

Romans
“The Great Reception”
Romans 15:1-7

Today we're finishing Romans, and that means I'm going to cover part of 14 oh 15 and all 16 has you take about three minutes.

We're going to cover the end of the book of Romans, see how it all works together. I'm going to read a few verses, Romans 15: 1 - 7. I do invite you to keep your Bibles open as I sort of range around chapters 14 and 15. But for now hear God's Word.

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves, but each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself. But as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me. For whatever is written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another in accordance with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God.

Let's pray for a moment. Father. I pray that you'd give us ears to hear all that you're saying to us, even now, about the welcome you've given us in the welcome that we owe to others. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Indeed, our theme is welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. Christ is the standard we follow our Lord Jesus. I felt the desire for welcome very intensely in 1981. I was at that time an enthusiastic basketball player, and I moved to a new town. And therefore you do what you do. You go find a basketball game, you find a gym. And I played with some men who seemed pretty good, and I was glad to play with them one week, and they kind of told me when they're meeting next week, and when I came the next week, I realized I had walked into a high end game. Looking around at the skill, the size of the players, it was pretty clear that several of them, maybe even most of them, had played some college basketball. Some of them probably almost surely D1 and D2. There were 15, 16, 17 players there. I thought there's, you know, they're picking teams. I'm going to be on the sidelines for a while and they're going through the process 1 to 1, two captains picking and a pick number nine. The captain on one team said, I'll take down. I walked over to him. He gave me a little slap in the hand. He said, Dan, we do not need you to score today. I said, yeah, I figured that out a while ago, but, we like your passing and your defense. Glad to have you on the team. And I felt welcomed. I was new in town, new people. Glad to be on the team.

That desire for welcome is very strong in the human heart. When we move to a new place, when we walk into a room, we see people. They all seem to know each other. They don't know me well. Anyone received me well, I wouldn't say hello to me. Or will I be excluded on the sidelines? This desire for connection comes at the earliest stages.

Little babies. Little babies want to be held. Little babies, although they can't really control their eyes very much. Scholars. Scientists have certainly detected that they're looking for a face even at one, two and three days old. We want to connect. We want to be held. We want to know that I belong here, that somebody wants me here. Now, the good news of Romans chapter 15 is Christ welcomes us.

Christ did not live to please himself. He lived to please us and to welcome us, and therefore we welcome others as Christ has welcomed us. Because once Christ has received us, we strive by the Holy Spirit to do the best we can to live a life that follows his ways. Now, welcome is something that sounds sweet and easy, but it isn't always easy if you're here.

Last week we studied Romans chapter 14 and 15, which describe tensions between the strong who are right and the weak, who are wrong in the church. And they had tensions about food. What do they eat? What do they drink? The tensions about calendars. When do you celebrate? What do you celebrate? Nothing. Is every day holy to God?

The same year there's one day differ from each other and they disagreed ethically. It's not always easy to welcome people who disagree with you. They also had problems ethnically. That church in Rome was a church of Romans, except it started with the synagogue, which is Jews and Jewish Christians, and the church was 50/50 and Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Romans didn't always blend.

And so it wasn't always easy to welcome the people. It's not always easy to welcome. You may have a challenge in a couple of months when the new lead pastor comes here welcoming the new lead pastor, he may be a little bit different from what you're used to. And I have to tell you something else. Birmingham is a church hopping kind of town, and people are going to roll in here whom you've never seen before.

If you're going to say, who are they? All our church hoppers. They're just checking out the new guy. And you may be inclined to think, well, I'm not going to welcome them, but the Bible says, welcome each other, welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you. Now Romans chapter 14 sets it up. It sets it up by telling the church they do disagree about things, and there's a right and there's a wrong.

And Paul described what we do when we disagree about things. He said, first of all, when you disagree, you don't despise each other. Just say we disagree. You study the matter. Apostle Paul

says each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. When there's a controversy, you study it out and you come to conclusions and you practice those conclusions.

Number two but number three, you do not judge those who disagree with you. You leave judgment to God. You don't despise or condemn somebody who studied the matter. Also, it came to a different set of conclusions. Don't pass judgment. Now, one of the issues they disagreed about was food, and the Jewish Christians were inclined to keep on following the Old Testament laws that said, you can't eat pork, which means you can't eat bacon, which is really sad, and you can't eat shrimp and other food.

