

To the glory of God alone: Romans 11v32-12v1

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Date: 04 June 2017

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[0 : 00] Maria is going to come and read this morning. It's on page 1131 if you're using a church Bible. Okay, Romans chapter 11, verse 33.

Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out.

Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever. Amen. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, and in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

And this is your spiritual act of worship. Thanks, Maria.

[1 : 39] Alex is just handing around some pens and there's a piece of paper. If you want to take notes as well, it's got headings, which you can follow along if you want to take that.

And just to remind you that today we come to the end of our little mini series, which we call Glorious Salvation. And some of those themes that we've been looking at will be the theme of our Summer Bible Week.

So I hope it's given a taste in some ways of that. So come along to the Summer Bible Week, which is in July. Put that into your diary.

The lectures are repeated morning and evening. So if you can't get to the morning, you can go in the evening. Don't forget to pick up your summer program as well.

And you'll see on the inside that during the month of July and August, there are different people who will be preaching. Some names you will recognize, others you won't.

[2 : 40] But they are all related in some way to Munster Bible College and those who have been teaching or helping at that.

So do come along during the months of July and August. Pray for those who will be preaching and teaching. Let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at his word together.

Our God, you are great and you are glorious.

For you have done good and mighty things. Father, we pray that you would give us a fresh glimpse. Paint a picture upon our hearts and upon our minds. Engrave your salvation deep upon our lives.

[3 : 54] That we may see the wonder, the beauty, the magnificence of you, Lord Jesus. And that in response, we would be a people who live for your glory.

Amen. We ask for your help to us today. In Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know about you, but art was really never my strongest subject.

In fact, it was terrible. And that caused a bit of a problem because exam time was getting close.

Running out of ideas, I went to one of the art rooms and collected all the leftover drawings and put them neatly into a folder, all belonging to other people.

And the day came when we had to hand up our work and I proudly presented my work. And I passed. I took all the praise and all the glory for something that was not mine.

I robbed the glory that belonged to someone else. Now, when it comes to our salvation, we can claim the glory for ourselves.

[5 : 26] We can look upon it as something that I achieve. God accepts me because I obey him. God loves me because, well, I love him.

God saves me because I chose him. It's all about me and what I've done. It's my performance, my effort. It's what I deserve.

But every time we say I in regard to salvation, we are stealing or robbing the glory from God.

Rather than God being great and awesome and magnificent, well, then I become great. It's to Johnny be the glory forever. Amen.

It's taking praise and glory for something that is not mine. You see, when it comes to our salvation, God alone should get all the glory.

[6 : 31] Have a look at verse 36, Romans 11, verse 36. This little section here, maybe it has a little title, verses 33 to 36, it has doxology.

Maybe that's the title. It's not inspired, it's not from God, but somebody has put it in afterwards. But really, it's just a hymn of praise, of exaltation, a great outburst of uncontained emotion towards God. And it comes at the very end of 11 chapters that has gone into great detail, showing us and detailing to us God's amazing gift of salvation.

And as he traces God's plan of salvation, he gets to the end and he can't help but just burst out in praise. And here's what Paul, the author, says in verse 36.

Thinking of God's amazing salvation, verse 36. For from him and through him and to him are all things.

[7 : 39] To him, to God, be the glory forever. Amen. Salvation is planned by God, provided by God, purposed by God, so God gets all the glory.

Martin Luther, our friend that we've been looking at over these weeks, now with the Lord, of course, rediscovered that salvation was nothing to do with us, it was all of God.

And here he bursts into praise as he contemplates and thinks about it, follow along as I read. He says, Christ, the Son of God, was given, not for the righteous and holy, but for the unrighteous and sinners.

If I were righteous and had no sin, I should have no need of Christ to be my reconciler. Therefore, let us praise God the Father and give him a hearty thanks.

For this his immeasurable mercy, that he has delivered us out of the kingdom of the devil by his own Son, when such was impossible to be done by our own strength.

