## "<u>COMMISSIONED FOR LIFE</u>" Romans 12:1-2, 9-13 © 2023 Rev. Dr. Brian E. Germano

[PROP NEEDED: Intro video clip to "Lion King" movie]

[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 4-16-23]

--I--

- 1. Read Text: <u>Romans 12:1-2, 9-13</u> and Pray
- 2. [SHOW VIDEO-CLIP from Disney's <u>The Lion King</u> (From 00:00:29 00:04:25)]

A--"From the day we arrive on this planet and blinking, step into the sun There's more to see than can ever be seen more to do than can ever be done There is far too much to take in here more to find than can ever be found But the sun rolling high through the sapphire sky

keeps great and small on the endless round. It's the circle of life & it moves us all through despair & hope through faith & love. Till we find our place on the path unwinding in the circle, the circle of life."

- B--...So begins the story of a young lion named Simba and his struggle to discover his identity as child of the Lion King in the African Serengetti,...
- C--...And -- through a series of life transitions -- to find and claim his place in what the movie theme calls "*the circle of life*."
- 3. You know, we're entering a season that commonly contains many of life's *transitions*: Summer Break; Graduation; Retirement; Job changes; & (today) Christian Confirmation.
  - A--And like it or not, these transitions often cause many of us (like Simba) to struggle with our identity and where we fit into our own "circle of life."
  - B--Well, I believe what we find in today's scripture from Romans 12 is advice that can help us through those times of transition (whatever they might be).

[9am ONLY-- Listen to Paul's words there... "I So, brothers and sisters, because of God's mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate priestly service. 2 Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.... 9 Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. 10 Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. 11 Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! 12 Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home."]

- 4. Before talking about these words can help us with the transitions of our life, we first need to know that this book of Romans was written by Paul to Christians, who (like us) were struggling with *their* identity as God's people in the midst of a pagan world.
  - A--After taking the first 11 chapters to explain various Christian beliefs, he begins Chapter 12 (where our text comes from) by saying that these beliefs should form the *foundation* for a certain kind of living -- I.E., that because of *who* we are in Jesus, we should *live* a certain *way*.
  - B--In fact, many scholars believe that the qualities shared in Verses 9-13 are actually *specific instructions* given to adult converts (like today's Confirmands) *prior* to their baptism and joining of the church about *how* they should act and behave as Christians.
- 5. So, Paul is essentially telling them (and us) that by building upon the foundations of faith that we've *already* received, we can be *Commissioned* for an entire *Life* for and with God -- a life that manifests the virtues and characteristics that we find in these verses. <sup>1</sup>
  - A--For example,...
    - 1--When we head off college, Verse 9 says that we should "Let love be genuine; [that we should] hate what is evil, [and] hold fast to what is good."
    - 2--When we start a new job, instead of focusing only on ourselves, Vs.13 invites us to "Contribute to the needs of the saints; [&] extend hospitality to strangers"
    - 3--When we retire, Verse 12 says that instead of worrying about what we'll be doing, we're to "*Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, & persevere in prayer*"
    - 4--And I could go on, but you get the idea: our Christian faith (and the behaviors that go along with it) are not just meant for church on *Sundays*, but 24 / 7 / 365.
  - C--They are verses meant to remind those of us who're experiencing life's transitions: "Don't forget WHO you are and WHOSE you are, because THAT identity is what's going to get you through this new stage of your life."
  - D--In Verse 2 he put his advice this way: "Do not be <u>conformed</u> to this world, but be <u>transformed</u> by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
  - E--Over my 35 years of ministry here in North Georgia Methodism, my family and I have moved 11 times (I've served 8 churches in that time, but moved homes 11 times!).
    - 1--Each of those moves has brought with it new challenges, new opportunities in places, with new friends and parishioners.
    - 2--But in each one of them, we're always tried to remember that our ultimate success and fulfillment in those places did not generate from any innate talent or ability in *ourselves*, but in WHO and WHOSE we are in Jesus Christ.

3--In other words, in the end, what mattered most in each of those places was NOT what we accomplished or did, but HOW we lived out our identify and faith as followers of Jesus.

## --III--

- 6. I don't know exactly what "transition" it is that *you* may be facing (or soon face) today.
  - A--Maybe it IS Confirmation, or Graduation, a job change, a new home, Retirement, life without a loved one, or something else.
  - B--But whatever it is, today's scripture invites us not to forget WHO or WHOSE we are.
    - 1--Just like Simba in <u>The Lion King</u>, our baptism and our faith which has gone before us reminds us that we are *children of the King* -- and not just of any "King" thought up by Hollywood, but children of the *King of kings*!
    - 2--OUR task/calling today is merely either to *claim* or to *remember* our identity and place in the King's family.
- 7. You see, because of *who* we are & *whose* we are in Jesus, you and I have been *"Commissioned for Life"* to serve God and our fellow humankind -- will we accept it as God's call for us?
- 8. [PRAYER]

## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> When someone is "commissioned" for something, the "commission" is usually only for a brief, specific task or period of time -- like being "commissioned in the military, or to paint a painting, & when that task or time is up, the "commission" is over. But here I believe that Paul is saying that with our *Christianity*, in essence we are "**Commissioned for <u>LIFE</u>**" --that our Christianity and the actions & characteristics of our faith are not just for Sunday morning, or at church, but for ALL of life