And the Gentile said, hey, listen, it's all good, it's all clean, and you should try it. You should try it. And the Jews said, I will not eat them. Sam-I-Am I'm. You will like them. You will see, said the Gentiles. And the Jews said, I do not like them. Let me be. Now I can tell you've read that book.

It's one of my personal favorites when I want to, you know, cross off books off my list, I pick up Sam-I-Am. It's very readable, I find. Well, this isn't the only thing Christians disagree about. They disagree about all kinds of things. You know, there are Christians in the world today who believe that the gospel makes them free. And so they want to they want to smoke cigars and they want to drink whiskey.

And that shows they have Christian liberty. And there are other Christians on the other side who say, you know, we should take no stimulants into our bodies. We you know, you start with, you start with tea. Next thing you're drinking coffee, next thing you're drinking coke, next thing you're taking cocaine. It's all this slippery slope.

And there's a young man. Let's imagine his name is Jason. And Jason has adopted this conviction that all stimulants are bad for. You should just live the life that God gives you. You should eat broccoli and and, salmon and baked potatoes. Sweet potatoes, of course. And no stimulants. That's his true conviction. And he has a friend, a mentor named Andrew.

And Andrew does not agree. Andrew thinks it's fine to drink coffee in the morning or tea in the afternoon, and he even thinks it's okay to drink Coke. And I've learned in my time here in the South that there's different kinds of coke, by the way. There's Coke, Coke, and there's doctor Pepper, Coke and there's Fanta, Coke and.

I don't know, there's a lot of kinds of coke.

And Andrew will not drink it because he doesn't want to mislead Jason. He's convinced he can drink coffee and tea, but he's not going to do it because he wants Jason, whom he leads, whom he mentors. He wants Jason to believe that he's serious about righteousness, and following God is not careless and heedless. He doesn't want to help Jason lean toward carelessness.

He wants Jason to follow his convictions. He does not want to drink coffee, even though it's perfectly fine to drink coffee, in his opinion, and mind the matter at hand. Even though it's fine to drink coffee, he's not going to drink coffee and thereby induce Jason to do something he thinks is wrong. Because if you're convinced that you shouldn't drink coffee than friends, you should not drink coffee because the Bible says Romans 14 ends with this statement whatever does not come from faith is sin.

That means whatever you do, you should be convinced that it's good and right to do it. Whether that's Coke's hamburgers, cheeseburgers, or bacon. Everything we do, everything we drink, everything we eat. Every time we go to sleep, we say, Lord bless my sleep. I believe it's right to sleep. When we read books and we play games and we dole out hugs.

When we make jokes, when we choose our clothes, we should do it all out of the conviction that now I am living by faith. And so Andrew knows that he wants Jason to live that way so he doesn't drink beverages in front of him. Paul says, why in chapter 14, verse 17, you can follow along in your Bibles.

I'm covering a lot of ground today. Chapter 14 verse 17 says, the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which means we're free to eat all kinds of foods. But that doesn't mean we should eat all kinds of foods, because satisfying ourselves with what we like to eat or drink, or how we like to shake ourselves from lethargy with little stimulation, what we want to do is not the final determinant of how we live.

We keep our eyes on the rest of the body of Christ, and do nothing that would lead them to stray from life of faith, offering everything to God in faith. All food is clean. Paul says there's no doubt the strong the Gentiles who had that view are right. But Paul also says in verse 22, the faith that you have that is, say, the conviction you can eat and drink anything.

Keep between yourself and God. Sometimes you don't have to tell everybody every last thing you think, especially if it will be divisive, because the kingdom of God is more than a matter of eating and drinking. Let me just make sure you hear it again. I'm going to say it a little bit different way. When you're in the middle of a controversy, you do three things.

The first thing you do is study the matter. There are correct answers. The strong who believe I can eat meat and every day is sacred to God. The strong right, the weak are wrong. Study the matter. Come to convictions. Don't give up. Number one. Number two, pursue the truth by studying the Bible, by listening, by thinking. Don't just go to your first opinion.