[8 : 56] Let us extol and magnify the glory of Christ, who has delivered us into the kingdom of Christ, to whom be glory world without end.

Amen. So who gets all the glory? God alone. Well, let's see how all this is true.

We're going to look at two big ideas. First, we're going to see the glory of God displayed, and then we're going to look at the glory of God declared. So the glory of God displayed.

I want you to imagine that you're walking through an art gallery, maybe like the Louvre in Paris or some other national art gallery.

And as you walk through the different rooms, you're confronted by all these amazing pictures on the wall, all by famous artists throughout the centuries.

[10 : 02] Each portrait, each scene that you look at, just takes your breath away. Well, these verses, verses 33 to 36, is like walking into the art gallery of God.

On display as we walk through our pictures and scenes of God's salvation, each one reflects the glory and the beauty and the magnificence and the power of God.

And every scene that you look at causes you to stop and gaze in wonder and worship of what an almighty God we have.

So let's walk through the gallery of God's glory together. Three things we see as we look at God's glory.

First, the riches of God. That's the first scene that we're confronted with. The riches of God. Look at verse 33. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

[11 : 18] On display before us is the deep, never-ending riches of God's goodness and kindness towards us.

There we stand, as it were, in the gallery, looking at God's riches before us, and we are conscious of how deep and how great our own sin is.

But as we gaze at his riches, we are overwhelmed by how deeper and greater God's grace is. It is like a wave that washes over us.

Let me show you a glimpse of his riches. Go back to chapter 3, verse 22. The end of verse 22.

Romans chapter 3, the end of verse 22. Talking about the human race of all people of all times.

[12 : 25] The end of verse 22. It says, There is no difference, for all have sinned, and all fall short of the glory of God.

We simply do not measure up. But God, if you like, in his riches, verse 24, are justified. That is, we are declared not guilty, freely, by his grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Move on, look at chapter 5, verse 17. We can so easily become overwhelmed by our own guilt and shame, but here, look at the riches again.

Chapter 5, verse 17. For if by the trespass of one man, death reigns through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Here we see the riches of God, his wisdom, declaring us not guilty, the riches of his knowledge, knowing what we are like, but pouring out his grace upon us.

[13:51] Gaze and wonder at the magnificence of God. And as we gaze at that scene, we move on and we see another picture.

We see the scene, the plan of God. Go back to Romans 11, and verse 33. We're going to be jumping backwards and forwards to get a picture of these things.

So back to Romans 11, verse 33. The end of verse 33. How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out.

There before us, we see God's plan, his judgments, his paths, all his plans and decisions that he has made to bring about our salvation.

So if you're here this morning and you're a Christian, look at God's plan through your life. You are a Christian, not by chance. It has been ordained by God from before time began and has been revealed to you by God's own design and you've come to experience it by the power of his Holy Spirit.

[15:09] And he wants us to stop and look at his plan. Look at verse 34. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?

Did God ever draw alongside you and consult you and ask you what he should do as regards to saving the world? Did God come looking to you and ask you for advice and say, what should I do? Did God ever turn to you in a state of panic and say, help, what am I going to do to save this person? No.

It all starts with God and it all ends with God. God acted out of his loving initiative and he intervened in our lives according to his will.

Have a look back at chapter 5, verse 6. Just wonder here at God's plan as it unfolds before you.

[16:21] Chapter 5, verse 6. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. but God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God acted by his own will and decree in our lives. And the wonderful thing about God's plan of salvation is it cannot be undone, it cannot be overturned, it cannot be reversed.

Look at these wonderful words. Chapter 8, verse 38. That God not only initiates and brings about our salvation, but he keeps our salvation.

Chapter 8, verse 38. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present or the future, nor any powers, neither heights, nor depth, nor anything else in creation.

[17:45] So whatever you could imagine, not even sin, not even Satan, not even suffering, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Look at the plan of God. The magnificence of God's plan, initiating and securing our salvation from beginning to end.

But we move on to another scene. Look at the gift of God. Go back to chapter 11, verse 35.

