonious relationships Paul envisions for the church.

Our selfless love and open arms are like windows!

EVERY GOOD THING we do is meant to be a window for people to SEE THROUGH in order to recognize how good, and great, and glorious God is.

- The everyday opportunities are limitless. Think about it... Rather than TAINING or DISTORTING the glory of God with our bickering, backbiting, conflict, we now...
 - By welcoming someone with open arms...
 - Or being fully present in a conversation (I'm talking eye contact)
 - Or praying or offering that word encouragement...
 - Or serving them in their time of need...
 - Or extending generosity, just because God says, "pour out"
 - Or walking through the junk of life to bear someone else's burden...

resound with the message: "This is what God is like."

Conclusion:

I dream of the day... when my voice with your voice is echoing through every street in Medford and the surrounding cities we call home with the praise of God. Can you see it? It's coming!

PRAY. INVITE THE BAND UP....

Will you make this your one ambition? Open up your heart to the people around you. Be vulnerable. Show up. Invest. Pour out.

You will receive so much in the process, but most of all, God will be seen to be absolutely glorious as our voice resounds to the praise of his great name.

Pray: what's your next step? Christ? Group? Move toward a specific person?