All opinions are equal. The thought that enters your mind for the first moment just now is not as strong as the opinion of somebody who studied the matter for 20 years, study the Bible, spent time with wise people, and then third, don't use your convictions in a way that would cause a

brother or sister to stumble. Because we are the body of Christ. We're a community of believers and we don't just please ourselves. Jesus pleased us and therefore we please others. So says Romans 8:15.

Now I want to make a little proviso or a caveat for a second. The proviso is this is not absolute. It's not absolute that we never tell anybody they're wrong.

I had a conversation with somebody one time, and it included this statement an unbeliever or extremely weak believer. I'm not sure which one he was, but he said, I like to think of God as a benevolent grandfather who smiles on our successes and gives us a little nudge from time to time when we need some counsel or advice.

That's how I like to think of God. And I said, that's interesting, but not very weighty, because how you like to think about God is not determinative of anything. What if I like to think of you, you as a firefighter, does that make you a firefighter? What if I like to think of you as a dog sled chief and trainer in Alaska?

Does that make you a dog sled trainer? It most certainly does not in our thoughts about other people don't change those other people. God is who he is and you should stop declaring how you like to think about God and study who he actually is. I said it a little nicer than this, but I said it. You should be much more interested in what God thinks about you than what you like to think about God.

So, I had to correct that man because we were in a conversation. And, you know, he was in my life and I was some kind of a teacher to him. And so we do correct people when they're making major mistakes. And we let it go. We were silent. We were healed. We let the pleasures of others count more than our own pleasures in minor matters.

Okay, so how do we stay united? I want you to walk through 1 to 7 with me, and I'm going to give you a theological category called the indicative and the imperative. The indicative in the narrative means that what God does, the indicative statement, historical statements, statements of fact are the ground for everything God tells us to do. That's the imperatives.

All the imperatives the Bible gives us rests somehow or other on who God is or what he's done. The imperatives we ought to do. Rest on the indicative who God is and what he's done in history. So follow along with me. If you would. In Matthew chapter 15, verses 1 to 7. In verse two and three we are told to please others, not ourselves, because Jesus please others, not himself.

What Jesus did guides us. Verse four we endure because we follow the God of endurance and encourage it. In verse seven, we welcome others because Jesus welcomed us and continues to

welcome people to himself. So just to say it a little bit differently, the strong bear with the failings of the weak, because Jesus bears with us on our failings.

That's verse one. Believers please their neighbors, not themselves, because Jesus pleased his neighbors. Us not himself. And believers edify each other because Jesus edifies us. And we live in harmony because it gives glory to God and we welcome each other one more time as Christ welcomes us. Let's just look at a couple of these in a little bit more detail.

It says in verse one we bear with one another. The strong should bear with the failings of the weak and not please themselves. Now that sounds a little bit negative. I have to bear with you. It means yeah, when someone displeases me, when someone has a conviction or a manner, maybe they're a little bit. I don't know how to put it.

I'll put it this way. my wife and I went to the symphony yesterday, and, she made me change my clothes, and I was wearing white pants. She said, you can't wear white pants to the symphony. I mean, that just not permitted. You can wear dark beige pants, but. Okay, I'll change my clothes. And we got there and we saw not only people with white pants. We saw multiple people with white pants, people with white wrinkled pants. We saw men in shorts. We saw men in Hawaiian print shirts. We saw a man in a bowling shirt. He had clearly just come from the bowling alley. But. I didn't like any of it because I could have kept my white pants on.

Bare with it. You go to the symphony, say these people aren't dressed right. Bear with it. It's not that big a deal. Let it go. You fill in the blank for yourself. What is it that you don't want to put up with? Put up with it because the Lord puts up with us. That sounds a little bit negative, and it kind of is.

But I want to tell you the word bear with also us another meaning, and it can be much more positive in the Bible, to bear sometimes means to bear one another's burdens, that is to say, not just put up with them, but actually help them carry them forward when it's too much for them. So we bear with each other.

When they behave in ways we don't like. We don't condemn, we don't mock, we don't laugh, we don't belittle, we love them and we help them along if we can. That's the first one. Second one is verses 2 to 4. We please each other as Jesus pleased others, not himself. Let me read it one more time in verse two.

But each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up. So it says, we do what we can not to be people pleasers. That's miserable. It's miserable to run around trying to do whatever people want us to do. We please them in the deeper way of doing what's right, doing what's good. We try to please God, not man, but if we truly please God, we will be kind to the people around us, especially in minor matters.

