

When in Rome: Make Room

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[0:00] Let's pray. Father, we are here this morning, which you knew. Father, thank you for your incredible mercy and grace.

! Thank you that when we were far from you, you made a way for us to come near through Jesus Christ. Lord, open our eyes to see people who are hurting and in need.

Give us generous hearts that are willing to share what you have placed in our hands. Teach us to practice genuine hospitality, to make room for people who need love and friendship and encouragement and hope.

Father, show us this week to whom you would have us reach out. Show us what we need to give or let go of in our lives that we could share with someone else.

Show us who we need to invite and then guide our steps in the way you would like us to do that.

Father, may our homes, our church, our tables, our time, and all our resources become instruments of your love.

[1:13] Help us not to merely hear your word, but to live it. And it's in Jesus' precious, powerful, and wonderful name we pray. Amen.

Welcome here for this Sunday, September 13th, 2026. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here. This morning we're continuing in our sermon series, When in Rome, and we're making our way through the book of Romans.

So this is an ongoing journey that we've been on together. If you are visiting today or you are new to this entire series, if you are a regular attender of Bramard Baptist Church, you have slept for a great deal of sermons so far.

But you can still find them on the website. So there's always an opportunity to listen back or catch up or whatever you need to do, and people do that regularly. There are some things in life that we don't notice until they are missing.

We notice a chair when someone needs a place to sit. Maybe you remember musical chairs. I remember it not so fondly all the time. We notice food when someone is hungry.

[2:31] We notice an empty room when someone needs a place to stay. At least I hope we do. I hope we are aware of those kinds of things. Sometimes I think we don't recognize how important it is to be welcomed until we experience what it's like to be left out.

I think I can say with confidence that every one of us here this morning has felt that sting at some point in their life, felt a sense of rejection or exclusion.

Elementary, school, gym class, anyone? Amen. Amen. Picked last. A curse at that time. It would be a blessing today.

So our passage for this morning is Romans 12, verse 13. And I'm just going to remind us here, the reason we seem to be slowing right down in Romans 12 is that chapter of the book of Romans is filled with many, many great short messages that I think we need to take time to unpack.

And so we're doing that again this morning. So go ahead and turn to it, or you can just hear me read it. Romans 12, verse 13 gives us two simple instructions. Share with the Lord's people who are in need, Paul says.

[3:49] Practice hospitality. Paul's describing there what a transformed Christian life should look like. Did you ever think of that?

Maybe you didn't. Our sermon this morning is titled Make Room. And we're going to be exploring the depth and breadth of that together with Romans 12, verse 13 as our guide.

So Romans 12 begins with these words, Therefore I urge you, Paul says, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy. Quite an entrance to that chapter.

Paul is saying to us that because God has been merciful to you, let that mercy change the way you treat other people. Christianity isn't simply about coming to church, although I love to see you here on Sundays.

It's not simply about knowing scripture. Sword drills, anyone remember those? It's not simply about singing worship songs as we've done.

[4:52] Those are critical factors. But a transformed life becomes visible, truly visible, in how we treat other people. Maybe that seems like common sense.

I'm not sure. I hope so. But one of the clearest ways, I think, that our faith becomes visible to other people is through both generosity and hospitality.

And you may think of the word hospitality and think, well, when was the last time somebody invited me to A&W; after the service? Because it's bigger than that, and we'll get there. I have a question for you this morning.

You know, I'm a guy who likes to ask questions. And so I want you to keep this in your mind as we go through the sermon this morning. What would happen if every Christian asked this question every morning?

Here it is. Lord, who can I bless today? Imagine what would happen in our families, in our churches, in our communities.

[6:01] So we're going to look at these three simple commands that we can recognize in Romans 12, verse 13. And first, we need to see the need. Paul says, share with the Lord's people who are in need.

Seems clear, right? And before we can meet a need, we have to see it. Makes sense? Simple equation. Sometimes our biggest problem isn't that there aren't needs around us.

