

“TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS.”
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First Christian Reformed Church
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Scripture Texts: Romans 11:33-36

Prayer: Father of all glory, make what I preach and what we hear and believe worthy of you, worthy of the clarity and excellence of your Holy Word. Let your Word be a double-edged sword penetrating to joints and marrow, to soul and spirit, to the depths of our beings. Fill us with the fullness of God that you may be glorified in your Church. For the glory and sake of Jesus, Amen.

Introduction.

I love big endings, grand finales, like the last big burst on Fourth of July. I love crescendo moments. Like a glorious sunset or the aurora borealis we have been having the past week. Like the intensity of Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus. Like graduation ceremonies.

Crescendos are crescendos because there is a gradual build-up of intensity and loudness, that culminates in a powerful and unforgettable climax.

Romans 11:33-36 is one of those crescendo moments in Scripture. Paul has several in this letter. They are even more powerful and profound when you consider how personal they are, deep expressions of Paul’s inner spiritual life.

I Timothy 6:13-16 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, ... 14 to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will display at the proper time—[then Paul bursts into spontaneous worship as he soars into the heavenlies] he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

I Timothy 1:12-17 I thank ... Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with

the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 ... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the *foremost*. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the *foremost*, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 17 [and then the chief sinner among sinners who is the chief object of mercy bursts into worship] To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

For eleven chapters in Romans Paul has expounded on great theological themes. Eleven chapters about the character and nature of God. On and on and on through the deep, hard truths of God with a gradual building of intensity.

He started with the terrible, sinful condition of our hearts as Paul walked us into the depths of God's wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness in Romans 1–3:19.

Then Paul announces the great work of Christ on the cross to provide a righteousness and a sacrifice so we could be justified by faith alone apart from works. In chapter five God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, justifying us by His blood.

Then came the mighty sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in chapter six to conquer sin which was very personal to Paul as he revealed his own heart in chapter seven.

Romans 7:14-15 I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Romans 7:24-25 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Then we soared through chapter 8 as we are made secure in the love of Christ.

Romans 8:31, 39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 39 [nothing] else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Then finally in chapters 9-11, the great defense of the God's sovereignty, Paul plunged into some of the deepest theology, how not all Israel is Israel, how God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and harden whom He will harden, making vessels of wrath to show vessels of mercy the riches of His glory, how He is the potter and we are the clay.

We ended last week with the stunning words:

Romans 11:32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

It had been building for eleven chapters as Paul pondered the joy of forgiveness and justification and adoption and the gift of the Spirit and the mysteries of election and the purposes of God for Israel.

There is nothing left for him to say or do, but express the wonder of it all. Oh! The depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

Romans 11:33

- (1) God's riches and wisdom and knowledge are infinitely deep.
- (2) God's judgments are infinitely unsearchable.
- (3) God's ways are infinitely inscrutable.

Oh, the inexhaustible, unfathomable depth of God. Out of our reach, beyond our sight, beyond the limits of human experience and grasp. No matter how deep we plunge, there will always be deeper depths. How could you wrap your head around the extent of God's knowledge?

Psalm 147:4 says God knows all the names of all stars, which only stands to reason, since He made each one of them Himself. Astronomers estimate that there on average about 100 billion stars in a galaxy and there are about two trillion galaxies in the observable universe, so that comes out to about 200 billion trillion (200 sextillion) stars.

Scripture says God knows the number of hairs on all eight billion human heads (Matthew 10:30), on average between 90,000 for redheads and 140,000 for blondes.

God numbers the rain drops and decides where they land. God knows the number of the grains of sand on all the seashores and the number of molecules in each grain, 27 billion-billion.

God knows everything and He has always known it. God does not learn new things. And all of this knowledge all added together is just a little dust on His scales.

God's judgments are unsearchable, how and why He runs the world; how He plans to save so many. His ways are inscrutable, incapable of being investigated or analyzed.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

What do you do with a God whose ways are above and beyond our ways, with a God whose ways and reasons and purposes are beyond comprehension?

You humbly submit and bow down and worship. And despite all that we don't know, here is what we do know. God is faithful and trustworthy. He has absolute integrity. We can depend on Him in our darkness and ignorance.

Romans 11:34-35

Then Paul poses three rhetorical questions, questions meant to lead us to more humble worship. Paul removes all argument, all human presumption, all boasting and pride.

Who can ever say something to God that God has never thought? God knew everything about all of human history before the world began.

Who can argue with God about God's decisions and choices and election?
Can the clay ever argue with the potter?

Who would dare to volunteer to give God some helpful advice or tell God something maybe He hasn't thought of?

