

“Transformers – more than meets the eye.”

Romans 12:1-8

August 24, 2008

At the beginning of the Transformers movie released last year, we visit a military base where a helicopter that had supposedly been lost in battle months before, has suddenly appeared on radar and is approaching the base. Fighters are dispatched to intercept the approaching craft, which is warned to proceed and land at the base without deviating from its course or it will be destroyed.

Upon landing the helicopter is surrounded by heavily armed soldiers. The pilot and crew are warned by the base commander, “Shut down your engine and step out of the craft with your hands up, or we will kill you.” It’s just at that moment the helicopter transforms into a giant, and well armed robot who is unaffected by the weapons fired at it, and proceeds to destroy the base, and most of the soldiers in it.

“Transformers – more than meets the eye.” That’s the catch-phrase from the cartoon version of Transformers, and it finds its way into the movie as well. It’s an appropriate way of describing these living robots, who are able to take on the shape and function of just about any type of vehicle.

Of course, that’s all just make-believe, but it does remind me of what Paul is talking about in our reading from Roman’s today. **Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

As God’s people, we are to be transformed. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We are to be “more than meets the eye.”

Of course there are many differences between us and the Transformers of the movie. When the transformers change, they change in their appearance – from a car or truck or helicopter into a robot. But the core of their being remains the same.

Our transformation does not involve a change in physical appearance – except that we may smile a little more. Our change is a change of mind – a turning in a new direction on the inside that results in our going in new directions on the outside too – even though we look the same.

In fact, our new mind looks back on our old self and our sinful ways, and we are ashamed, just like the Lord said in Ezekiel 36:24 and following: **“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.**

**You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. I want you to know that I am not doing**

**this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, O house of Israel!**

How is it that we become ashamed of the things we once willingly and eagerly did? We have changed, or more accurately, we have been changed. God has called us out from among all the nations to make us His own. He has given us His Spirit, and He has given us new hearts that desire to follow His righteous ways and to be ashamed of our sin. We are called to live lives of victory over sin, death and the devil, and we can...to a point.

That's the struggle though, isn't it. We are changed. We are renewed. But our fallen flesh remains, and our old evil enemy still prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, and all too often he tricks us and we begin to fall into his pit only to cry out once again, "Lord, save me." And of course He does. He does save us. He stretches out His hands and says, "It is finished. Why did you doubt, O you of little faith."

We live in a constant battle between the spirit that is willing and even eager to follow after God, and the flesh that is still being pulled at by this world and the devil. We are transformed in spirit into the righteous ones of God, but our flesh is not yet transformed.

According to our redeemed nature, we are wonderful, even glorious. But according to our fallen nature, we are wicked and shameful. And so life is a constant battle – a battle that we cannot win by ourselves, but which our text indicates that God does in fact want to help us win.

**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

How is our mind renewed? How are we to grow more and more Christ-like in our thoughts, words and deeds? How is it we can grow up spiritually so that our very being is transformed and doing what is right is also the natural thing for us to do instead of a struggle? How do our very thoughts become transformed so that they lead us into righteousness instead of temptation?

The answer is the Word of God. It's God's Word revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. It's God's powerful word of promise attached to the waters of Holy Baptism. It's God's awesome word of forgiveness attached to the bread and wine of Holy communion. It's the Word, the Word, the Word.

Jesus is the Word made flesh. He died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to us – and remember the Word is the Sword of the Spirit, and a dull sword does no one any good.

As God's people we are to be immersed in the Word of God. We have the privilege of studying it openly. We have the opportunity to meditate upon that glorious Word so that it will change our hearts and minds from the inside out. So many people in this world are persecuted because of this faith. So many people can't even have a bible, and yet most of us probably have many copies. The question is; are they knick knacks on a bookshelf, or are they decorative coffee table books...or are they a central part of every day so we can let God have His glorious way with our lives – molding and making us in His image.

Our Father wants us to live victorious, abundant lives that bring glory to His name. Now, He's already taken care of the hard part – He sent His only begotten Son to die in our place. He has given us everlasting life as His free gift. Now He wants to enable us to start living victoriously - right now! The victory is ours today though it is often hidden beneath the fallenness of this world.

Do we, as God's redeemed people live in the fallenness of this world, or do we as God's transformed and redeemed people live in His victory in spite of the fallenness of this world? This side of heaven we will never be perfect in thought, word and deed, but the power to live a *more* abundant, *more* fulfilled, *more* victorious life is available to each and every one of us through the powerful, transforming, Holy Word of God. We are God's Transformed, and we are more than meets the eye. In Jesus Name. Amen.

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