The problem is that we don't notice them. I think I've told this story before, but I was walking into the dollar store once, a few months ago, I guess.

And a lady had just come out of the exit. So you know how dollar stores have the really fancy foyer. So this lady was coming out. I was going in. She'd come out.

She was carrying things in a plastic basket, almost like a storage bin of sorts. And she had a whole bunch of cleaning products and stuff. And the basket just completely gave up on her. Broken glasses, bottles, everything all over the floor in this foyer.

[7:09] And I walked in the door and I did a real quick analysis. And I thought, I don't have time to. And then I thought, oh, just be quiet.

But then I started to watch right away as people were coming out the exit behind her. And they stepped over her, around her, through her. A few people looked disgusted.

So I just stopped. I just stopped and saw another human being and tried to be a human to another human. I'm no hero. I'm no, it's not suddenly I was pastor of the year there.

But I just stopped and thought, here's somebody in need. What can I do? And I said, do you need help? And she said, oh, do I? And so I just got on my knees and I helped her out.

Folks, we're busy. We're tired. We're focused on our own responsibilities. We're thinking of our own problems. Try not to think about them right now.

[8:12] And while we're walking through life, there may be someone right beside us who is hurting. Have you ever driven in traffic? I've started to try and do this more. Rather than being triggered and immediately angered by someone who cuts you off or whatever, think for a moment where they're at in their life, where they're at in their day, what's going on behind the scenes in their story that you don't even know.

Have you personally been driving home from the hospital after someone just passed away? I drove home from the hospital after my mom had died.

It was the middle of the night. I probably wasn't the best driver. So right there, we can recognize there's times when in our own lives we're going through rough stuff.

We're struggling. And so we're looking for people to extend grace to us. It's a two-way street. Someone may be carrying a burden that nobody knows about.

Someone may be sitting in church smiling right now, but secretly struggling. Someone may be lonely. Someone may be financially overwhelmed.

[9:26] Someone may be grieving today. And somebody may simply need another person to see them and listen. One of the most remarkable things about Jesus was that he noticed people.

We can see it on full display in the accounts of his interactions in all of the gospels. In Matthew 9, verse 36, Jesus looked at the crowds and had compassion on them. He didn't just see a crowd, my friends. He saw people. He saw their pain. He saw their confusion. He saw their need.

I think I've told you this before. When I was in seminary, I was talking to one of my profs. I think it was my theology prof. He's become a good friend. And I said to him, I think I have an avatar theology.

And he said, what? He said, I think I need time for this conversation. And I said, Jesus had an avatar approach to people.

[10:34] And he said, okay, Dixon, what are you talking about? And I said, that scene and that quote from the movie Avatar, and do I recommend it as a pastor?

Yeah, it's all right. I'm just like scanning bad words, nudity. Nope, no, no, all good. But that interaction between two characters was they stopped, they made a connection to each other, and one said to the other, I see you.

And I believe that's what Jesus modeled all the time for us. I also said to him at the same prof, went a different time. I also have a frozen theology, and he said, what are you talking about?

He said, you're gonna fail. No, I didn't say that. And he said, okay, tell me about that one. And I said, sometimes you just have to learn to let it go. And that movie I do recommend, by the way. But we see this approach of Jesus in all of his interactions in the Gospels. He saw people, and that's the heart that God wants to develop in us.

[11:45] We need to look beyond initial appearances or perceptions and see other people. Some of you may have heard me say this to you, one-on-one in interactions.

I do say it to people. If I ask somebody how they're doing, I won't generally let someone get away with, oh, I'm good, I'm fine. I will often say, and maybe I've said it to you, do not lie to me.

And people look shocked and horrified, and say, because I see something more there than you're letting on. So trust me. Some people don't say, I need help.

They say, I'm fine. Everything's okay. I can handle it. But sometimes, I'm fine really just means I don't even know how to ask for help.

