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To Him Be Glory!

Romans 11.33-36

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

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I. Introduction

- A. When I was teaching at WVU I was involved in our Ph.D. program
 - 1. Over the thirty years I was there, I was the advisor for about 30 Ph.D. students
 - 2. And in our Ph.D. program, all our students had to take a series of core courses, most of them in other disciplines
- B. Since our Ph.D. program was a research degree, our students had to take a series of research design courses, usually in the Department of Educational Psychology
 - 1. And one of the most noteworthy professors in that department was Mike Sing
 - a. And he taught many of my students research design and analysis – essentially an advanced statistics course focusing on analysis of variance
- C. ANOVA is a statistical tool developed to determine differences between groups of subject in an experiment
 - 1. And since my students would eventually be doing experiments with groups of subjects in educational or sport settings, they needed to have all the research tools necessary to conduct the experiments
 - 2. Now, statistical analysis was not exactly my students' cup of tea, not in their wheelhouse
 - a. My students were more interested in the processes and procedures that would enable improvement in movement quality in physical activity settings
 - b. Things like exercise, training protocols, or group management strategies
 - 3. But to assess the effects of those things, you had to learn advanced statistics
 - a. You had to understand analysis of variance
 - 4. So classes on ANOVA were kind of the “eat your spinach” kind of courses in the doctoral program
 - a. My students did not relish the experience, by and large
 - b. They took it because they had to
- D. But Mike Sing did his best to make it interesting
 - 1. What made Mike one of the most noteworthy professors that my students had to take was not his competence in the area of advanced statistics

- a. Though I'm sure his expertise was first rate
 - 2. And it wasn't that Mike was the best communicator
 - a. He was Asian; English was not his first language
 - b. He did his best, and my students learned from him
 - c. But sometimes they had a hard time following him
 - 3. What made him noteworthy was what happened to Mike when he taught analysis of variance
 - a. And nearly every student I had noted this about him
- E. Mike would be explaining a research problem to the class
 - 1. He would generate the data for the example
 - a. Putting the numbers into their appropriate columns
 - b. Calculating the sums of squares for the different treatment groups
 - 2. Then he would plug the appropriate numbers into the appropriate formulas
 - a. And when he was finished the entire blackboard was covered in an elegant display of numbers which represented comparisons
- F. Then he would stand back, admiring his work as if it were the Mona Lisa
 - 1. And he would exclaim, nearly in tears, "Oh, isn't it beautiful!"
- G. And my students would just shake their heads, roll their eyes
 - 1. For the life of them, they just couldn't see the beauty in Mike Sing's masterpiece
- H. Now, I don't know that Mike Sing was a Christian
 - 1. He might have been
 - 2. And I don't want to demean his appreciation for the elegance of advanced statistical analysis
 - 3. Johannes Kepler, the great German astronomer and mathematician, believed that mathematics was no mere human invention
 - a. But was the very language through which God created the universe
 - b. And numbers revealed the very fingerprints of the Creator
 - 4. And it's possible that that was not lost on my colleague
- I. In any event, it is fascinating to note what kinds of things strike awe and astonishment in people
 - 1. In Mike Sing's case, it was the system of mathematics displayed elegantly through statistical analysis
 - 2. What is it, in your case, that evokes that kind of awe?
 - 3. Let's see what it is that evokes such reverence in the apostle Paul

II. Text

- A. Our text this morning is Paul's glorious doxology at the end of Romans 11
 - 1. And after all Paul's discourse, it's as if he stands back, and admires – not his work, but God's work
 - 2. And erupts in a convulsion of praise
- B. **Romans 11:33–36** (ESV) —
 - 1. 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
 - 2. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

