

Humbled by God's Merciful Plan

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[0:00] So Romans 11, I'm starting at verse 11. And I'm going to the end, which is verse 36.!

Now, if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean?

Now, I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then, as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

For their rejection means the reconciliation of the world. What will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump.

And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others, and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant towards the branches.

[1:42] If you are, remember it's not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you.

Then you will say, branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.

That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief. But you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.

For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then, the kindness and the severity of God.

Severity towards those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off.

And even if they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in. For God has the power to graft them in again.

[2:46] For if you are 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, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree?

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers. A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

And in this way, all Israel will be saved as it is written, As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake.

But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

For just as you were at one time disobedient to God, but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you, they may also now receive mercy.

[4:18] For God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all. O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counsellor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen. Well, good morning, everyone.

Wasn't that a hard song to sing with integrity? You've got to have a very big view of God's goodness to trust him to choose our lot.

[5:32] We're going to see his goodness in our passage today. Will you pray with me as we come to God's word? Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would bring us all with a humble spirit under your word.

I pray that you would make your word clear to us and make your grace, your mercy clear to us. So that we might be praising you like Paul does.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, your prior expectations can, as you know, expectations can powerfully determine how you interpret something.

Like a teenager going on a family holiday overseas, expecting it to be boring. They often make it boring because they expect it to be.

Or a young married couple assuming the model they saw in their own parents' marriage. Your expectations change how you interpret a situation.

[6:46] God's word to us today is God's plans for the descendants of Abraham. So I just want to ask as we start, what are you expecting from God's word today?

Perhaps you've already decided to tune out because you can't see the relevance. I would advise against that, but I'm going to have to convince you.

Well, God's word will convince you. Perhaps you're curious and you've got your guard up. Just the political strain, even this week, between Australia and Israel.

But the thing about the pulpit is I'm not entitled to an opinion. I'm constrained to say what God's word says.

I don't have the right to share my opinion with you. So if that's your expectations, I'm going to let you down. I'm not speaking into that space. Perhaps you're a bit fearful, expecting this passage to be complex and controversial.

[7:51] All Israel will be saved. It will stretch our minds. We can take some assurance from 2 Peter 3 that even Peter says of Paul's writings, there are some things in them that are hard to understand.

Even Peter's saying that. So we're in good company. But there really is quite a simple point in this passage. God hasn't given up on his people. We've got to look into the details of what that means.

But he's not given up on his people. And us non-Jews, if you're not a Jew, then we should be amazed that we can call ourselves God's people. It's really quite a simple overall point.

If you're expecting having to defend your view of eschatology, end times, could we just agree to put our armour down, our defences down?

Because your full belonging in this church and the mutual respect and affection is not based on our doctrine of end times.

[8:58] It is entirely based on the gospel of grace alone. So can we just put our armour down? Let's come to this passage expecting to learn something new.

Whether it's the first time or you've studied this in depth, let's come expecting to learn something new. And we should expect to end where Paul does. If we really get into the mind of Paul here, we should arrive where Paul does.

He is humbled and his heart is so full of wonder at the mercy of God. You're going to wish that I hurry up and finish the sermon because you just want to sing. That would be a good expectation in this passage.

So here's where we're headed to see God's salvation plan. In verses 11 to 15, there's a three-stage process in God's salvation plan.

Then in verses 16 to 24, part of that process, looking at the non-Jews, humbling for us nations that we are grafted into his holy people.

[10:16] Then we'll look at, in this way, all Israel will be saved. And like I've already said, we should be finishing where Paul finishes. We should be humbled and just praising God's mercy.

So that's where we're headed. Please have your Bibles open. So from verse 11. We saw last week in verses 1 to 10 that within ethnic Israel, there are two groups.

There's God's chosen, the elect remnant, chosen by his grace. And they've put their hope in Jesus and are saved. And then there's the rest, many who are hardened in their unbelief.

It would seem that those hardened who are insensitive to God's message of salvation in Jesus, who are stumbling over the message, can it really just be by faith?

