

## *Not to Judge but to Worship and to Serve*

### **Romans 14: 1-12 (September 17, 2017)**

#### ***Romans 14: 1-4***

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. 2Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. 3Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. 4Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another?

#### ***Historical Context***

Paul expects to visit Rome soon, and when he arrives he will be seeking support from the community of house churches in Rome for the first-century equivalent of a Kickstarter campaign to help fund his missionary travels to Spain. The phrase “to be sent on” in 15:24 [Gk = propempe] refers to support for the journey, such as money, food, travel arrangements, etc. Thus, it was important for Paul to focus on what believers have in common.

#### ***Theme: Not to Judge but to Worship and to Serve.***

At its core, the issue here is each group setting itself above the other group, claiming the high moral ground for its particular practices and opinions. On one side are the vegetarians; on the other are people who will eat anything, with each side sneering judgmentally at the other about their behavior. From the first century until now, it seems, people manage to develop self-righteous attitudes toward those with whom they disagree.

In our current polarized, contentious culture, consider filling in the blanks with verse 3: Those who do or think X must not despise those who think or do Y, and those who think or do Y must not pass judgment on those who do or think X; for God has welcomed them. Perhaps we can raise the level of discourse and discussion in light of the standing of us all as people called by grace and by God not to judge but to worship and to serve.

#### ***Gospel Story as a Case Study (Matthew 18:21-35)***

Building on the theme of not judging people, is the parable about forgiveness. Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who sins against him. Rather than judge someone's worthiness for forgiveness, Jesus holds up a mirror to us each time we think we have to limit our forgiveness. “Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow-servant just as I had on you?” That is the question that Christ asks us.

#### ***Something to try with someone with whom you disagree***

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/08/business/getting-along-when-you-disagree.html>