Imagine walking through a neighborhood after a major storm. I know you can't relate. But imagine seeing houses that look perfectly normal from the street. But inside one house, the power may be out completely.

[12:56] Inside another, there may be water damage. Inside another, an elderly person may be unable to get out.

You won't know unless you stop and truly look. The same, I think, is true of spirituality, because there are people all around us carrying invisible burdens.

With these things in mind, I think we need to pray, Lord, open my eyes and mean it. Ask God to help you to notice the person who always seems to be alone.

The family that is struggling, maybe. The co-worker who seems discouraged, maybe not a lot of joy in their life. The elderly person who needs assistance.

The new person at church who maybe doesn't know anyone. The neighbor who needs a friend. The person who hasn't been around church lately.

[14:02] Friends, don't just look at people. Seek to truly see them. Galatians 6 verse 2 says this, Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

You can't carry someone else's burden or help them with it if you never even notice that they have one. We need to see the need.

Our second point this morning is we need to share what God has given us. Paul doesn't stop with seeing there in our passage this morning, 12-12.

He says, Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Seeing the need is important, right? We've recognized that because you don't know there's a need if you don't see it, don't recognize it.

And that's a critical first step. But then seeing without responding, seeing somebody in need and then kind of going, Uncomfortable. I need to walk away.

[15:10] Without responding, it changes nothing. Nothing for you and ultimately nothing for them. And then possibly you may have seen a need and like I said, chosen to walk away, chosen to ignore it.

Have you ever thought that in your head? You see something and think, Whoa, way outside my comfort zone? Or someone else is going to do this.

Surely there are other people around seeing what I'm seeing, not my problem. That's a risky frame of mind. The Christian response to need must be generosity.

Because everything we have comes from God. Psalm 24 verse 1 says, The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

Ergo, everything we have ultimately comes from God. Where did the skills come from that you have? God. Where did your job come from?

[16:16] God. Where did your spouse come from? God. Kids? God. Church family? God. Your breath in your lungs? God. Our money, our homes, our food, our time, our abilities, our opportunities, our possessions, even our very strength in our bodies comes from him.

So also, when we share, we should never be saying, Oh, look at how generous I am. Yikes.

Instead, we need to be thinking and saying, God has blessed me and I want to become a blessing to someone else.

The question also isn't how much do I have? Have you ever been there? Sometimes we say, I don't have enough, X, Y, or Z, to help.

Generosity doesn't begin with how much you have. It begins with what you're willing to give. Did you catch that? Generosity doesn't begin with how much you have or waiting until you feel you've reached an appropriate threshold.

It begins with your willingness in your heart to give whatever God asks you to give. Kind of thinking to myself, I recognize, so, Joanne is fishing for fish this weekend.

[17:40] She's at a fishing derby. And she loves this story, so she's not here to hear it, but she can listen later. So think about the boy in John 6.

Joanne and I have had conversations about it, and she said, you know, I think about that boy, and I think about the disciple's reaction, and I think about all these things, and then I think about his mom. And I said, do tell.

And she said, she baked bread. She prepared fish, sent her kid off with a lunch. She had no idea.

And I said, no, she did not. I bet she heard all about it.

He had five loaves and two fish. Wasn't much. It was a pretty decent lunch for a little kid, probably.

But he put what he had willingly into Jesus' hands.

How many did Jesus feed it with? Thousands. Don't tell yourself, please don't tell yourself, what I have isn't enough.

[18:47] Put what you have into God's hands, and he can and will use it. What can you share?

You know, that's obviously sometimes a stalling point for people.

You can share your money, that's an obvious one. You can share your food, your home, your car, especially if your pastor now has two failing vehicles. Kidding.

You can share your time, though, your skills, your experience, your encouragement, your prayers.

You have so much to share, so much to give. And sometimes the most valuable thing you can give someone doesn't cost you any money at all.

It may simply be your time and your attention. A person can have a fridge full of food and still feel hungry for friendship.