They're stumbling over that message. It would seem that they've got no hope for the majority of Israel. Verse 11 is asking the question, has hardened Israel fallen without any hope of recovery?

[11:36] Like a runner who's tripped over and they've just hit the ground so hard, they're just permanently out of the race. Have they fallen that hard?

They've got no hope. When I'm saddened by individuals who've turned away from Christ, there's a thought that helps me.

It's not necessarily the end of their story. Not because unbelief for individuals isn't deadly. It is. If Israel remain in unbelief, that's serious. But because God is incredibly patient and he's faithful to his covenant promises, there is hope.

So in what way is there hope? Paul immediately says, by no means. There is hope. So in what way? So here we come to that three-stage process.

[12 : 44] Verses 11 to 15. And it's not only in verses 11 to 15. He's laying down, he's describing the process, and then the rest of the chapter, we see the process all throughout.

So here it is. Stage one. Through their trespass. So the majority of Israel rejected their Messiah. There's stage one. They've not believed. But through that, stage two, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to the nations.

But then there's stage three. So as to make Israel jealous, where that jealousy prompts repentance and faith in Christ to be saved.

Now please leave to one side, like how many are going to be saved, okay? I'm not going to answer the quantity. We're not coming to that yet. Just can we focus on the process for a second?

Verse 12, we've got it again. Their trespass means riches for the world. Their failure means salvation, riches for the world. That's stages one and two.

[13 : 59] How much more will their Israel fullness mean? There we've got stage three. Then verse 13 and 14.

Paul's approach to his own ministry, his personal goal, even though he's the apostle to the Gentiles. Yet Paul always went to the synagogues first.

He made a priority of that. And we get an example of this in Acts 13 in Antioch. He preached in the synagogue. He's rejected. And then he says, God's salvation plan is like Stephen Bradbury, ice skating at the Olympics.

Can you remember that? In the speed ice skating, he's way behind. And the three skaters out in front, they wipe each other out so that Bradbury just glides right through to win gold.

If you're a Gentile, that's how you're saved. It's because the Israelites wipe themselves out. We just get to glide in. As much as Paul was excited about the nations coming to Christ, his desire and his expectation was stage three.

[15 : 53] So have a look at verse 14. In order, in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous and thus save some of them.

He sees this three-stage process even in his own day and age, in his own ministry. Verse 15, we see it again.

God's rejection of Israel, stage one, because of their unbelief. Stage two, the reconciliation of the world to God. But then he expects stage three. There, Israel's acceptance by God will mean life from the dead.

Now, that is a puzzling phrase, life from the dead. Some people think maybe that's tied to when Jesus comes back and we're all raised, life from the dead.

Some people think that. It could just be spiritual resurrection. When you come to Christ, you are born again. He could have Ezekiel 37 in mind, where it's a valley of dry bones and it's the word of God and the spirit of God that brings new life.

[17 : 06] It's a puzzling phrase, okay? But he's expecting it. He's expecting this process. Paul is saying about Israel's unbelief, it's not the end of the story.

God's not done with ethnic Israel. You ain't seen nothing yet. He's excited. Something is exciting him here. Now, we see this three-stage process as we continue in the olive tree metaphor.

Natural branches are broken off, stage one. Us Gentiles are brought into the people of God. We're grafted in, stage two. But then if they don't continue in their unbelief, Israel can be re-grafted in.

So we've got that three-stage process all through here. And you go to verses 30 and 32. It's Israel's disobedience that means us Gentiles can come in.

But then Israel see the mercy given to us Gentiles. And then they receive mercy. So I'm laboring the point, I know. But all throughout this passage, Paul is excited by this three-stage process.

[18 : 24] Now, how does this process of jealousy work? I'm not sure I've fully got my head around it, but I think the only way for it to work is if Jewish people see something wonderfully different.

They've got to see something in Christians and in churches that makes them stop and think. I belong to God's chosen.

It's probably something along these lines. I belong to God's chosen children from all the families of the earth. But I see in you, Christian and church, a closer relationship with God of my scriptures than I have.