3. 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”
 4. 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”
 5. 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things.
 6. To him be glory forever.
 7. Amen.
- C. Now, there is some question about what, exactly, is Paul exclaiming about
1. Romans is Paul’s explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - a. That is the theme of the entire book which he introduces very early
 2. **Romans 1:16–17** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - b. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
 3. Then he expounds the gospel, examining facet by facet this diamond of the salvation of the human race, through 11 chapters
 - a. And after Chapter 11 concludes there is a natural change of emphasis
 - b. From Chapter 12 through 16 we have a section of this great epistle which unfolds the practical applications of the glorious gospel
 4. So, is this doxology meant to exclaim about the entirety of the gospel from Chapters 1-11?
- D. On the other hand, some would look at this doxology in terms of its closest context
1. That it concludes, more properly Chapters 9-11
 2. Chapters 9-11 have been about the relationship between Gentiles and Jews, Paul’s kinsmen
 - a. Considering the Jews large scale rejection of Messiah Jesus
 - b. But how God has used Jewish unbelief as the catalyst for the salvation of Gentiles
 - c. Which had itself been prophesied in the OT
 - d. And how, in the final analysis, how God will use the Gentile belief as the catalyst for the salvation of many more Jews
 3. That section, in itself, according to those scholars, would warrant its own doxology
 - a. Because what God has done among Jewish people vis a vis the Gentiles is nothing short of astonishing
 - b. And didn’t Chapters 1-8 have its own doxology of sorts?
 4. Remember how Chapter 8 ends?
 5. **Romans 8:31** (ESV) —
 - a. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
 6. **Romans 8:38–39** (ESV) —
 - a. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

- b. 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- E. So, which is it?
 - 1. Is Paul's doxology looking at the whole of Romans 1-11 and finds himself overcome by adoration and praise of the God of the gospel?
 - a. Or is Paul overwhelmed with God's amazing plan for His chosen people
 - b. And how salvation in Christ has been made available by grace to both Jew and Gentile by grace through faith?
- F. Well, let's just assume that either may be true
 - 1. For either option is certainly worthy of our awe and worship

III. The Glorious Gospel

- A. First, let's look at the glorious gospel
 - 1. As we've seen, Paul introduced it all at the very beginning of Romans
- B. Romans 1:16-17 (ESV) —
 - 1. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, ...
 - a. Not ashamed? Just the opposite – Paul glories in the gospel, for that is what his great doxology is all about!
 - b. What Paul begins is an understated tease compared to where he will end in Chapter 11
 - c. Now, why is he not ashamed?
 - 2. for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,
 - a. This gospel, for which he is not ashamed, and in which he glories, is the power of God for salvation
 - b. That everyone who believes is, in fact, saved is beyond comprehension when we consider the human condition
 - c. Now, for whom is it the power of God for salvation?
 - 3. to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - a. Yes, Paul's exposition will concern the salvation of both Jews, Paul's kinsmen, as well as Gentiles
 - b. Gentiles – those unexpected recipients of the good news of God's grace in Jesus
 - c. Those former pagans whose interest in the things of God involved paltry substitutes through various forms of idols
 - 4. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."
 - a. And now Paul exclaims, in all of the gospel, God is jealous to reveal His nature and character
 - b. And Paul will show in these chapters how the righteousness of God is revealed
- C. So, with that introduction, let's see Paul's masterpiece unfold
 - 1. First he begins with the human condition (Romans 1.18-32)
 - a. Humanity is by nature opposed to God

- b. We suppress the truth about God in unrighteousness, even though we see the fingerprints of God all throughout the created world
 - 2. And this truth suppression leads to a downward spiral of moral degradation
 - a. Starting with a rejection of the worship of the One true God, to ingratitude
 - b. And then with the distortions of thinking
 - 3. And, as they say, one thing leads to another
 - a. Impure hearts
 - b. Dishonoring sexual expressions
 - c. Rampant idolatry in which man will worship and serve anything and everything but God
 - 4. Then the debased mind of humanity would give way to “all manner of unrighteousness” in which a list of iniquities would be summarized as “haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil... foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.”
 - D. Then in **Chapter 2** Paul shows how the human condition applies to the religious and the so-called non-religious, or Gentiles
 - 1. That both Jew and Gentile are both afflicted by this deplorable human condition
 - 2. That’s right – deplorable is an appropriate descriptor to apply to the human race
 - 3. You surely remember that Hillary Clinton got into trouble when she described about half of the American population deplorables
 - a. She was certainly wrong about that; half of the U.S. population is not deplorables
 - b. No! 100% of the population are deplorables apart from the grace of God in Jesus!
 - 4. That’s why 100% of the population, not just of the U.S. but of the whole world, is desperate for a Savior!
 - E. In Chapter 3 Paul concludes that
 - 1. **Romans 3:10–12** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 ... “None is righteous, no, not one;
 - b. 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God.
 - c. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
 - 2. The human race is depraved, and that depravity is both universal and pervasive
 - a. Universal – it applies to every person
 - b. Pervasive – it affects every dimension of the human character – minds, wills, emotions, bodies
 - F. But then, in **Chapter 3**, Paul begins to expound the good news – which makes sense only after that catalogue of bad news
 - 1. That God manifests His righteousness – His nature in acting in according with who He is

