**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Text:** Romans 12:1-8

**Theme:** Put you whole self in!

It is a bit silly and somewhat tiring song and dance. Perhaps you have heard of it or even experienced it at a wedding. It is called the hokey pokey. The song and dance tell you to put our left arm, right arm, right leg, left leg, into the into the circle, shake it all about, and do the hokey pokey. At the end you put your whole self in!

Our text for today reminds me of this dance. When I think of the phrase “put your whole self in! it sounds like what Paul is encouraging us to do. “To present your bodies” is Paul’s way of saying, “Put your whole self in.” **Therefore, I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship.** This is not a silly song and dance we do at weddings. This is our spiritual act of worship. And God wants all of us! **Put your whole self in!**

We understand the idea of giving an offering at church. There are plates that are used to collect it. We place money or a check in the plate. We have envelopes that help us keep track of our offerings. It represents an acknowledgement of God’s blessings. It represents our response to his gospel message and a commitment to the ministry of the congregation. It is a part of our worship. It may seem different today because of the pandemic. We do not pass the plate, instead offerings are set in the plate before entering the sanctuary or sent in by electronic giving and by mail. Yes offerings are part of our worship, but all of us, need some help with the idea of offering ourselves to God. What does is really means to “**put our whole self in”**

Real worship is not merely praying to God, being a part of a liturgy or some splendid ritual. It is not making large donations. Nor is it singing great songs of praise, or even listening to a sermon. Real worship happens when we confess our sins, turn from sin, repent and understand, really understand that we have the forgiveness of sins. This is when God gives us the ability to see his gift of grace. Then, we can offer ourselves to God in a loving response to what he has done for us!

Listen to what Paul has to say. **Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship. 2Also, do not continue to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you test and approve what is the will of God—what is good, pleasing, and perfect.**

He put His left arm in, he put his right arm in, he put his left leg he put his right leg in. There on that rugged cross. For you and for me. For the entire world. He did not pull his had away, even when the nail was placed in his palm. He willingly put them all in. And the result? Nails that were driven into those hands and feet. There on that cross. He put his whole self in. His life for ours! **By the mercies of God!** His mercy. His love. His grace.

We are the ones who should have had the nails driven into our palms. We are sinners. He did not sin! Our sin deserves death—punishment in hell forever. He took our place, suffered hell and died in our place**. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)** We are saved from the fires of hell. We are given the gift of life. Jesus the grace-giver, Jesus the dead-raiser, Jesus our Savior. How could we ever forget that?

Now, if this is not enough motivation for us, for us to put our whole selves in, then we are in trouble? Our actions often show we have forgotten just what Jesus has done for us. We are tempted to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. “I am ok. I am fine. I really do not need Jesus to be so involved in my life. I do not need Jesus every day. Occasionally is enough.”

Where would we be without Jesus’ love and forgiveness? Where would we be without God’s presence in our lives? What kind of hope would we have without him?

Let’s think for a moment about our situations. Consider our family, our friends, our job, and our church, our country. Where would we be with out Jesus? **Lost & Condemned!**

But thanks be to God. We are not lost! God’s grace is always there.

**3So by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think in a way that results in sound judgment, as God distributed a measure of faith to each of you. 4For we have many members in one body, and not all the members have the same function. 5In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given us. If the gift is prophecy, do it in complete agreement with the faith. 7If it is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach. 8If it is encouraging, then encourage. If it is contributing, be generous. If it is leadership, be diligent. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully.**

Let’s think for a moment again about our situation. We are not lost and condemned. We are saved. That is an unbelievable thing! Yes saved! You are transformed! God has done it. He word is alive and active. Right here right now. So respond! Respond to this! Be alive! This is worship!

Paul said “... offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1). The expression “living sacrifice” is not the same as the Old Testament sacrifices. While the Old Testament worshiper offered an animal or crops form the field, the New Testament worshiper is to offer himself or herself.

When Paul uses the term body he is saying the whole person. In this act of living person, we do give not our dead bodies. Living implies life. Life is an everyday experience—cutting lawn, painting windows, counting money, cleaning, meetings, teaching and the list goes on and on. Paul gives concrete examples of living sacrifices--worship.

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Offering ourselves to God is not something that should be contained within a sixty-minute worship. A living sacrifice is a sacrifice that is alive and continually in motion. This means worship occurs not just in the sanctuary but in our everyday lives, each task, each opportunity, each problem, each success, and eve each failure. True worship is our personal connection of faith and works, the offering of everyday life to God. **But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. James 1:18**

One of the things we learned in Africa while viewing wild animals is the terms used to express what a group of the animals are. A pride of lions, a raft of hippos, a parade of elephants. These terms had interesting meanings imbedded in them. Lions promote power and pride. Hippos stay close together in the river as it dries up and they look like a raft. Elephants walk in a line and families as if a parade. A group of rhinos is called a crash. You see, rhinos can run thirty miles an hour, which is pretty fast when you consider how much weight they’re pulling. They are actually faster than squirrels, which can run up to twenty-six miles an hour.

But the rhinos have a problem. Their eyesight is very bad. Rhinos can see only thirty feet in front of them. Can you imagine something that large moving in concert as a group, plowing ahead at thirty miles an hour with no idea what’s at thirty-one feet? You would think that they would be far too timid to pick up full steam, that their inability to see far enough ahead would paralyze them to immobility. But with that horn pointing the way, rhinos run forward full steam ahead without apprehension, which leads us to their name.

Rhinos moving together at full speed are known as a crash. Even when they’re just hanging around enjoying the watershed, they’re called a crash because of their potential. You’ve got to love that!

I think that’s what we’re supposed to be. We have the potential. Lets run. Get going. Worship! Put your whole self in! When the church becomes a crash we become an unstoppable force. Gods force!

**Amen**