What is going on? And the difference, you just believe in Jesus. It's got to be something like that. On the website, Jews for Jesus, there's the story of Jenny Sue Vertheim.

Here's part of what she writes. I'll tell you a lot of her story, but there's even more to it. She says, as a child in the synagogue, the rabbi spoke mostly about how Jews should fulfill the law and do what is right.

[19 : 39] And he chided the congregation for not doing what they should do to honor God. And I felt that he was pointing the finger at me. She asked her dad one time, why do people fast on Yom Kippur?

We fast for forgiveness of sins, he told me. And I remember asking, when you fast, do you know that God has forgiven you? My dad looked at me and with a sad smile said, I really hope that he has.

And I wondered, if dad doesn't know, how will I ever know? But I try not to think about it too much. In my freshman year of high school, my friend Karen, who wasn't Jewish, watched her parents go through a bitter divorce.

And she was devastated at first. But I began to notice some differences in Karen. She seemed peaceful, even joyful. I saw that she was carrying a Bible with her school books and reading it in between classes.

I asked her what was going on and she said, well, I'm a Christian. Now I'm a Christian. I told her that was fine, but I'm Jewish and Jews don't believe in Jesus. And she looked at me and said, I don't see why not.

[20 : 53] She opened her Bible to Isaiah 53. She handed it to me and said, this is one of the promises from your Bible. I was stunned, angry and unsettled.

Karen and I remained friends, even though we disagreed. Whenever I mentioned a particular problem, she prayed for me. She suggested that I read the New Testament for myself.

And as I read, everything Jesus said and did seemed so Jewish. He was loving and compassionate and he did things only God could do. And then this memory came to her.

A local boy, Tommy, out of racism, once made her brother's nose bleed. And she said, I ran to Stuart's room, grabbed his baseball bat and ran downstairs.

Tommy was standing in front of our house and I was so furious and full of hatred that I wanted to beat him with a bat until he was dead. And once it hit me, I was a sinner.

[22 : 00] I'd wanted to murder Tommy and I realised that I truly did need Yeshua's forgiveness. Because my hatred had offended a holy God.

I asked Yeshua, Jesus, to take my sin away and I acknowledged him as my Messiah and Lord. I felt a remarkable sense of peace, like a warm blanket covering me.

And the uncertainty I had as a child about whether God forgave me was gone. That jealousy brought her to repentance and faith.

Well, in verse 16 to 24, Paul is speaking to non-Jews.

Throughout this passage, notice the you language. You. We're talking about Israel, but if you're not a Jew, it's non-Jews who need to hear this.

[23 : 12] The pastoral issue in the Roman church was pride. He uses the metaphor of a cared for, a cultivated olive tree to address that pride and saying, remember the roots of your salvation.

Verse 16, he lays the principle down. He gives a quick metaphor of offering the first part of a dough of your harvest.

It has a knock-on effect to the rest of your harvest. If it's holy to God, that impacts the whole thing. But he sticks with the olive tree metaphor. And I think that's a picture of who are God's people, who are God's covenant people.

And we saw earlier in our time in Genesis this year that God's salvation plan for the world centers on Abraham and his promises.

So I think the root here is the promises to Abraham, the promises to the patriarchs. The natural branches, his physical descendants, they are holy if they remain connected to those promises by sharing the faith of Abraham.

[24 : 30] Otherwise, because they rejected Jesus and didn't have faith in the fulfillment of those promises, they've been broken off. But don't for a minute start thinking that God then looked around the world and saw you and thought, hmm, that would be someone great to have on my team.

Look at their potential. We're a wild olive shoot. Don't picture something special here. Picture this. Picture a small, scraggly bush that produces nothing useful. You want to just put it in the green bin. We're a weed.

I think you say, we were weeds. By God's mercy alone, he took me a weed and made an incision in the tree, grafted me in to his covenant promises to Abraham by faith in Jesus.

So remember your roots. There is a danger if you've been in the church for a long time and you feel quite comfortable in the church.

[25 : 52] You can start to think, God needs me. No, he doesn't. We have the privilege of serving him. This ministry needs me.

It does our faith a world of good to remember. I was once a weed.