A person can have a beautiful home and still feel emotionally homeless. A person can have lots of money in the bank and still need someone to sit beside them.

[19:58] A person can have thousands of followers on social media. I personally have tens. and still feel completely alone.

So that's why Christian generosity is bigger than, it must be bigger than money. It must be bigger than waiting until we feel we have enough. Friends, we give ourselves.

I want you to ask yourself this morning and in the week ahead, what has God already placed in my hands? and then ask, who can I bless it with?

With whom may I bless it? There you go. So maybe God's given you a spare room, a gift for cooking.

We have lots of people with those skills here, mechanical skills, financial resources.

Maybe God has simply given you a spare hour this week. don't wait until you have more. Do what you can with what you have now.

[21:05] Proverbs 19, verse 17 says, whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and he will reward them for what they have done.

Maybe you know this, maybe you haven't thought about it. God sees everything. God sees the actions, the generosity, the things that people do that no one else sees.

The bill that you quietly paid for someone. The phone call you made that no one knew about. The ride that you gave someone.

The person that you spoke to one-on-one and encouraged them. The prayer that you prayed.

Friends, God sees all of it.

Share what God has given you. After all these things, after recognizing a need and sharing what we have, we need to make room for people.

[22 : 14] Paul says practice hospitality. And as I alluded to earlier, this means more than simply entertaining. Oh, so-and-so's not very hospitable because they've never had me over.

I think you might be missing the point. See, because I believe entertainment says, come over because everything is perfect. Don't come over before that.

Certainly don't drop in. Hospitality, my friends, has a totally different mindset that says, come over because you matter to me.

I think entertaining can often be about impressing people. Hospitality, though, is about welcoming people.

Hospitality is deeply connected to the gospel, actually. So think about it here. We were separated from God because of sin, but God made a way for us to come near to him through Christ Jesus.

[23 : 20] Ephesians 2.13 says, but now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. We were far away, but God brought us near.

We were outsiders who deserved nothing. God welcomed us and set out his table for us. grace made room for us.

no right to demand a place at that table, but grace made room for us there. So when we practice hospitality, we're demonstrating something, actually, believe it or not, about the heart of God himself.

We make room for others because God made room for us. So who are we making room for?

Well, it's easy to invite people who are like us, have similar views, similar backgrounds, similar interests, people who in some way or other can give something back to us.

[24 : 33] But remember that another person doesn't just have value because of what they can do for us or offer us. You ever thought that?

Well, I'm really grateful for so-and-so because they did this for me. It's not a good way of looking at things. Because why is that?

Well, in my mind, people have inherent value as a loved and created child of God. I don't look at someone else for what they can do for me.

I consider someone loved by God and certainly loved by God far more worthy of my own love, affection, and attention.

Biblical hospitality also challenges us to welcome people who may not be able to repay us in any way, shape, or form.

[25 : 33] The lady that I helped at Dollarama in the fancy foyer never heard from her. We didn't exchange numbers. I wonder if she thinks about me.

Maybe. Probably not. But Jesus said in Luke 14 verses 13 and 14 that when we give a banquet, we should also consider those who can't pay us.

Friends, that is kingdom hospitality. that's what that means. So who needs an invitation? Who needs to be seen by you and given your attention?

Someone new at church. Maybe a single person who spends most of their evenings alone. A young person who needs a godly family around them because they don't come from one.

Maybe an elderly person who rarely receives visitors. a neighbor right near you that you've never even spoke to. Someone who doesn't look like you.

[26 : 43] Someone whose story is potentially completely different from your own. Someone who simply needs to know you belong here.

The church should be one of the places where people experience the deepest sense of belonging. not judgment, not criticism, not rejection, but deep, free belonging.

Imagine a dining table with several people sitting around it. Then imagine one empty chair. That chair represents someone who's missing, someone who needs friendship, someone who needs encouragement, somebody who needs Jesus.

to the question is, for all of us, will we leave that chair empty? Or will we make room? Maybe God is calling us even to pull up another chair. Talk about messing with your seating arrangements. Maybe your home needs to become a place of ministry.

