

Lenten Devotional April 1, 2023

Scripture

Romans 11:25-36

25 *So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,*

*“Out of Zion will come the Deliverer;
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”*

27 *“And this is my covenant with them,
when I take away their sins.”*

28 *As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.*

33 *O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

34 *“For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?”*

35 *“Or who has given a gift to him,
to receive a gift in return?”*

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Trevor Jamison '01

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (v 33).

Though Paul wrote that, it’s never stopped us from trying to comprehend God’s judgments and ways. That’s because we find them puzzling, and at times, distressing.

Paul was puzzled (and perhaps distressed) that “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” (v 25). Most of his fellow Jews did not accept Jesus as the Messiah/Christ. Why would God work in this way? What does that say about God?

In our time, we are puzzled (and sometimes distressed) by God’s ways with the world. Why put people in power who misuse it? Why permit suffering to be handed out to the innocent, whilst allowing the guilty to go free and prosper? Why arrange for people of faith to be persecuted?

Paul suggests God permits some things to happen in order to bring a greater good into being: “God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all” (v 32). Here, the apostle provides only a partial answer, but then, God’s ways are inscrutable.

If we can’t understand God fully, then we are going to have to trust. We have greater grounds for trust if God not only permits political injustice, violence, suffering, and persecution in this world, but also is prepared to be among those at its receiving end. And at this point in Lent, Jesus is approaching Jerusalem, and his encounter with these very things.

Prayer

O God, we cannot fully understand you, so help us to trust in you. Encourage us to confront, endure, and overcome the evils of this world, even as we remember your Son, the Christ, travelling to Jerusalem, ready to confront them. Amen.