It's not that I support the word of God. It's not that I support the church. It's the other way around. It's the church. It's the word of God that nourishes our faith.

He moves on to another potential attitude in verse 19. Well, those natural branches are broken off so that I might be grafted in. And he's saying, yes, that's true.

That is God's salvation plan. But don't for the second think that that was a comparison thing, that we're somehow more special.

[26 : 59] How we speak of Israel's failures in the Old Testament and the Pharisees in Jesus' day, we can speak about the Pharisees' attitude.

I think we've got to be careful of a feeling of superiority that I would never think that way. I would never do that. There can be a prideful attitude that we're not like them.

That's dangerous. It's really dangerous. Because it's that prideful attitude that led those natural branches to unbelief and being broken off.

What keeps us in the tree is faith. Not some prideful comparison that I'm more deserving than that person. It's just faith alone that you stand firm.

So verse 22, note then the kindness and the severity of God.

[28 : 13] Severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. That word, and is really important.

God's people will hear this warning and will keep repenting of our prideful attitude. I think my default is to keep going back to pride.

And God's word and his warning humbles us afresh. God wants us to keep us in his kindness. And one way he does that is to shake us up, going, you're getting proud again.

Come back. Stay in my kindness. Now, if you're conscious of your failings this morning and you're hearing this feeling dread, the warning's not to you because you're conscious that you need grace.

The warning is if you're getting a bit proud. A sense of entitlement that I deserve God's love.

[29 : 32] I'm pretty special in this church. The warning's for the proud. So why is it good for our faith to not simply focus on God's abundant, unlimited generosity, even when we don't deserve it?

Why do we need to think of his severity as well? Well, I think something has helped me this week is to remember the parable of the unmerciful servant.

The servant, as you remember, owed the king an enormous mountain of debt he could not pay. The king had every right to be severe.

Pay me what you owe. But he didn't. The king bore it himself. He bore the cost and gave mercy to that servant.

But then that servant went to someone who owed him 50 bucks and choked him and said, pay me what you owe. When the king hears about this, he throws him in prison until he pays what he owes.

[30 : 50] Severity doesn't mean God is mean. It's just what I deserve to receive. To remember God's severity keeps us from being casual or flippant about what he's given us.

We should be continually amazed at the riches of his mercy and forgiveness to us. And we shouldn't put limits on his kindness.

He is ready to graft those natural branches who are broken off. If they turn and believe, he's ready and how easily he can do it.

So we've got to keep those. God's severity and his kindness. We understand his kindness in light of his severity.

Well, that keeps us non-Jewish people humble and remember the privilege. We are the people of God now. And he wants us to remain in his kindness.

[32 : 11] Well, coming then to verse 25 to 27. All Israel will be saved. Can we just agree it's pretty straightforward?

Shall we just skip these verses and everyone okay with that? Poor attempt at a joke. All right, verse 28 to 29. Just for context, as regards the gospel, they, Israel, are enemies for your sake.

But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. Some take this as election to salvation.

But they're enemies of the gospel. If they're enemies of the gospel, they're enemies of God. This is just saying they are the chosen family of Abraham.

The context, the natural branches have been broken off. They're outside of salvation, despite being ethnically Jewish.

[33 : 27] Chapter 11, verse 7. Listen, Israel failed to obtain a right relationship with God by works of the law. Only the elect obtained it.

All of chapter 9 has given evidence since chapter 9, verse 6. Not all who are descended from Israel belong to God's Israel, God's saved people.

We've got the vital links in chapter 10 that we looked at. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? You can't be saved unless you call on Jesus.

There are not two ways to be saved. Believing the gospel or being ethnically descended from Abraham. It can't mean that.

It can't. So that leaves us with three main options for verse 26. What does it mean in this way all Israel will be saved?

[34 : 30] Let me just lay out the options and then we'll go through some of the details. Option 1, does all Israel in verse 26 mean spiritual Israel?

Kind of like what we've seen in the tree, that it's made up of Jews and Gentiles. So is Israel just God's people? Gentiles included.