Look at verse 35. Who has ever given to God that God should have to repay him? Just think, what did you bring to the table for your salvation?

What did you contribute? What gift did you bring to God to say, here God, look at what I've done, now save me?

[19:04] What did I ever give to God that his arm was forced that he should ever have to give in return to me? Absolutely nothing.

Our salvation is an extraordinary gift from God. Something God delights to do. Something God takes great pleasure in doing because he loves to do good.

Go back to chapter 9, verse 16. So if ever we think it is something that we do or we have earned, look at chapter 9, verse 16.

Speaking about our salvation, it does not therefore depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

Or look at chapter 11, verse 5. Speaking about God's continued working of salvation in people's life. Chapter 11, verse 5, so too at the present time there is a remnant, there are a people chosen by grace.

[20 : 26] And if by grace then it is no longer by works. If it were, grace would no longer be grace.

There is nothing we have done to force God's favour. There is nothing we can do to win his approval. There is nothing we will ever become that God is going to look and say I love you more. God owes us nothing but in his grace he has reached out to us and welcomed us and treasured us and saved us because he delights in pouring out his grace upon us.

So here in chapter 11 is this wonderful invitation to walk through the gallery of God's glory. On display before us is God's glorious salvation to undeserving people like you and me.

and we are just to sit not rush but pause and wonder that God who spoke the universe into existence would come down into the person of Jesus Christ and take all my sin and all your sin and die in our place and would declare me not guilty.

[21 : 47] just sit and bask in the knowledge that God forgives rebels like us and adopts us to be his children that we would have the same rights as the Lord Jesus that we have access to our Father God that we can cry out to him any time any place knowing he will never ever put his hand against us but will welcome us.

delight in the joy that God would choose to show such mercy and that God loves to do so.

Walk through the gallery of God's glory and see his salvation on display and wonder that God did it all for you.

the glory of God is put on display. Second the glory of God is now to be declared.

Imagine if you would for a moment again walking through a gallery and as you look at all the various scenes and portraits all around the wall and you notice people as they look at them they're praising the artist they're commenting to each other amazing incredible and so as you walk around you come to Da Vinci's Sunflowers and you get out a little scraper from your pocket and you start scraping off the corner and you scrape out Da Vinci and you just put your own little signature in the corner Johnny Grant or whoever it's ridiculous isn't it a ridiculous attempt to try and take the glory from the true artist and try and receive praise for yourself well in the same way to claim salvation is something that I achieve and that I deserve is a ridiculous attempt to try and take the glory that belongs to

[24 : 08] God to ourselves just as an artist paints a picture so that we can enjoy all that they've done they paint it and put it there so that we can be amazed and enjoy the sheer brilliance of what they have done so God the ultimate artist has intervened and saved us so that we can simply enjoy all that he has done and in response as we gaze at his brilliance we are to declare his glory so first to God be the glory look at verse 36 his conclusion to this great hymn of praise verse 36 for from God and through

God and to God are all things to God be the glory forever Amen salvation is from God he determined it salvation is through God he accomplished it and salvation is to God the purpose of salvation the goal of salvation the whole plan of salvation is all about God you see sometimes we think the purpose of salvation begins and ends with us that God looked down upon us and said I need to do this for you and it's all about us well it is in a secondary sense but in a primary sense God saves us for the purpose of bringing glory first and foremost to him he acts in such a way so that we would respond in glory listen to this from

Ephesians chapter 1 chapter 1 verse 4 just listen to these words for he that is God chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight why did he do that to the praise of his glorious grace or here follow on the screen here's another verse from the same chapter and you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation having believed you were marked in him with a seal the promised holy spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession why why did

God save you why did he save me to the praise of his glory so that attention would be drawn to him God saves us that is the reason we are saved is to give him all the glory we have not been saved to escape hell and get to heaven although that is in some sense true we are not saved simply to make our life better although our life is exceedingly better because of what God has done we are saved

primarily so that we might declare the glory of God that's the reason God delights in saving us that is why he pours out his mercy and his grace is so that his name becomes famous that the world would see what a mighty and great God we have to God be the glory forever