And the verse that follows is a little bit surprising in verse three. If you look at it with me, we please others, not ourselves. As it is written, the reproaches of those who reproach you fell on me. Now what that's saying is, is this Jesus did not please himself, but he came to this world knowing he would be reproached by people, reproached by the Pharisees, who called him a lawbreaker, reproached by the leaders of Israel, who had much more interest in power than true religion, and mocked him on the cross, saying he saved others, but he can't save himself if he's the Son of God.

Let him come down now from the cross. Jesus knew that he would endure those reproaches, but he took them so that the reproaches that people throw on God would fall on him, and he took them. So the reproaches that fall on us would fall on him. Jesus did not please himself. He did not come to this world to look around.

He did not come to this world because he heard about Iguazu Falls or Pilchards Falls. He didn't come because you heard about some awesome, awesome cathedrals in Strasbourg and Cambridge. He came to bear reproach for us not to please himself, but to please us, to please God, who had a plan of redemption and eternal plan of salvation, to redeem a lost and dying race.

Jesus could have silenced those who reproached him, but he didn't because he had to finish his work. And so, in a much milder way, we don't live for ourselves. The Bible says he bore the reproaches, and theologians write things like, you know, he had the ability to silence his accusers. He had the power not to suffer what he did suffer, but he suffered it for us.

And the strong who know what foods they can eat and what they can drink, should consider a trivial and light matter to put others first. You know, we have music in this church, and one of the interesting things I know about music is that people have tastes that differ. And I like trumpets, but maybe some of you didn't like the trumpets today.

And I liked actually, I liked all the songs today. But I'll be honest with you, I don't always like every song. And when that happens, my responsibility is not to grumble and complain about the song I didn't like. It's to give thanks for the songs I did like and to give thanks that other people obviously like those other songs or we wouldn't be singing them.

And it should be a trivial thing for me to lay aside my musical preferences. And honestly, friends, it should be a trivial, trivial thing for you to do the same and to give thanks for whatever we receive. It's our responsibility to please others, not ourselves. This is a key to the life of the church. Today I'm going to give you two illustrations.

The first one comes from the world of sports in the years 1919 40, the times of runners were going down really fast. I mean, believe it or not, we have lots of high school runners who were faster than the fastest runners in the world from the year 1900. And everybody's excited because everybody's excited because somebody someday is going to break the four minute mile mark.

And then in 1940, it stalled at about 401, 402. And and people were asked, is it possible for human beings to run a mile, 15 miles an hour, four minutes straight? Is it possible for, for somebody to run a four minute mile? And there was a runner named Roger Bannister, a medical student, and people said, you know, he might be the one who could do it, but he didn't do it himself.

He created many people, created a team, and the team ended up with three runners. And the first one ran half a mile right in front of Roger Bannister as hard as he could go, but breaking the when giving a tiny bit of drafts, a little bit less effort, little bit better chance of running the mile in under four minutes.

And then he peeled off, exhausted, and another man took the lead, and he ran as hard as he could for 3/8 of a mile. Same reason. Break the wind. Little drafting. And then he peeled off, exhausted, and Roger Bannister ran only 220 yards. One eighth of the distance is all he ran by himself, and he finished in 359.4, because other people did not please themselves, but accomplished what no individual could have accomplished, they pleased others.

Roger Bannister, the world. About 20 years later, seven men did the same thing, so that the time for the marathon would go under two hours for the first time, because there too, the timing stalled and stalled installed. And people said, Will we ever get below a two minute mile? It's our two hour marathon. And the answer is it took a team of seven, each saying, I will be insignificant so someone else can accomplish something.

Now let me take it from the realm of athletics and make it personal. As some of you know, if you got to know me, you know that I have some strange habits. And one of my strange habits is that I answer emails that accumulated during the day, especially if they're, a little bit complicated late at night. And it goes like this I don't need as much sleep as my wife.

