**Sermon 3/24/19**

**Romans 12**

It was one of those wonderful warm spring Saturday mornings.

Dad was cleaning and sharpening the garden tools,

         while Jamie played with his matchbox cars and trucks on the porch.

After a while Mom brought out glasses of ice cold lemonade.

Father and son sat enjoying their drinks on the porch steps.

Jamie, who had just gotten to the age of enjoying riddles, asked,

         "Dad, if three frogs were sitting on a limb which hung over a pool,

         and one frog decided to jump off into the pool and take a swim,

          how many frogs would be left on the limb?"

Immediately Dad replied, "Two."

Jamie started laughing as he said, "No, Dad. Listen.

        Three frogs were sitting on a limb which hung over a pool.

        One frog decided to jump into the pool and take a swim.

        How many frogs were left on the limb?"

"Two," Dad repeated.

"No," insisted Jamie.

"Well how many frogs were left sitting on the limb?” Dad asked.

"Three," Jamie said. "One decided to jump into the pool and take a swim.

          But he never got around to doing it."

Paul began his letter to the church in Rome carefully explaining how

         we are all sinners, but God loves us so much he is willing to forgive us.

Paul explained how Jesus died for us,

          and has prepared a place for us with him in heaven.

In today's reading Paul begins teaching about how we are to live as God's children.

God has given each of us gifts, talents, skills, and time,

       to do his work in his kingdom.

We are to share the Good News of God's love and forgiveness with others.

God really wants us to help and care for our neighbor, as well as each other.

We received the Good News joyfully.

And we really intend to do all we can to build each other up in faith,

         and to help everyone we can.

Yet how often are we like the frog which didn't jump in to the water for a swim?

How often do we plan to help others, but never get around to doing it?

We have good intentions, but sometimes we just don't carry them out.

How different our lives are when we follow through with those intentions.

Imagine the difference in our lives when we really do live God's way.

A woman telephoned a friend and asked how she was feeling.

"Terrible," came the reply. "My head's splitting and my back and legs are killing me.

          The house is a mess, and the kids are simply driving me crazy."

The caller said, "Listen, go and lie down.

         I'll come over right away and cook lunch for you and clean up the house.

        I'll take care of the children while you get some rest."

The friend said, "How wonderfully thoughtful of you!"

The caller, added. "And then I'll fix dinner for Sam when he gets home from work."

“Sam? Sam?" the complaining housewife cried. "My husband name isn't Sam.”

"Oh dear me, I must have dialed the wrong number," exclaimed the first woman.

There was a long pause. Then the housewife said in a disappointed whisper:

           “Does that mean you're not coming over?”

“No," said the caller. "Give me your address and I will be right over.”

The two woman became friends, helping and caring for each other.

They both would have missed out on many good times

         if the caller had abruptly ended the conversation with,

        “Of course I'm not coming over. I don't even know you.”

The caller was willing to help a friend, by helping a stranger she found a new friend.

And it made a big difference in both their lives.

When we don't use the gifts God has given us, we miss out on a lot.

Walter Samaszko was an elderly man who lived in Carson City

           with his mother for over 30 years until her death.

He continued to live in the same house for another dozen years.

He kept to himself, and seldom spoke to his neighbors.

One of his neighbors finally called the police to check on Walter

        because no one had seen him for several weeks.

The police found Walter dead in his house,

          and it was determined he had been dead for at least a month.

It had taken a whole month for someone to notice he wasn’t around anymore.

He had only about $200 in his bank account.

But as Walter Samaszko's house was being cleared for sale,

     officials were shock to discover gold bars and coins valued at $7 million.

"Nobody had any clue he was hoarding the gold,"

       Carson City Clerk-Recorder Alan Glover told the Las Vegas Sun,

       adding, “it was found stored in boxes throughout the house and garage.”

Samaszko also had stock accounts of more than $165,000,

        and another $12,000 in cash at the house.

He left no will and had no apparent living relatives.

He had no friends and after 40 years, in the same house, he barely knew his neighbors.

He had so much wealth, but never used it for his own enjoyment.

And he had never shared any of it with others.

He missed out on so much, simply because he hoarded his money,

           instead of using and enjoying it.

What a difference he could have made in his life, and in the lives of others.

Yet we all have a little bit of Walter Samaszko in us.

We thank God for all he has done for us and given to us.

But often we tend to hoard the gifts he has given,

          instead of making a difference in our lives, and in the lives of others,

           by putting his gifts to work.

How much fun, and peace, and joy, have we missed because we haven't acted?

We haven’t used the gifts God gave us.

Paul cautioned us that:

         We should be careful about judging others.

        and not think of ourselves more highly than we ought.

Rather we should consider ourselves with sober judgment,

        in accordance with the faith God has given each of us.

The colonel who served as inspector general in a particular military base

         paid close attention to how personnel wore their uniforms.

One morning he spotted a junior airman with a violation.

He stopped the young man and bellowed,

           “Airman, what do you do when a shirt pocket is unbuttoned?”

The startled airman stood at rigid attention, sweat broke out on his forehead.

The young man was shaking as he answered, "Button it, sir!"

The colonel looked him in the eye and said, "Well?"

There was a long pause filled with tension and silence.

Then the airman nervously reached over, and buttoned the colonel's shirt pocket.

We all make mistakes.

We often think others should do things differently.

But instead of judging them, it would be a good idea to check how we are doing,

          before we criticize anyone.

The former Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev once said:

        "The difference between Communism and Christianity is very great.

        When someone strikes you on the face, you turn the other cheek.

        But, if you strike me on the face, I'll hit you so hard your head will fall off."

Compare Khrushchev's response to Abraham Lincoln's response.

Abraham Lincoln was being criticized for his gracious attitude toward his opponents.

"Why do you try to make friends with your enemies?" a colleague asked.

          “You should destroy them!”

But the President gently replied,

“Am I not destroying my enemies when I make them my friends?”

Paul urged his fellow Christians:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

We all need to try to put the gifts God has given us to good use.

Not simply decide to do something, but carry out our good intentions.

Then we discover God's peace and joy in our lives

**AMEN**