**May 21, 2023 Romans 12:1-2**

***Divine Appointments***

**Scripture:** *Romans 12:1-2 NRSV*

*(1)I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (2)Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

**Notes:**

1. Making a difference in the world is being ***available*** to God
   1. Our ordinary days are filled with ***divine*** appointments,
   2. God may be glorified, shared, and ***experienced***.
2. God has a good, pleasing, and perfect ***plan*** for each of us.
   1. He wants only what is ***best*** for us.
   2. Joyfully give of ourselves as ***living*** ***sacrifices***.
3. What can anybody ***take*** from me that God did not ***give***.
   1. “*To* ***live*** *is Christ, to die is* ***gain***.” Philippians 1:21
   2. Do not be ***afraid*** to do what God is directing you to do.
4. If Christians make no ***effort***, they are of little ***value***.
   1. Christians should affect others ***positively***.
   2. If we live like Christ, we ***glow*** with His light.
   3. We ***hide*** our light by being quiet.
5. God wanted to do a ***work*** in this man's life
   1. God wanted to make a ***difference*** in the disciples’ lives.
   2. Never be ***afraid*** to do what God is leading you to do.
   3. Be bold and ***courageous***.
6. The ministry was going to spread like a ***wildfire***.
   1. Because they had a ***passion*** for God
   2. Because they were ***available*** to serve him and speak up.
7. Peter did not ***hesitate*** to share who Jesus is.
   1. You have a ***choice*** today and each day that you live.
   2. Are you going to ***share*** the love of Jesus
   3. Are you willing to ***risk*** your life to save the lost?
   4. What can the ***world*** take that the ***Lord*** has not given?
   5. God uses ***ordinary*** people to do ***extraordinary*** things.

**Script:**

# ***Divine Appointments***

Have you ever had a Divine Appointment? I never heard this phrase before until about maybe 15-20 years ago. The story I am about to share is true, and some of you may know the story I am going to share. I was talking to a man who was telling me about how one day he just happened to run into a person who was desperately in need. The person he ran into was looking for a few bucks to get something to eat. And God spoke to my friend, “feed him,” God said. So my friend after talking with this person for a while extended an invitation for the person to join him in the diner around the corner for something to eat. As you know the person went; after all who is going to turn down a free meal, especially when you are hungry.

So, they walk into the diner and sit at the counter; and my friend said to the waitress, get him whatever he likes. Of course, the waitress looking at my friend and then looking at his guest gave him a funny look, but said Okay. The guest did not order an extravagant meal, I believe they kept it simple, maybe a burger and some fries. As they sat and talked, my friend noticed his guest eyeing up the pie. Since this is my story, I am going to say it was coconut creme, my favorite. The guest is eyeing the pie and eating the meal, and my friend asks his guest, “would you like a piece of pie?” The guest is humbled and replies you have given me so much already. My friend stops his guest and tells the waitress a piece of pie for my friend here.

They finish the meal as well as the dessert and they part ways. As far as I know they never see each other again. But to my friend this was a divine appointment. A time set aside by God for one of his followers to make a difference in somebody else’s life. I don’t know if this meal had much impact on the guest's life in the long term; but the guest could walk away without feeling hungry. But my friend, on that day he knew that he had done the Lord’s work and shared a little bit of Jesus with somebody in need.

I am convinced that a big part of making a difference in the world that we live in, outside the walls of the church, is our very own attitude, expectation, courage, and willingness to be available to God to be used whenever or wherever he wants. I believe that our ordinary days are filled with divine appointments, the intersections where we, and other person(s) along with God all collide so God may have an opportunity to be glorified, shared, and experienced.

As we look at this idea, our perspective should look like our passage for today, Romans 12:1-2. Stand with me as we share in these verses today.

*Romans 12:1-2 NRSV (1)I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (2)Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

For my parents and siblings, we cannot help but think of PeePee Martin when we hear this passage. In his later years Pee Pee would walk up and down the road in Lovely just to get around and visit with people. More than once He stopped by our home and he would engage in neighborly small talk And sooner or later he would recite this passage and tell the same story about Pastor Charlie Rhodes telling him he would have been an excellent preacher if not for his bad habits. But the plans that the Lord had for PeePee we may never know for he never preached a sermon other than the way he lived his life. I knew PeePee for as long as I can remember, and I even asked him once how he came by the name PeePee, and his answer was that he could talk to the baby chickens and then he proceeded to chirp like pee pees. But in all the years I had known PeePee, I never heard anyone say anything bad about him; and us kids admired him because he had found joy and pleasure in his life.

God has a good, pleasing, and perfect plan for each of his children. He wants every one of us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honor and obey him. Because he wants only what is best for us. Since he gave his Son to make our new life possible, we should joyfully give of ourselves as living sacrifices for his service. This service leads to God-orchestrated appointments in our everyday lives when we realize that we are God's plan A. We should own it, we should look for it, we should seek it, we should pray about it, and we need to be watching our ordinary days come alive in ways that only God can do.

