Growth Group Questions

25th Sunday after Pentecost, November 15, 2026

Introduction

Have you noticed the new worship tool in the new bulletin format yet? Each non-communion week there's a tidbit inside the front cover explaining a part of our service, a hymn, or some reason for why we do what we do in worship. This week we talked about the pastor's robe and stole. Review the meaning of these two symbols.

Into the Word – Isaiah 1:10-18

1. This is one of the most searing texts in Scripture against dead ritualism. Why was God not pleased with the offerings and worship of Old Testament Israel?

2. Verse 15 is a stern reminder about whose prayers God hears, and whose he doesn't. Does God listen to the prayers of unbelievers?

3. Clearly worship even in the Old Testament wasn't just about doing the right things in the right way – it was about doing them with the right heart. What is pleasing to God in verse 17 and how can we turn our lives to God-pleasing worship today?

4. Note that even after calling Israel to repent and do the right thing, he doesn't say they will be saved by doing it. Instead, he would declare their sins washed away. Saved by grace! What's the connection to the robe the pastor wears in worship?

Into the Word – Romans 12:1-8

5. "Therefore" is always an important word in Paul's letter to the Romans, especially here. What does Paul teach the Romans about themselves, about God, and about forgiveness in the first 11 chapters before arriving at this "turning point" in the letter?

6. Most people in the world think they must please God so that they might then see mercy from God. Paul says instead that we offer ourselves "in view of God's mercy." What's the difference?

7. Verse 2 tells us to "be transformed by the renewing of our minds." Keeping the previous question in mind, describe how our minds came to be renewed, and what it looks like to be transformed by that.

8. The transformed Christian living by his renewed mind isn't concerned about himself as much as he is concerned for others. How does Paul show that in verse 3. How does he picture it in verses 4-8?

9. What gifts of time, talent, or ability have you sometimes (maybe even now) selfishly kept for your own benefit rather than giving it for the blessing of the Church? What gifts do you see most needed for our shared ministry at Salem?

Into the Word – Matthew 25:14-30

10. The two faithful servants earned different amounts for their master. But what do you notice about verses 21 & 23? What matters more to Jesus – the outcome of our use of gifts or the use itself?

11. This seems like an unfair conclusion. The one who had more got more in the end!? What does Jesus mean in verse 29? How is that an accurate description of believers on earth and their eventual rest in heaven?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, you have blessed us in countless ways throughout this church year. As you bring us another week closer to you, fill our hearts with awe as we stand in view of your mercy. May your grace move us to deeper love for one another and greater service with every gift you have given us. Amen.