2. In that through faith in Jesus Christ, a mass of humanity is justified – declared not guilty – by grace as a gift
 3. That God redeemed a humanity by Jesus Christ who God offered as a propitiation – a wrath-removing sacrifice
 4. And in so doing, God is glorified because His justice and His mercy are both on display in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for everyone who would ever believe
- G. Then he says, “You know what? All this was evident in the Hebrew scriptures”
1. In **Chapter 4** he uses Abraham as exhibit A, showing how “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness”
 - a. So Abraham was justified by faith!
 2. And so was David, whom Paul uses as exhibit B
- H. **Chapter 5** makes that good news even better, by showing the astonishing benefits of this justifying faith
1. That we who have been justified by faith in Jesus have peace with God
 - a. No longer enemies; God is now on our side, no longer our wrathful enemy
 2. That we have access to the Father, and enjoy hope in the glory of God
 3. And we even find that our sufferings produce blessings of enduring, character, hope
 4. And the love of God in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which you might say was icing on the cake
 - a. But it’s much more than icing, isn’t it?
- I. Then in **Chapters 6-8** we have a yet more wonderful facet of the diamond of the gospel
1. Having been justified by faith in Jesus, Paul shows us how God sanctifies us by the work of the Spirit of God within us
 2. We are spiritually united with the Father and Son by the Spirit
 3. And our identification with the Deity means that we have the capacity to act in ways we could never have dreamed of as deplorable sinners
 4. That we have been freed from slavery to sin, and belong to another master, to Jesus
 - a. Whose loving leadership carries us toward an eternity of blessing and glory
 5. He shows us how we are saved in Christ from the penalty of the Law of God
 - a. That the Law becomes our schoolmaster, leading us to the Savior
 - b. Who alone ultimately has fulfilled the Law on our behalf
 - c. But whose Spirit enables us to live the life God intended us to live
 - d. As we walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh or the sinful nature
- J. All of that puts our suffering into perspective
1. So that we see that our present sufferings aren’t worth comparing with the glories that are to be revealed in us
 2. That in our sufferings the Spirit helps us in our weakness, interceding for us according to the will of God

3. So that all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose
- K. And then in **Chapters 9-11** Paul applies the gospel to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles
 1. Driven by his “great sorrow and unceasing anguish” for his Jewish kinsmen, he has searched the scriptures to see what future the Jewish people have
 2. And he discovers that God has not forgotten his chosen people
 3. That has used the unbelief of the Jews to save Gentiles
 - a. And he is using the belief of Gentiles to provoke Jews to faith in Jesus
 - b. So that in the long run, “all Israel will be saved”
- L. What a glorious gospel!
 1. How could you not erupt in praise and adoration of God whose gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”
 2. So Paul, stands back, looks at what God “hath wrought”, and is overcome with praise and adoration!
- M. Are you not similarly overcome with the impulse for doxology?
 1. If you are not, I doubt you are a Christian!
 2. I know that my doctoral students were not enamored with the elegance of demonstrations of the analysis of variance
 - a. They can be forgiven for that, I suppose
 3. But how can you not be overcome with such a gospel as this if, in fact, you have been the recipient of His grace?
 - a. Justified by faith
 - b. Sanctified by His Spirit
 - c. Assured of your salvation through the sovereign grace of the Triune God?

IV. **The Glorious Olive Tree**

- A. Now, maybe Paul’s doxology was not intended to reflect on the entirety of the gospel, as glorious as it is
 1. After all, there is a glorious ending to Chapter 8 as we have indicated
 2. Maybe the more immediate context is what drives this doxology
 - a. The section comprised of **Chapters 9-11**
 - b. In which God reveals through Paul His grand design for the salvation of the Jewish people
 - c. All the while, including the Gentiles in the same body
- B. Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree
 1. The roots of which are decidedly Jewish
 - a. Born of Abraham and patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob
 2. But a tree capable of divine husbandry
 - a. In which unfruitful branches are broken off
 - b. But which wild olive branches might be grafted in

