

## **Lenten Devotional March 26, 2021**

### **Scripture**

Romans 11:13-24

*13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry 14 in order to make my own people jealous, and thus save some of them. 15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead! 16 If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy. 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, 18 do not vaunt yourselves over the branches. If you do vaunt yourselves, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. 19 You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you. 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.*

### **Devotional**

#### **The Rev. Dr. John Charnock '09**

In this passage about the olive tree, Paul does three things: asks a question, provides an answer, and tells the truth. First, the question. Who do you think you are? We might fancy ourselves the heart of things, but the fact is we're barely a *part* of things. I've never seen a wild olive shoot, yet I realize I *am* one. Undisciplined, wandering, haphazard. I know who I am. Who do you think you are? That's a question Paul asks us all.

He also provides an answer, spelled G-R-A-C-E. By grace, a wild olive shoot is treated as a natural branch. By grace, a lost soul is welcomed home. By grace, the question finds an answer. "Who do you think you are?" sounds the question. "Saved by grace," comes the resounding reply.

So there are the question and the answer. Now it's time for the truth. None of this is easy. All that pruning and grafting is painful—so of course it hurts. Especially in the middle of Lent, it hurts. After all, we follow one who took Holy Week walks in the olive groves. We bear the cross of one who died on the tree.

Who do you think you are? Saved by grace. None of this is easy. Thanks be to God.

### **Prayer**

O Lord, I don't always journey along a neatly groomed pilgrim path. Sometimes I wander in the wilderness. Sometimes I even outrun the hope that is in me. So help me find hope in you. In your name I pray. Amen.