

Be Transformed (A Sermon for VBS Sunday)
St. Mary's Episcopal Church (Cypress, Texas)
Romans 12:1-8
July 23, 2017

The transformers – as in the cartoon, toys, and so on, was created in the early 80's. The basic plot was that there were these robots who lived on a different planet that started to fight one against another for the power there.

Some wanted to use the power for good while the others wanted to use it for evil. The source of their power were these energon cubes that eventually ended up on earth. In order to disguise themselves in search of the source of their power the robots came to earth as vehicles and other assorted mechanical or technical items – that could transform back into their true selves when necessary to truly use their powers.

Transformers first came out when I was in kindergarten, so I truly grew up in their presence. A few years ago my boys started watching a new version of the Transformers show, called Rescue Bots. Then I introduced them to the original series on Netflix.

This was a monumental day in my life, as I once again was allowed to play with Transformers in my house. And this time I was finally old enough to figure out how to make them change from a car to a robot and vice versa. I recently came across this Bumblebee, took it out of the package and this is what we found... bummer.

This isn't a Transformer. This is a toy car with a picture of Bumblebee etched in the bottom. It is just a superficial change, not a true Transformer.

True transformation...that is what Paul is talking about in his letter to the Romans. And who better to talk about true transformation than Paul? Paul went from being someone who persecuted Christians to someone who helped build the early church.

Paul was changed, transformed. Where he had been Mr. Know-It-All, he became someone who learned from God and from others. Where he had been filled with hostility and anger, he became filled with faith, hope, and love. Where he had been trying to stamp out this new Jesus movement, he became one of its greatest leaders and thinkers.

Paul struggled in his transformation. He was truly going against what his community, his society, expected of him as this new Jesus movement spread and challenged old ways. He speaks honestly and openly about his transformation and about what it taught him about God.

That is where my second friend here comes into play. This is the new Paul. He started out looking much like that – but through much toil and struggle (and they say that a 5-year-old should be able to transform this guy) he became his true self. Paul did the difficult work of digging deep, finding the true self that God planted in him at the time of his birth, and putting that true self – his God-given gifts - to work in God's service.

In another translation of this passage, the Message, it says this, "In this way we are like various parts of the human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body...Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body...So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let us go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't."

In the Body of Christ, we are able to be transformed into who we truly are. Beloved children of God that are uniquely made to love, give, share, pray, and go.

Those were the themes for each day of VBS this week: love, give, share, pray, and go.

It is in the Body of Christ that we are shown what it means to be loved, and to love others around us.

It is in the Body of Christ that we see the gifts we have been given, and how and where we can give to others.

It is in the Body of Christ that we have the opportunity to share our gifts and passions with our community and the world.

It is in the Body of Christ that we have been offered the opportunity to pray and listen and grow closer to God.

And it is in the Body of Christ that we are sent out, to go to our communities and to our world, to let others know about the love of God.

In this loving, giving, sharing, praying, and going, true transformation starts to take place. We can't just wear the t-shirt and think that's enough. It's not a "been there, done that" type of thing.

The things we learned this week at VBS should change us. And a life of loving, giving, sharing, praying, and going should change us. Not just with a new t-shirt, but with a new life. A true life.

That is real transformation. That is a transformation that can change us, and eventually that is the kind of transformation that can change the world.

Amen.