3. It's one tree, not two!
 - a. Jewish in its essence
 - b. But inclusion in the tree depends on faith
 - c. Faith in God's promise of redemption through the seed of the woman
 - d. Eventually, in the OT, it becomes clear that this seed would descend from David
 - e. And the only descendant who could ever qualify is Jesus of Nazareth!
- C. Paul is driven in his concern by the apparent unbelief of so much of the people of Israel
 1. While Paul himself is Jewish, and the early church, especially in Jerusalem, was Jewish
 - a. By and large, the church has become largely Gentile
 2. What was God up to? Were His promises to Israel forgotten?
 - a. Did God fail to carry out His covenant?
 3. By no means!
 - a. And Paul shows in these chapters why this is the case, why God's faithfulness shines forth in His dealings with Israel
- D. How did God do it?
 1. He knew the unfaithfulness of Israel would open the door of salvation to the very people the Jews couldn't imagine being included
 - a. The Gentiles!
 2. There always was a remnant of Jews who believed in the promises of God
 - a. Even during the most dire moments of unbelief
 3. And eventually, under the sovereignty of God, once the Gentiles have been included, God will bring the greater body of Jews to faith in Messiah Jesus
- E. So there would be one tree – one glorious olive tree!
 1. Jewish in its roots – so that no Gentile should be arrogant over the Jews for any reason
 2. But inclusive of all who place their faith in Messiah Jesus, Jew or Gentile
- F. That, in itself, is enough for Paul – and for us! – to erupt in praise and adoration
 1. Do you join in this doxology?
 2. Gentile, are you humbled by your inclusion in the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus?
 - a. Are you grateful for your Jewish forebears who believed the promises of God?
 - b. Are you thrilled for the hope that we have for the larger Jewish people who will be saved by faith in Messiah Jesus?

V. The Uniqueness of God

- A. So, with those impulses driving Paul, and us, toward praise, what does Paul call attention to in his eulogy for the living God?
- B. His Wisdom and Knowledge
 1. First, is His wisdom and knowledge

2. **Romans 11:33** (ESV) —
 - a. 33 **Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!...**
3. There is some question whether there are two or three qualities of God that are honored in this verse
 - a. Is it riches and wisdom and knowledge as in the ESV
 - b. Or is it the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God – that wisdom and knowledge are the riches as the NASB has it: “Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”
4. The scholars say either; I’m inclined to think the emphasis is on wisdom and knowledge
 - a. That’s because that’s what is called attention to in the next verse
5. **Romans 11:34** (ESV) —
 - a. 34 **“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”**
6. The mind represents the knowledge of God; wisdom is the domain of the counselor
7. So, when we consider the glories of the gospel, and the glories of the one olive tree, do we not see the knowledge of God and the wisdom of God?
8. Just think of His knowledge
 - a. Arthur Pink: God is omniscient. He knows everything; everything possible, everything actual; all events, all creatures, of the past, the present, and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell.... Nothing escapes his notice, nothing can be hidden from him, nothing is forgotten by him.... He never errs, never changes, never overlooks anything.”
 - b. Only an all-knowing, omniscient God could have designed redemption in such a manner like that
 - c. In a manner in which the character of God, His righteousness and His mercy and grace, are all on display at the same time!
9. And what about wisdom
 - a. Wisdom is knowledge directed to the highest goals and most moral destiny
 - b. Tozer: Wisdom... is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so that there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision.
10. The glorious gospel and the glorious one olive tree, with saved Jews and Gentiles, is the wisest, most glorious means of achieving God purpose of saving a desperately sinful humanity while displaying His nature and character

