



“My Son’s Transformers”

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Scripture (NRSV):

Romans 12:1-8

12 So, brothers and sisters, because of God’s mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate priestly service. ² Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.

³ Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. ⁴ We have many parts in one body, but the parts don’t all have the same function. ⁵ In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other. ⁶ We have different gifts that are consistent with God’s grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, you should prophesy in proportion to your faith. ⁷ If your gift is service, devote yourself to serving. If your gift is teaching, devote yourself to teaching. ⁸ If your gift is encouragement, devote yourself to encouraging. The one giving should do it with no strings attached. The leader should lead with passion. The one showing mercy should be cheerful.

Sermon:

When I was younger, I was very irritated by the apostle Paul. He seemed always to be complaining, and scolding us all to be different, to be better, to change ourselves, our bodies, our words and attitudes. I tried to be a nice young woman and I didn't like his bossy ways, so I didn't spend much time with Paul, I assure you.

Now, I am older, and maybe wiser. I view Paul with a somewhat kinder eye. I also recognize and forgive his social and cultural biases a little more easily.

And I can actually hear him encouraging and even congratulating his little crowd of Roman Christians, in this passage.

They are different than the people around them. They are different than the Jewish community in Rome. They are, and they don't need to be ashamed, he tells them. They don't need to hide their differentness because it is beautiful.

It is, God's will.

Now, the will of God was another irksome phrase when I was younger. Who knew the "will" of God, anyhow? Usually some old white guy who was trying to oppress me, keep me quiet, boss me around.

So, yeah, "will of God" annoyed me, too.

Then I discovered the theological possibility that "will of God" meant "God's design for creation".

I can see beauty and design in everything in creation, and it makes my heart sing in thanksgiving to the designer of our glorious creation.

Paul might be using this language when he speaks, he might be.

I will give him the benefit of the doubt and believe he, too, is awed and thrilled at seeing God's design in his Roman Christian friends.

Look, oh look, at the beautiful people around you! Look, oh look, at how you strive to be beautiful members of the Body of Christ.

Like my sons toy Transformers, you are so much more than you seem!

How many of you are familiar with Transformers? Trucks that turn out to be so much more than a truck. There is a whole universe and detailed world story for these toys. Good guys and bad guys, heroes and villains. Megatron, and Optimus Prime. And they start out looking like simple cars and trucks.

Those toys kept Nick busy for years. And I understand the toys spawned a whole series of movies too. Nick tells me they are not very good, but they have lots of action and explosions.

But I was always amazed that the toys were more than they seemed. That was the really cool part, that let this mom play with her son and his toys, and have a great time with it!

I look around this space and I see people who strive daily, even moment to moment, to live lives that are filled with holy mystery, divine love. As Paul suggests, I see people who take their individual strengths and put them to work for others...who take the thing that they care about and share it. They are more than they seem.

Paul put it this way:

“God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. ⁴We have many parts in one body, but the parts don’t all have the same function. ⁵In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other. ⁶We have different gifts that are consistent with God’s grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, you should prophesy in proportion to your faith. ⁷If your gift is service, devote yourself to serving. If your gift is teaching, devote yourself to teaching. ⁸If your gift is encouragement, devote yourself to encouraging. The one giving should do it with no strings attached. The leader should lead with passion. The one showing mercy should be cheerful.”

Gifts, gifts, gifts. People in their variety and their uniqueness, each with some gift to give, to share, to use for the transformation of the world.

Because it’s not just we who are like those little toy Transformers...as we look out at the world, as we live and work in our precious creation...we can see that it, too, is like a surprising toy, so much more than it seems!

We don’t just walk on the earth, we are called to treasure it...from its hot and seething core, to the smallest creature upon it...there is the wild creativity of the Creator God in it all.

From our most basic building blocks of life, we realize that we are stardust and we are intrinsically connected to our world, to the sun and all the universe. We are gifts from the universe, and gifts to the universe.

There is beauty that shines through it all, and theologians believe, a divine call to completeness, to fulfilling God's design for the earth and the stars, as well as all peoples.

So I invite you, you sweet people who are God's glory and creativity, sitting in a pew; keep on!

You shine; shine on!

You unique and wonderful teachers, healers, leaders, prophets, givers....you are beautiful.

You are transforming yourselves, and those around you, through the power of your love and passion.

Bless you! Keep on!

Alleluia.