

Message for Sunday, August 16, 2026

Scripture: Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32

Title: Who Are You?

Welcome

Announcements: Giving Options, electronically on the website, QR code, check in the offering...etc; Special Offering for Augusts is the ARC; All Church Retreat and Potluck-flyer and sign up in foyer, as well as email and church newsletter. (Jeni may want to say something about this as she is planning on being here); Mountain View Book Club will meet on Tuesday, September 1 at 9:30AM in Verde Hall. They are reading Theo of Golden

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: When hatred and division separate us,

P: God's love binds us together.

L: When quarrels estrange us,

P: Christ's grace brings us reconciliation.

L: When we feel excluded and left out,

P: The Spirit's peace eases our pain.

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L: Come! Let us worship the One who makes us one.

Unison Prayer

Eternal God, heal the wounds that block our unity as your beloved children.

Ease the hurts and betrays that block us from embracing the balm of your forgiveness.

Cast out the fears that prevent us from seeking your peace and reconciliation.

**Even when our hearts are pierced with anguish, send us friends who will bring us solace,
through your loving Spirit. Amen.**

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Offering/Special Music- Patricia Clark “You’ll Never Walk Alone”

Scripture: Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

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² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

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²⁹ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

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³⁰ Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience,

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³¹ so also they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they also may now receive mercy.

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³² For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

L: The Word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: Who are you?

Another short passage from Romans. But as you should be familiar with already its going to be one that has a lot for us to unpack, and we aren't going to unpack all of it. This passage is a continuation of what Paul is struggling with, whether Israel is saved by God or not. Paul answers this quite emphatically, "By no means!" in verse one.

So now that we have that sorted we can just go home right? Of course not. One of the reasons most of chapter 11 is not read is because historically that section has been

repeatedly misinterpreted. The way it has been interpreted, including our selection of passage, is as supersessionism. I know that's a million-dollar word here, but I have to remind you I went to school sometimes, right? Supersessionism is the belief that the church has now replaced Israel as the subject of God's covenant. Paul has specifically answered this, he's rejected it in the very first group, but for some reason...maybe it is personal bias, people ignore that part of the verses.

We still need to wrestle though with what is happening to Israel in this passage. During my research I came across two predominant ideas. The first is the remnant theory. This is an idea based in the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. For those who don't remember this passage, it's the one where God appears as a still small voice, and Elijah just beat all the prophets of Baal in a miracle faceoff and then ran for his life. When he is hiding in a cave he tells God that God should just wipe out the people of Israel. God tells Elijah that he has 7,000 faithful people that he doesn't know about.

This idea is exemplary of the remnant theory. The people won't be destroyed because some believe. Not all of them, but a few of them. So to carry this logic to the new testament, there are some Jewish people who believe in Christ. Therefore all the people are saved because a few believe.

I am not very satisfied with this interpretation. One of the reasons is that to me it still lays a problem at the feet of those who believe this. If only a few Americans believe is

that enough that the whole nation is saved? What about a few in some unknown country?

And how many is enough for a whole people to be saved? When do we know if we hit the basic threshold? For me it raises more questions.

My preferred interpretation of this is not without its own struggles, but I think it forms a more cohesive view of what is happening here. That is the idea of apokatastasis, I know another million-dollar word. This is universalism. You see this helps me with what I feel is the most awkward verse, verse 32. Verse 32 is pretty clear that you are trapped in disobedience because God has you trapped there. Now bear with me. I want you to understand something very clearly. Our relationship with God is not transactional. We say this all the time, that you can never do enough to earn Gods love, but then we often turn around and say, “well you have to do or say x, y, or z, to be saved.” This is still transactional. Instead I invite you to look at the fact that God is the one in charge. There is nothing you can do to earn- it therefore it is given freely by God to everyone. Any limits you put on this are limits you *choose* to place upon God, and to be honest I am not brave enough to do that.

One last part of that universalism is that all people are saved. Those who struggle with this idea I have a question for you. Where has God rejected people for rejecting God? God is repeatedly throughout scripture portrayed as the lover seeking the wayward lover,

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Hosea. Or the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, the gospels. God is always seeking us and has saved everyone you meet.

Then how does this work with evangelism we talked about last week. This goes back to how I think evangelism is mistranslated. You see the Christian walk is a communal one. We walk together to be more like Christ. And we are trying to love one another and love everyone around us. Inviting people into a loving relationship with God is far easier, and let's be honest. far more desirable to share, when we know that God loves us no matter what...you mean we are back a Paul's major point for the past several chapters? Yep! Nothing can separate you from Gods love. Even rejecting God... Well thank God for that. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer/Lord's Prayer, Song, Benediction, Song, Goodbye