Option 2 is near the end of history there's going to be a mass revival of ethnic Jews putting their trust in Jesus. Option 3 is over the course of history God has his remnant, the elect that he's going to bring in every generation and the full number will come in.

So is all Israel the church, Jews and Gentiles? Is all Israel a mass revival? Or is all Israel all the remnant has come in?

Now these few words, they're so debated. I don't understand why people get in such a huff about this.

[35 : 53] It would go against the thrust of this passage, which is saying be humble to not be humble based on this issue.

Here's why I don't understand why we get in a huff about it. Because all three positions say that you need faith in Jesus to be saved. We all believe that's absolutely necessary.

We all believe ethnic Jews will make up a significant number of God's people. It will be saved. We all believe that God continues to offer salvation to Jews.

Now if there is a mass revival of ethnic Jews one day, there will not be a single person folding their arms going, We're going to be cheering, aren't we?

Even if you're not convicted, that's what the passage is saying. We're all going to be cheering if that's the case. We'll be praising God's mercy.

[37 : 03] So I just don't understand why some people get uptight. Anyway, I've got to be careful with my language. That's not in my script. If someone thinks this passage means we should all be committed to the revival of Israel, I think heat comes into this debate if someone makes the next step of mixing politics into this.

Because if we took that three-stage process seriously, that it's jealousy that provokes Israel to be saved.

I don't think the way you demonstrate believing this passage is political backing. You should become a missionary to Gaza.

Save by preaching the gospel as many Palestinians as you can. And Israel will look over the border and get jealous and get saved. I don't think any of us should be dogmatic.

These verses are really hard to understand. I'm going to need to be brief here. So I'm going to straw man the arguments, okay? I am. I'm really sorry.

[38:29] But let's look at a few of the details and then I'm going to bring it all together. The term mystery. Mystery sounds like a divine prophecy of the future.

But other uses of mystery in the New Testament and at the end of Romans in chapter 16 is the mystery of the gospel.

So what was hidden in the Old Testament is now revealed in the gospel. So it could be future prophecy. But more often it's about the gospel has revealed.

So Augustine talks about the Old Testament as a fully furnished room but it was dark. Everything was there but it was just hard to see it.

But then Jesus comes and the light, he switches the light on. We can see it. That's what mystery is about. It's more about what was hidden in the Old Testament.

[39:28] It was there but it was shadowy. But now it's revealed. So that's the main use of mystery. In verse 25 we get stages 1 and 2 again.

A partial hardening has come upon ethnic Israel. But is that partial the number of people? So not all Israelites are hardened.

There is a remnant. There is an elect part. Or is it partial in a time sense? It's going to be hardened for a while but then one day that's going to change.

That's hard to work out. Until the fullness of the Gentiles have come in. The fullness of the Gentiles, I haven't heard anyone who disagrees with this yet.

I think we all interpret that as the full number of the elect Gentiles. The full number of those who believe. It's not every single person.

[40:35] That would be... I haven't heard anyone who disagrees with that. So it's the same word there as back in verse 12. So ESV translates it full inclusion.

But you've probably got a footnote there. It's fullness. So Israel's fullness, Gentiles' fullness. I think there's good reason to interpret that as the same.

The full number of the elect. Then you've got until. That does seem like... It is a time reference, isn't it?

Until. Until. Now it sounds like something's going to happen after that until. And maybe it is. But you've also got examples in the New Testament of like 1 Corinthians 11.

When we share the Lord's Supper, we're proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. That until has nothing... It's not saying something's going to happen after that.

[41:34] It's just talking about what we're doing until the end of history. So again, it's really hard to decide. Is this partial hardening happening until the end?

Or is something going to happen after that? It's really... It's hard to decide. So will stage 3 of Israelites provoke to jealousy come to faith in a mass revival after the Gentiles have come in?

Or is stage 3, Jews becoming jealous and coming in, is that happening all the time? Right up until the end of history. Paul, at least, thought it's happening in his day.

He wanted to provoke. You got the quotes from Isaiah there. They definitely speak about a wonderful restoration of God's people.