When I think of the divine appointments in my own life, three come to mind right away. The first took place while I was in college. The Monongahela River was flooding, and portions of Cal U’s campus was under water; so Cal U was canceling classes on campus for the week. I however was a student teaching off campus so I was told to remain at my school and continue to student teach. So I went to the common area and was watching some television when another student from another dorm came to wait on a friend. We talked and parted ways. Less than a year later I was beginning my first full day as a full time teacher and into the building walked this same guy. We spent the next 30 years working side by side and on the same floor in that school. We had many discussions about life and faith. I like to think that God brought us together to help us down the road.

Another instance was in 2008. Jan was away at the pastor's spouses retreat and so me, dad and my boys went out for supper. On our way home I received a call from Janice. She proceeded to tell me that one of her former patients called her and that she was being kicked out of her home. Jan told me a little of her history and troubled past and asked if I would have any objection to her coming to stay with us until she could get back on her feet. Oh, did I say she had a baby less than a year old? And did I also mention that Janice was not home for the weekend? I only had seconds to make my decision and response. I told Jan that she could. This young woman moved into our basement and lived with us for near two years. In that time Jan did an awesome job of teaching her how to manage her life and what it means to believe in Jesus. But that night I believe I had a divine appointment, when a homeless single mom and her infant moved into my home.

We did what we could to help point her in the right direction, but above all else, we loved her like Jesus would have. Some people questioned my decision; “What if she robbed you blind, or accused you of something that would smear your character?” To which I responded with a statement that I still use today. “What can anybody take from me that God did not give me? And what can they take from me that God cannot give back to me tenfold.” That is my philosophy, could she have made an accusation to smear my character and reputation, Yes but God was standing beside me. Could she have stolen our possessions? Yes but God has blessed me with nice things that he could give me over and over again. But what if she was to take your life, after all there are a lot of crazy people out there? To which God points to Philippians 1:21, “*To live is Christ, to die is gain*.” We should not be afraid to do what God is directing you to do.

Our lives should look like this; Matthew 5:13-16: "*You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.* "

If seasoning has no flavor, it has no value. If Christians make no effort to affect the world around them, they are of little value to God. If we are too much like the world, we are worthless. Christians should not blend in with everyone else. Instead, we should affect others positively, just as seasoning brings out the best flavor in food.

Can you hide a city that is sitting on top of a mountain? Its light at night can be seen for miles. If we live like Christ, we will glow with His light in the darkness, showing others what Christ is like. We hide our light by: (1) Being quiet when we should speak, (2) Going along with the crowd, (3) Letting sign in, (4) Not sharing our light with others, and (5) Ignoring the needs of others.

An obvious divine appointment in Scripture happens in the book of Acts. Peter and John are on their way to the temple one ordinary afternoon to pray. Neither had heard an audible voice and there was no angel directing them, but this ordinary day turned extraordinary as these two walked into the temple area.

Acts 3:1-10: "*Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money. Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, 'Look at us!' The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. But Peter said, 'I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!' Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them. All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded!*"

SO this story took place at a place with a lot of activity. Many believe 8,000 to 10,000 people would gather in this area for a prayer time. The milling around also made this gate a strategic place for the poor to beg. One of the fixtures there was a man, crippled from birth, waiting by the gate for some financial help. This day was different. God wanted to do work in this man's life and in the lives of the disciples. It took courage to do what Peter did within a sea of unbelievers ready to ridicule him. The Holy Spirit moves and Peter goes for it.

Peter and John didn’t know, when they woke up that morning, that ministry was going to spread through Jerusalem like a wildfire, simply because they had a passion for God and were available to serve him and speak up. They were going through their daily routine when God revealed a divine appointment. And, because Peter and John were alert, an ordinary stroll to the temple turned into an extraordinary opportunity for spreading the gospel.

But here is the rest of the story, seize the opportunity …

Acts 3:12-16: "Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. 'People of Israel, ' he said, 'what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him. You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact! Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes.'”

Notice that Peter did not hesitate to share. Peter shared who Jesus is, how the people had rejected him, why the rejection was fatal, and what they needed to do to change the situation. Peter reminded the crowd that they still had a choice and that God still offered them an opportunity to believe and receive his mercy and grace.

We should pray to have courage like Peter, to see the opportunities and to use them to speak up for Christ. It will change our community one person at a time and change us for the better.

I would like to leave you with some Divine Appointment Truths:

(1) God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

(2) God will empower our witness.

(3) As we make ourselves available to God to be used, we will see that divine appointments are happening often. We will recognize them and take action. God will be transforming hearts in our community. The fact that he uses us is so humbling, exciting, and satisfying. To God be the glory.