

Holy Trinity Sunningdale – 10.00am
Sunday August 23, 2026 – 4th Sunday after Trinity
Readings – Romans 12:1-8 & Matthew 16:13-20
Who am I?

In our gospel reading, Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do you say I am?” In our reading from Romans, Paul tells us and everyone who follows Jesus, who we are in Christ. Today, I am focussing on Paul’s message to us and everyone who identifies with Christ and the question to answer is, “Who are you? Who am I?”

A farmer once caught a young eagle in the forest, brought it home, and raised it among his chickens and turkeys. Five years later, a naturalist came to visit him and saw the bird. “That’s an eagle, not a chicken!” he said. “Yes,” said the farmer, “but I have raised it to be a chicken.”

The naturalist said, “It has a wing span of fifteen feet. It’s an eagle!” The farmer said, “But it will never fly.” The naturalist disagreed, and they decided to put their argument to the test.

First, the naturalist picked up the eagle and said, “Thou art an eagle; thou dost belong in the sky and not to this earth; stretch forth thy wings and fly.” The eagle saw the chickens and jumped down.

The next day, the naturalist took the eagle to the top of the house, said the same thing and let the eagle go. Again, it spotted the chickens below and fluttered down to join them in feeding.

“One more try,” said the naturalist. He took the eagle up a mountain. The trembling bird looked around, and then the naturalist made it look into the sun. As he spoke its true identity once more, suddenly the eagle stretched out its wings, gave a mighty screech, and flew away, never to return. (**UCB Word for Today 28 July, 2026**).

When sacrificing an animal according to God’s law in both the Old and New Testaments, the priest would kill the animal first before placing on the altar. But, Paul says that as Christians, we must offer our bodies as living sacrifices.

My resident minister in Nigeria, in reference to Romans 12:1, would say that the problem with people as living sacrifices is that we crawl off the altar. Like the eagle in the story, for years we lived in the world within the wrong environment and the wrong company and it is so easy to see the chickens and turkeys around us and crawl off the altar to join them, thereby denying or renouncing our true identities.

God has good, pleasing and perfect plans for all his children – everyone he created. He is Father of all and loves everyone. He wants us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honour and obey him.

Paul warns us not conform to the patterns of this world which is selfish and corrupting. It is possible to avoid most of the world’s vices and evil behaviours like committing murder or theft or being fraudulent and still be proud, covetous, selfish,

stubborn or arrogant. Therefore, Paul adds that we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

My interpretation of this is that if we, as living sacrifices do not want to keep crawling off the altar, we need something more than or apart from or in addition to just the right environment and the right company. God won't take us away from the world, he wants us to live in the world, therefore, we have to live within the environment and among the company of chickens and turkeys. Only when we allow the Holy Spirit to renew, re-educate and redirect our minds that we are truly transformed. This requires us daily and in every situation and circumstances of life to lay aside our wills, energies and resources and trust God to lead and guide us. The key component to help us know who we are created and called to be is God's input.

On the cross, at Golgotha, many voices were quick to describe Jesus as a failure, but one criminal crucified with him saw something many others missed. He saw the kingdom of God even in this death and defeat situation. He recognised God's input in Jesus and cried out, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!"

Michael Mayne, a former Dean of Westminster puts it like this:

"When the penitent thief says to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom,' I choose to hear him also saying something more profound: Lord, remember me, recreate me, make me anew, put me together again, but now in your likeness and as you have always intended me to be."

Let us pray:

Lord remember me, recreate me, make me anew, put me together again, but now in your likeness and as you have always intended me to be. Amen.

Dolapo Ogunbawo