Who is able to give God something that would make God indebted to you and have to pay you back? God owns everything so He can't be given anything that isn't already His, you can't put God in your debt.

Who has earned or deserved or merited anything from God? To whom is God beholden?

God has every right to freely do as He alone pleases with the creatures He has made and He doesn't have to answer for it or explain it.

Romans 11:36

Then the crescendo of crescendos, this is the glorious height, the pinnacle of God. Three prepositions. From, through, to.

- (1) All things are from God: He is the Source.
- (2) All things are through God: He is the Sustainer and the Means.
- (3) All things are to God: He is the Goal.

This is why all the rhetorical questions must be answered in a resounding no one.

Because all things are from God, through God and to God. He is the one responsible for everything that is, there is nothing that is, that is not from Him and through Him and to Him.

God didn't create everything and then just let it be. There is nothing that is independent of God, that doesn't still need God to continue to exist. Everything God created, completely depends on God to continue to exist. If God ceased for one second to sustain everything, it all would disappear.

God is intimately involved in every facet of His creation from the galaxies and supernovas to the planet earth to the weather, and the individual lives of every human and every living creature down to sparrows the ants and the movement of the atoms.

Acts 17:24-25 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, ... gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Since we are created, owned, sustained by God, it only follows that we belong to Him for His glory. What other purpose can we have, if it is from Him and through Him and by Him and for Him that we live and move and have our being?

The same God who is at the beginning of all things is also the same God who is at the end of all things.

God's glory should be the desire behind our getting up in the morning, raising our families, going to school, doing our jobs, living out our retirement, what we do with our money, our wealth, our time and resources.

Give all glory and praise to God for who He is, for His excellence greatness, His sovereign goodness, His steadfast love and covenant kindness and sovereign election.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Implications and application.

There are 68 words in our text this morning. Can you find the most important word in this text?

Which word would you pick? God, depth, riches, unsearchable? OK, glory, that has to be it, right? Nope.

It is the first word, Oh! Oh the depth, Oh the riches. Oh the glory of God.

Is there an Oh in your life? Where is the crescendo in our lives?

How many of us find our experience of God to be just sort of average, not great but not terrible, just sort of normal, so so, maybe even a little boring sometimes?

How many of us are just sort of doing Christianity on auto pilot, just enough to get by, nothing too radical or life-changing? Nothing too risky. Maybe our goal is just to stay out of hell.

Are we bored with God and what we believe about God? Is what we believe just in our heads and not in our hearts? Have we been captivated by the Gospel proclaimed in Romans?

Have we been captivated by the sheer astonishment and amazement and awe at God, at the staggering power and authority and holiness and grace and mercy and amazing love.

Is there a reverential kind of fear that grows out of the painful realization of how great a sinner we are against so pure and good a God, and is it followed by the joy of so great a salvation offered to us? That Oh moment.

Do we exclaim Oh at the thought that while we were yet sinners still lost in our sin, God loved us and sent His Son to die for us! Ohs come to those who know the depth of their forgiveness and the mercy of their salvation. Without our sin we would know nothing of grace, mercy and love.

Where is the crescendo in our lives? Where is the Oh!?

This is what we are made for, this is what we are saved for, to experience the fullness of God. Christians burst out in worship. Christians forget ourselves and everyone and worship Him. Christians don't just go to church on Sundays, as if doing some duty, Christians come to offer heartfelt worship to the one true and only living God.

Men, let me ask you, when we sing, do we sing like we are self-conscious of being heard, or are we singing Oh, like we are God-conscious, do we care less about ourselves and others, care only about God? Men, what keeps you from Oh? Paul was a man's man, unafraid of humbling himself before men, that he might honor His God.

If your theology doesn't lead you into doxology, it isn't worth anything.

One more thing, people who are staggered by God aren't easily seduced by sin. People in awe of God find sin less appealing. When you are enthralled by his beauty it is hard to become enslaved to unrighteousness. People whose attention has been captured by the beauty of Christ and his saving love and mercy find little appeal in the glamour of this world (Sam Storms).

I love You, Lord and I lift my voice to worship You.
Oh my soul rejoice. Take joy my King in what You hear.
Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear.

Psalm 34:3, 8-9 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!

8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

9 Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, 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 that he might be repaid?”

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

Prayer: Holy, gracious and all-glorious God, lift us up out of our stagnant, lukewarm, shallow lives, into the light of your grace, into the light of the joy of our salvation, into the crescendo of your glory revealed in your Son and our Savior who has done more than we can ask or imagine, let alone even deserve. Deliver us from the triviality of our temporal lives and make our souls thirst for the living God, make your love better than life itself, make our hearts and mouths sing for joy to you our rock and our redeemer, for your glory, in Jesus name. Amen.