[27 : 53] Maybe it already is. Maybe your dinner table can become a place of discipleship. maybe it already is. Maybe your coffee table can be a place where someone finds hope.

Maybe your church can become a place where the lonely find family. My brothers and sisters, make room for people.

Paul has given us a three-part challenge, and we see it on full display in Romans 12, verse 13. Paul suggests that we need to see a need.

Ask, Lord, who needs help? Then don't live with your eyes closed. Second, share what you have.

Ask, Lord, what have you placed in my hands? Then be willing to use it to bless someone else.

Third, make room.

[28 : 54] ask, Lord, who needs a place at my table? Invite people into your life. I want to give us a practical challenge for this week, and I hope you'll be intentional about taking it on.

I promise I won't check your homework. Before next Sunday, I challenge you to do three things.

Find one need. don't just notice it.

Find someone who needs encouragement, assistance, prayer, food, transportation, friendship. And frankly, I don't want to hear about it.

Meet one need. Use something that God has given you, whatever that looks like, we've looked at it in detail, use something God has given you to help that person, to bless them, to serve them.

Third, invite one person. Invite someone into your home, into your life, your church community, or simply to coffee.

[30 : 09] Three simple actions, see, share, and make room, because someone once made room for you.

Let me close with this thought. I don't know if you think about it this way, but you're here today because someone made room for you.

Maybe a parent prayed for you. Maybe a friend invited you to church. Maybe somebody encouraged you when you wanted to quit at something. Maybe someone fed you, someone listened to you, someone opened up their home to you.

I can probably safely say someone introduced you to Jesus. Someone made room in their life, in their day, in their time, with all that they had.

They responded to Jesus. And because of what they did, Jesus made room for you. you. John 14 verse 2 says, you know it, my father's house has many rooms.

[31 : 25] Friends, the gospel is the story of God making room for people who are far away. So God calls us to do the same. Make room.

Make room in your schedule. Make room at your table, in your home, in your church. Make room in your heart. Because I guarantee there's someone around you who needs what God has already placed in you.

Lots of homework at the end. As we close, I want to ask you three questions. They're rhetorical.

Raise your hand if you want. Shout it out if you want. We'll all turn and look at you awkwardly.

Who has God been asking you to notice? I've started to have more conversations with my neighbors right around us. People who I've lived next to for years, only been a pastor for seven, lived there a long time, but still, I've followed Jesus for most of my life, and I haven't paid attention. What has God placed in your hands that he's asking you to release? And remember, there's a wide range of those things you can recognize, but something that God is calling you to release to bless someone else who you may already know.

[32 : 50] Who is God asking you to make room for? Maybe God's been speaking to you about a family member, maybe a neighbor, maybe someone at church, maybe a co-worker, maybe someone who has been forgotten.

ask God to prompt you, and don't ignore the prompting. God may want to use you to bring about a miracle in someone's life that they desperately need right now.

Hands and feet of Christ, folks, that's what we are. It may come through your hands, these blessings, your home, your generosity, your invitation, your willingness to just sit down with someone and listen.

You know, I'm a volunteer RCMP chaplain. Chaplaincy is generally called a ministry of presence. I've run out of fingers and toes to count the number of chaplains I have interacted with who've said, I don't even know if I'm making a difference.

And it's not like they're saying, oh, it's all about me, I need the attention, but they just don't recognize God using them or how. But friends, that's why it's a ministry of presence, and that's what you can be for someone else.

[34 : 09] Be there to listen. Men are bad at listening without offering solutions and advice. Boys, listen more than you talk.

Sometimes people just need to know you're there. They need to know that you're on this journey with them. Friends, this week, let's become Romans 12, 13 Christians.

Eyes that see, hands that share, and hearts that make room. when people encounter us, may they encounter a taste of the true love of Jesus.

Amen.