Amen now the question is how do we go about giving God the glory well all life is to be lived for the glory of God look at chapter 12 verse 1 you see if we didn't have chapter headings or big numbers like 12 there we would just keep reading and that's in a sense what we're meant to do as we wonder at God's salvation what do I do in response chapter 12 verse 1 therefore because of God's glorious salvation I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy as you walk through the gallery of God's glory as you see all that he has done for you what can you do but offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual or reasonable act of worship in response to

[29 : 26] God's salvation our whole life is now to serve God we no longer serve God to try and gain favour or get his attention so that he'll bless us more or give us more we serve God because he has saved us and given to us everything and all that we need because he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ here's how our dead friend Martin Luther put it we are both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon us therefore it is our only one occupation to serve God joyfully without thought of gain you see we declare the glory of

God as we serve him and the way in which we serve God is not by wandering off into some private little excluded commune and singing hymns to God all on our own although you're quite welcome to do that and it's good to praise the Lord it's by serving one another in the context of everyday to day life listen again to Martin Luther here's what he said although the Christian is free from all works that is free from trying to earn salvation God he he ought he he to empty himself take upon himself the form of a servant and serve help and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees God through Christ has dealt with him and still deals with him we want to serve God well just think in the ways in which God has served you and the way in which God deals with you, he does not treat us as our sins deserve. So in the same way, deal with one another and serve each other. So no longer are we striving to use our good works to make God love us, but now God has given us good works to serve others for the good of others, for the glory of God. What will it look like? Well, continue on. Chapter 12, verse 9.

Here's what serving God or serving one another is going to look like in the context of every day-to-day life. Let me just read a few examples. Chapter 12, verse 9. Love. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil.

Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

This is how we bring glory to God. Verse 13. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Invite people to your homes. Or invite them out. Spend time with them. That's how we bring glory to God. Or verse 17. Do not repay evil with evil, but be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. Sorry, I should have read verse 14. Let's go back to verse 14 again. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who are mourning.

[33 : 30] Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Verse 21. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. You see, living life to the glory of God is not confined to one hour on a Sunday morning.

It's not about separating ourselves from the world and surrounding ourselves by a nice group of Christians and singing hymns and praying, although we should sing and we should pray. It is lived out in the context of every day-to-day life, 24-7, in the nitty-gritty hardship of life, whether you're at home with your kids and spending time with them, whether it's working alongside a grumpy colleague, whether it's serving an annoying neighbour and being friendly to them, or giving hospitality to those who are outsiders. In all of this, we are responding and we are serving God for his almighty salvation in our lives and we are saying glory to him as we serve one another. All of life is lived for the glory of God.

Look at chapter 15, verse 7. In some ways, this brings it all to a conclusion. Chapter 15, verse 7.

1. Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you. Why? Why serve one another? Why love one another?

Why mourn with those who mourn? Why rejoice with those who rejoice? Why forgive each other? Here's the reason. In order to bring praise to God. To bring him glory. So let me encourage us all to walk regularly through the gallery of God's glory. Do not rush, but stop and gaze and wonder at the pictures and the scenes on display. His riches, his plan. Everything worked out for our good. And in response, serve one another in love. To God be the glory forever. Amen. Let's pray.

[36 : 27] Our Father God, would you please help us to sit, to reflect, to think upon the beauty, the power and the greatness of our almighty God. And may you work in us in such a way that we delight in all that you have done and enjoy all that you have done and live our lives in service to you.

Father, may we bring glory to you. Father, may we bring glory to you. Father, may we bring glory to you.

May all the praise go to Jesus so that your name is exalted and you become known throughout the world.

Father, we pray for your help that we might do it well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. We are going to sing together two songs, which I hope help us in some way to respond to what we have been thinking about this morning.

[38 : 19] The first one, let your kingdom come, let your will be done, so that everyone might know you.