And so she goes to bed and I stay up and I answer complicated emails. And maybe after reading complicated writing complicated emails, I'll read a book and I'll take some notes on a book. And as I do so, as time goes by, I get hungry because it's been hours since I ate supper, and as a consequence, I'll maybe get out some hummus and some crackers and some cheese and I'll eat them over here, and then I'll maybe get, I don't know, blueberries and grapes or, I don't know, an orange and eat them over there, and then maybe I'll decide I need a little bit of Wheaties or some chocolate ice cream to carry me through to the end. And at the end of this period of time,

doing these wonderful things. there's a dish here and there's food there, and not this year. There's a there's a spoon over there. And I think to myself, I'm a noble person. I've been working hard all day. And then I came home and I answered emails. I'll just leave this.

These dishes strewn around the house because I have every right to do that, don't I? No thumbs up on this one. Nobody with me on this. No. My job is to please my wife, and certainly I leave the dishes out from time to time. It's true. But if it rises to consciousness, which it usually does, if it rises to consciousness, it is my sacred obligation not to please myself, but to please my wife and put away this thought that my goodness will take me 45 seconds to put all these foods and things away and just do the work, because as a Christian, it is my obligation to follow Christ and not to please myself, but to please others. No, you have to figure out how it applies to you, but I believe you can.

Because Romans 15 says that the whole Bible is written for our instruction. It says that every line of Scripture was written to teach us whatever is written. Paul says in our passage, whatever is written encourages us and helps us to endure and teaches us how to live. And I want to make sure you know that the nouns are clear, but the pronouns when we here, especially when you have the word, you in English, unless you're in the south and say y'all, but translations don't say y'all, so you never know.

So I'm going to tell you that this passage is not saying this is simply an individual matter. I'm going to read it to you with the with the pronouns clear. I mean, the God of endurance and encouragement grant you plural, to live in such harmony with one another in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you plural, may with one voice glorify God and the father of our plural Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a plural life. This is not a word to individuals to have more grit. It is a word to the body of Christ together, to put each other first, and to please each other, and to please Christ, to please each other. And then the third is verse seven. One more time we welcome one another as Jesus did. We welcome, we receive, we accept.

We accept people whose manners are a little bit different, who wear bowling shirts inappropriately. People who have hair or clothes or a voice is too loud or too soft. Their nose is too long. They have hair in the wrong places on their body. We welcome all these people because Christ welcomes us. Think about the way Christ welcomes us.

Think about the welcome Christ gave to Peter and the other apostles after they had betrayed him. If Jesus could welcome Peter back into ministry, if Peter all the disciples fled. When Jesus was crucified, they all ran. If Jesus could welcome them all back, which he did except for Judas, if he could welcome them all back, then surely, we can welcome each other and we can think about practical ways to do that.

Practical ways means that when you're in a little circle of 5 or 6 of your favorite people and you see somebody else come up and then hesitate, step aside, make room for that person in your circle. And if you're having a conversation about something and somebody walks up, you say, hey, we're talking about this, and you're welcome to the conversation.

There are practical ways in which we do this, not just theoretical ways we do this together. And that's what drives the mission. That takes up Paul's mind from chapter 15, verse 14 onward, because from 15:14 onward, Paul says, listen, one big reason why I want the church at Rome to be unified is I want you to be unified in supporting my mission, because I'm going off, he says.

This is my ambition. I'm going off to proclaim Christ and to start churches where Jesus has never been named. And that's really hard. Paul was in a perfect position for it. He had Roman citizenship. He knew Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Latin, was a member of that elite group called Roman citizens. He was perfectly positioned, but he also knew there's no way he could start churches all throughout the western half of the Roman Empire without the support of the Church of Rome, which was unified.

It takes a unified church to do the work of proclaiming Christ to the world. He wants unity because unity drives mission and we are a mission driven church. So Paul says, be united so you can come with me. Wherever Paul went, he also he always took people with him. It took 2 to 7 people on every journey he ever entered into.

I need you to send people with me. I need you to pray for me, he said. And I want you to do that. Jew and Gentile like I want to run through a few verses in 15, 9 to 12 just for a moment, because Paul is going to tell us about another form of unity. And this form of unity is that all the nations of the world, all the peoples of the world, should call on Christ.

In verse nine he quotes Psalm 18 therefore I will praise you among the nations, and sing your name. The nations should hear the praise. The Gentiles should hear the praise of God. In verse 11 he cites Psalm 117 praise the Lord, O you Gentiles, and let all the nations extoll him. And then a little bit later in verse 12, he cites Isaiah chapter 11, verse ten, the root of Jesse will come.