C. **His Judgments and Ways**

1. And then Paul calls attention to God judgments and ways
 2. **Romans 11:33** (ESV) —
 - a. 33 ... **How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**
 3. The judgments of God refers to His decrees, usually focused on decrees of judgment in which God holds sinful humanity accountable for their unbelief and unrighteousness
 - a. We've seen evidence of God's judgments in the gospel, in which all humans are under the wrath of God for truth suppression
 - b. And when God "gave them over" to increasing levels of self-destructive sinful patterns
 4. **Romans 11:32** (ESV) —
 - a. 32 For God has consigned all to disobedience...
 - b. That's a judicial judgment on God's part
 5. But His judgments, His decrees can also be positive
 6. **Romans 11:29** (ESV) —
 - a. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
 7. So, both in the gospel and in the one glorious olive tree, God's judgments are unsearchable
 - a. Unsearchable in the sense that we can understand and know them by His revelation of them
 8. And then there are His ways
 - a. The ways of God; His manner of acting in relation to our desperate humanity
 - b. We think of His patience, His long-suffering
 - c. How He endured the weak faith of such as Abraham, Isaac, and the conniving Jacob
 - d. How He used as has-been shepherd Moses to lead a people out of bondage – an exodus that explodes in meaning when we see the grand exodus from sin that comes from Messiah Jesus
 - e. How He used an adulterer and murderer like David to nevertheless be a person of God's own heart to be the one through whom Messiah would eventually come
 9. All so we could see both His justice and righteousness as well as His love and mercy and kindness through it all
 10. His ways are inscrutable!
 - a. We would never understand the ways of God apart from the study of His revealed word
 - b. Reading through the Bible like we do in Study with the Pastor is the only way we can trace the patterns of the ways of God!
 - c. His ways are inscrutable
- D. **His Grace and Mercy**
1. Then Paul exclaims His grace and mercy
 2. **Romans 11:35** (ESV) —
 - a. 35 **"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"**

3. This is a rhetorical question, the answer for which is “No one”
 - a. No human being could ever give anything to God to repay Him!
4. That’s what makes grace grace; that’s what makes mercy mercy
 - a. If you must repay grace, it’s no longer grace
 - b. If you must repay mercy, it’s no longer mercy!
5. And both in the glorious gospel, and in the glorious one olive tree, with sinful but redeemed Jews and Gentiles, grace abounds! Mercy exclaims!
6. Is there anything more gracious and merciful than a God who gives what can never be repaid?
 - a. A gift so perfectly suited to the need of a desperate humanity, a deplorable people
 - b. A gift leading to justifying grace, to sanctifying grace, to amazingly gracious inclusion of Jew and Gentile in one body?

E. **His Nature and Being**

1. And then Paul speaks of the nature and being of God
2. **Romans 11:36** (ESV) —
 - a. 36 **For from him and through him and to him are all things....**
3. When you consider what God has done in the glorious gospel, and what He has done in the glorious one olive tree, what do we learn about God?
4. “For from him...”
 - a. God is **the source** of all, the source of everything, the source of our salvation
5. “And through him...”
 - a. And God is **the means** through which everything in His redemptive plan is accomplished
6. “And to him are all things...”
 - a. And God is **the end** to which all things are destined
7. He is the alpha and the omega – the beginning and the end
8. God is the “all in all” (**1 Corinthians 15:28**)
9. Everything comes from Him; everything is accomplished by Him ultimately; and He is the goal of everyone’s existence
 - a. Yes, your very existence is destined for God
 - b. One way or another – either in His just judgment for your rejection of Him, or in the glory of His goodness by trusting in Jesus alone for your salvation
10. So, which will it be?
 - a. How will you experience this God who is the source, the means, and the end of everything?

VI. **To Him Be Glory!**

- A. And then Paul says the only thing left to say in such a doxology
 1. **Romans 11:36** (ESV) —
 - a. 36 **... To him be glory forever. Amen.**
- B. Glory belongs to no one else
 1. **Isaiah 42:8** (ESV) —

- a. 8 I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.
- C. Dear friends, in the glorious gospel that Paul proclaims – which is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the only gospel – all glory, all praise, all credit goes to God alone
 - 1. The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that made His salvation necessary
 - a. The sin which Jesus Himself took upon Himself so that we would never have to experience the wrath of God
 - 2. The foreknowledge was God's foreknowledge
 - 3. The predestinating to be conformed into the image of His Son is God's predestinating work
 - 4. The spiritual call of God is God's call
 - 5. The justification is God's justification
 - 6. And the glorification God promises to every believer is God's glorification as well
 - 7. He alone gets the glory
 - 8. No one of us will pat ourselves on the back and say to God, "Isn't it wonderful that I had the good sense to be saved, or that I was smart enough to be saved, or that I was righteous enough to be saved"
 - a. It was never about anything in us!
 - b. It was always about everything in God for us!
- D. To God be the glory, forever!
 - 1. Amen!

Benediction

Romans 11:33–36 (ESV) —

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”

For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever.
Amen.