



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, September 11-17 (A) – Romans 14:1-12

Focus: *Live to the Lord*

word of life

“If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.” Romans 14:8 (NRSV)

Read Romans 14:1-12

How does a follower of Christ live faithfully in community with others? This is the question Paul is addressing in chapter 14 of his letter to the Romans. It seems that differences and disputes had arisen in the community of faith about how to live out the faith in daily life.

1. *What are some issues that can divide communities of faith?*

Disagreements about appropriate foods to eat and the proper way to keep the Sabbath and other holy days were dividing the Roman community. For many, it was a matter of principle. (Paul also addresses the issue of proper diet in his letter to the Corinthians – I Corinthians 10:23-11:1.) People were being judged by others for the ways in which they practiced their faith.

2. *What are some modern-day examples of “proper” norms and principles for a follower of Christ?*
3. *Does a person’s diet reflect the depth of Christian faith? Explain your answer.*

Paul expresses an inclusive, open acceptance of others who are expressing their faith in different ways. The one, overarching criterion Paul asserts is that everything we do in our daily life, we should do to honor the Lord. Whether certain foods are eaten, or whether one abstains; whether worship services are held on Sunday, or the Sabbath is kept on Saturday – all should be done in order to honor Christ.

Principles are important, but we are called not to serve principles but to serve God. “Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.” (Romans 14:6 NRSV) Those who differ in principle and practice of the faith also belong to God and are striving to honor God in what they do. If we treat all days and all foods as gifts from God; we make each day and each meal holy.

4. *What does it mean to “honor the Lord” with your eating habits?*
5. *Can you think of examples of abstaining in honor of the Lord?*

All this is done in community. In one of the beloved verses in Paul’s letters—one often read at funerals—he writes, “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.” (Romans 14:8 NRSV)

Our religious practices might vary. Our understandings of what is appropriate might differ. Only one thing matters in the end, and that is our relationship with Christ. How we express and live that relationship is to be a reflection and response to the Good News: in life and in death, we are the Lord’s. “For this end, Christ died and lived again” (Romans 14:9 NRSV)

6. *Summarize Paul’s teachings in your own words.*

word among us

Klaus was a life-long Lutheran of German heritage. The congregation where he was a member was a central part of his faith and life. Every October, the congregation celebrated Wurstfest with music, bratwurst, and a keg of German beverage. Klaus was known to enjoy the food, festivities, and beer (in moderation, of course).

One year, however, Klaus invited a friend to join him at the festival. And Klaus was noticeably different. He had a soft drink in his hand. When other members of the congregation asked him about the change, he paused and then said, “My friend is a recovering alcoholic; I want to make her feel welcomed and comfortable. After all, what is more important: my relationship with my friend, or the beverage I’m drinking?”

1. *Describe a time when you changed your actions to welcome and include others.*
2. *In what ways do our actions reflect what is most important in our lives?*

Wine or grape juice? Bread or wafers? Leaven or unleaven loaves? Kneeling or standing? Bratwurst, lutefisk, or enchiladas? Traditional or contemporary? Liberal or conservative? These are important issues and distinctions with which every community of faith has to wrestle. People practice and live out their faith in a multitude of ways. Oftentimes, we make judgments about others who are different and who express their faith in different ways.

3. *When might different views and preferences in worship become a blessing to the whole? Share an example.*
4. *How has your life been blessed by someone (from a different generation, gender, race, or socioeconomic group) who saw things differently than you?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

We “practice” or live out our faith in community. As we remember and affirm our baptism, we promise and commit to “live among God’s faithful people.” This commitment calls us to be open to different ways of expressing the faith. We strive to be accepting of differences, to live and act in ways that reflect the ultimate truth: we are the Lord’s.

5. *What does it mean to “practice” the faith?*
6. *Describe the person who has “perfected” the faith.*
7. *What is central to a follower of Christ striving to live out and practice his/her faith?*

Paul’s word crystallize and focus our attention on what is of utmost importance: in all that we do, we are to “honor the Lord and give thanks to God.” (Romans 14:6)

Prayer

O Christ, in all I do, help me to honor you, for you have made us your own. Amen

last word

As you live the faith this week,
strive to do all things in honor of the Lord.