He says, even he who rises to rule the Gentiles in him will the Gentiles hope. Now the root of Jesse is Jesse, and leads to the son of Jesse, who is David, and Jesus is the son of David. So the world must know that there's somebody coming. This is a gospel for the world. Paul quotes actually, for passages on a road to say, listen, make sure you understand that from the beginning, all throughout the Old Testament, the nations were supposed to praise God.

We're supposed to turn to the Son of David, namely Jesus. And that's why we go out. There's also a twist in this as Paul gathers, Jew and Gentile alike, he gathers the week in the strong and says, you all need to hang together. Our first service we had high school grads, maybe sixth

grade grads and maybe college grads, but they're all together. High school grads. And I said to them, you understand what this means? Sometimes younger people, newer believers go farther than older believers. The strong. In Romans chapter 14 and 15, the ones that know they can eat whatever they want and know that every day is glorious to God. That's new believers. New believers can go further. You who are believers for a long time, you have to keep on renewing your faith. Don't get stuck in what you heard 40 years ago or 20 years ago, or a book you read when you're 18. Keep on learning so the mission of God can go forward. That's what Paul is implying here. We're going forward together. This is Paul's ambition, he says. I make it. My ambition to proclaim Christ was never been heard before. And I said it kind of for the grads. But I said, everybody, it's good to have ambitions in this world right now. There's a general tendency to say, you know, ambitions are bad, ambitions are selfish. I read recently that something like 40% of all college students hope to have an ambition to become a social influencer, that maybe not the best ambition you could possibly have.

But there's nothing wrong with ambition. Selfish ambition is bad ambition to do what God has called upon you to do, individually and collectively as a church is good. You should have grand ambitions. We scorn ambition because we associate it with things like a desire to be famous. But you don't have to desire to be famous, to have an ambition.

One of my grandchildren a little while ago, a few months ago, said to me, Papa, you're a little bit famous. And I said in a few very narrow circles, maybe. Now let me tell you what it means to be famous. Mildly famous as a reformed theologian. It means people can quote you and can misquote you. It means that random people write your letters and expect you to answer at great length.

Which is why I stay awake late at night. And it means that they can say unkind things about you with impunity. But here's what it really means. It means that in the church, in the church, the one place where I'm really famous is within the five. The two year old group. And when the five and four and three and two year olds meet me, I'm their pastor and I think it's pretty cool.

I talked to one a few days ago who called me Doctor Dorian. Hi, doctor Dorian, I'm glad to be Doctor Dorian. I'm glad to be famous in their eyes, in that tiny little group of three, four and five year olds here. Brian. Brightwood. And you can desire to be famous to. You can desire to be famous for being the best mom your kids have ever known, and the best elementary school librarian.

And the mechanical engineer or the electrical engineer. It's known in your little circle, your corporation, your company as the man or woman to go to when you have this problem. And by the way, they'll be nice when they help you out. You can have an ambitious good to have an

ambitious good for us to have an ambition to take the gospel to places where it's never been known to do deeds of service has ever been thought about.

And we do it together. To say it again, this is a church hopping kind of town. People come and go. They come to a church that makes them feel good. And by the way, church should make you feel good, although it should make you feel bad. Appropriately for repentance from time to time. One person said, my church is not a bless me club. You should seek a blessing a church, but it's not a bless me club. It's a place in which we function you plural, as the body of Christ, praising him among the Gentiles, we're mostly Gentiles doing his work, welcoming each other into the body of Christ. Not to prove anything, but not because we hope the Christ will receive us if we do enough good stuff.

No, because we behold Christ. We know who he is. We know what he's done. We know he's borne reproaches for us. We know he's given us a purpose for life, a model in himself that rests on his absolute saving grace. May we live in it.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, we ask that you give us a warm desire, sweet and happy desire to welcome each other as you've welcomed us to please each other, as you have pleased us to lay aside our prerogatives. Even as Lord Jesus, you laid aside all your prerogatives when you came to this world to redeem us. And so, Lord, looking at all you've done, all of your indicative, all of who you are, everything you have fulfilled for our salvation, we find our light or enthusiasm, our strength in that grow out joyfully together, doing your work, building your kingdom in this world.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.