

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for August 23, 2026

Romans 12:1-8 - "One Person, One Body, One Team"

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

I'm a pretty big Winnipeg Jets and Blue Bombers fan. I used to watch as many hockey games as possible on TV and we're Bomber season ticket holders. When I was a kid, we would go to my uncle's house every Saturday to watch Hockey Night in Canada. Football is still on every week, but while I don't watch much hockey anymore, when it comes to playoff season, I'll try to find a way to fit a few into my schedule.

One of my favorite parts was watching the interviews, especially after big wins like the Stanley Cup or the Grey Cup. Everyone was so excited and happy. And almost every person interviewed would praise their teammates. Even when the reporter would ask about a goal or catch or touchdown that the player got, it was always "I couldn't have done it without my teammates", or "we won this game as a team", or "it was a team effort." In my opinion, the best teams are the ones who are there for each other. The teams where when one player is struggling, another one picks up their play. The teams where each person has their unique gift, is supported by their teammates, and are missed when they aren't there. The other thing that makes a team great is when they are involved in their community. We often hear stories of athletes being involved in their community. Whether it's visiting children's hospitals, donating money to military veterans, or having a pickup game with neighbour kids.

Paul says that this is what the church is supposed to be like. The book of Romans can be divided into two parts: a theological explanation of the gospel for the first 11 chapters and a series of ethical exhortations for the rest of the letter. At the end of chapter 11, Paul reflects on God's mysterious, fixed purpose and great mercies for all people. In response, he broke into doxology, expressing his praise to God. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen." (11:36) But the letter doesn't end there. Paul introduces new content as he brings the story of Christ's redemption to bear on the life of the believer in tangible and practical ways.

As we head into chapter 12, Paul calls his audience to respond to God's great mercies not simply in doxology, but with a living sacrifice. Pulling on the language that giving a sacrifice to God was a typical piece of worship during Paul's time, he is telling us that we are now to be that sacrifice. Not by offering ourselves in death at the altar, but by giving ourselves fully and wholly to God. More than just spiritual worship, Paul is calling us to bodily worship. Paul exhorts his audience to present their bodies and reminds them that they are one body in Christ with many members.

In the last part of today's reading, Paul emphasizes that while we are one body with many members, not all members have the same function. We are all individuals with unique attributes and gifts that, when put together, become the amazing body of Christ. We might be teachers or prophets or caregivers or leaders or followers. No matter our gift, we are all an important piece of the puzzle, important cogs in the machine that we call "church".

We are a team. We are "Team Church". Like in the CFL, we meet once a week to do the thing we do. We gather in one spot. We read some lessons. We hear a sermon. We sing some music. We receive a blessing. And then we go home. And there is nothing wrong with that! I have always called Sunday

worship a resetting for the week. It is powerful and meaningful. All of the things we do each week is meant to be a communal reminder, a re-orientation, and a loving accountability which brings us back to the way of Jesus. But then what? Is this full-bodied worship? Is that being the body of Christ?

We call the body of Christ “church” but that doesn’t mean the individual buildings. Talking about church as the body of Christ is talking about the people, the believers, who collectively form the church. Being the body of Christ means to be united under his name, unified members working together to keep being what Jesus called us to be from the very beginning – God’s beloved people.

For Paul, this full-bodied worship is not an activity but a way of being, a way of living in full relationship to God and each other through the way of Jesus Christ. This full-bodied worship happens in the community as we live out our faith by serving one another to build up the body of Christ. The quality of our worship is not measured by what happens on Sunday mornings, but by what happens when we are out in our community from Monday through Saturday. Paul’s worship of Christ wasn’t confined to a building, so why should ours be?

The western church has long enjoyed a privileged place as an institution. However, the church was never meant to be just an institution. It was meant to be a community of forgiveness and love and generosity. Almost across the board, church buildings are starting to empty. Where people used to walk to church in droves, they are now driving in small groups. The meaning of being in the building is fading away. But that doesn’t mean the team is breaking up! It just means things look differently than they did before. The church is being reborn into what was always meant to be – a group of people doing things that puts us outside the norms of behaviour for our society.

We are being called to change, to discern what this new body of Christ will look like. We need to wrap our minds around what we do day to day in our lives that expresses God’s will. Now, more than ever, we will need to lean on each other, help each other discern our gifts, and find new ways to serve God as a living sacrifice.

So, what did Paul mean when he spoke about full-bodied worship? It means worship as acts of service for others done in the name of Christ. It means moving beyond the sanctuary into the streets. It means acts of kindness extended to others. It means helping those in need rise above the barriers of the education system or health system. It means giving resources to help improve the quality of life for someone.

None of us are perfect but we all are part of one body and one team. We are team church! The church that is a group of people and communities gathered by the grace and mercy of God who loves us freely and ferociously. The church that is meant to be a body giving Christ a face and voice and hands and feet to the world. The church that truly offers ourselves for service to others in the name of Christ.

Amen.