But the surrounding... Again, it's tricky because the surrounding context in Isaiah, there is judgment for the injustice done within Israel. It also includes, in those contexts, the Gentiles coming in.

[42:53] The deliverer is Christ. We all agree on that. But is his coming, the deliverer will come. Is that his first coming or his second coming?

Will he one day take away sins? Or is he already getting rid of ungodliness, taking away sins in the new covenant to the Jews who believe?

I'm guessing I'm provoking about a thousand more questions than providing answers here. Partly that's my point. Let's be humble as we sit under God's word.

Then we've got in this way. So verse 26, in this way. I think that's best understood in this manner. All Israel will be saved.

What manner? What we've been looking at. The three-stage process since verse 11. The mystery that was in the Old Testament.

[43:57] We've got a quote in chapter 10, verse 19 from Moses. So Moses even spoke about this process of jealousy. That's the mystery.

I think that's the mystery. Jews were not expecting God to be so lavish and free to the Gentiles to bring them in.

But it was there. And who would have ever thought that Israelites would be saved by depending on Gentiles?

No one was expecting that. So I think the mystery there is this three-stage process. You can probably see where I'm at based off my comments.

But just to bring it all together. And here's where I'm personally at. And I think I don't know where my fellow elders are at since Tuesday night. But there's disagreement even in the elders, okay?

[44 : 56] So let's keep talking over morning tea. This is just where I'm at. Like, I've got to have an opinion by... Oh, wow. It's past 11. Sorry. Stay with me. I struggle to accept that Israel in verse 26 means something different to verse 25.

I think it is talking about ethnic Israel. And to say that Gentiles make up God's true Israel, I don't think answers the question of verse 11.

Has he given up? Is there any hope? I don't see that as a satisfying answer to the question. Now, I'm excited by the idea of a mass revival.

I hope there is. But in chapter 9, Paul was at pains to show that God's promise to Abraham was not based off ethnic identity.

Not all Israel will be saved. He was at pains to show us that. It's those chosen within Israel. It would be a little strange for him then to go, oh, by the way, based off ethnic identity, I am going to save it all.

[46 : 16] There's just a bit of inconsistency, I think. I think Paul seems to be saying Israel's hardening is only in part.

It is not total. It's not permanent. He's excited that generation after generation, his fellow Jews are going to, the elect are going to come in.

They're going to come in and come in and come in. And the full number are going to be in. And he's excited by that prospect. I think that view pushes us to gospel witness now.

It's another reason I think it's a good view to hold. But if you disagree with me, let's talk over morning tea. Verses 28 to 32 give the theological reason for this three-stage process.

So what good is it for us today to understand that this is God's process of salvation to the world? I don't think it's to try and interpret the times and seasons we're in.

[47 : 26] In history. We're meant to go where Paul goes. He's humbled and he's just in awe of God's mercy to him and to the world.

In these verses, notice there's a surprising interdependence that humbles everyone. So us nations before Christ, we were disobedient.

Without God, we had no hope. But the gospel coming to us depends, like the Bradbury, it depends on Israel disobeying.

That simply by faith in the cross, we weeds might now be called sons of the living God.

And then who'd have ever imagined that Israel would then in a strange way depend on unchosen, unclean, unfit nations for their salvation?

[48 : 32] When they see the mercy given to the nations and then they're humbled, they get jealous and they come to faith.

They realise it's not salvation by works, it's salvation by faith. Now why is God doing this? Why has he done it this way? Why is God doing this?

Why is God doing this?

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counsellor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things.

[50 : 19] To him be glory forever. Amen. Well, may we all be praising his mercy afresh to us.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Father, we confess that there's something in our minds and hearts that wants to hang on to some sort of merit that you saw in us potential or something about us that means we deserve it.

Father, I pray that you would help us. Father, I pray that you would help us see that we owe our salvation. We owe everything. We owe every breath. We owe belonging to your people totally to your mercy.

Father, I pray that we would praise your mercy so that we would be people of mercy and be a light in this world. That we would be a church that is characterised by mercy through and through.

For your glory, I pray. Amen. Amen.