

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Eleventh Sunday After Trinity, August 16, 2026

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 37, 23:4, 411, 487, 476:4.

Lessons: Isaian 59:1-21, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Luke 19:41-48.

Sermon Text: Romans 11:25-32.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ our Savior, dear friends:

How is it that some believe and others not, when given the same opportunities? We cannot answer that question, for it is a divine mystery. All we know from Scripture is that all who believe and are saved, owe it all to the grace of God, and not to their own works or merit. ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”*** Eph. 2:8-9 Those who are lost in hell have only themselves to blame and are not lost because God wanted them damned. ***“God our Savior ... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*** I Tim. 2:4

One of our confessions, The Brief Statement of 1932, says that “when we try to understand why ‘one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is Converted again,’ we enter the domain of the unsearchable judgments of God and ways past finding out, which are not revealed to us in His Word, but which we shall know in eternal life, 1 Cor. 13,12.” (p. 8) Paul says: ***“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”*** I Cor. 13:12

God’s ways are both unsearchable and gracious. Paul writes that God does as he has determined in his infinite wisdom. ***“Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.”*** Rom. 9:18 To those who would find fault with what God does, Paul says: ***“But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? ‘Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’”*** Rom. 9:20

The mysterious things the Bible does not explain to us we leave to God to explain in heaven. None of us deserves to be saved. When we hear of God’s mercy in the Gospel and how men are saved in Christ, these words of the poet apply: ***“God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.”*** (The Lutheran Hymnal, 514)

According to our text, let us consider:

A MYSTERY CONCERNING GOD’S MERCY IN CHRIST ON THE DISOBEDIENT

- 1. The elect among the Gentiles have received mercy as a result of Israel’s disobedience;**
- 2. The elect among the Jews will receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy on the Gentiles; and,**
- 3. Finally, all the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, will be saved through Jesus.**

Paul writes in our text: ***“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”*** The apostle Paul, in these words is addressing Gentiles who believed in Jesus, but who were formerly heathen. When he told them about how the majority in Israel had rejected their promised Messiah and Savior in unbelief, he didn’t want the Roman Gentiles to feel conceited. He didn’t want the Gentiles to look down upon the people of Israel and feel proud and conceited and boastful as though they had accepted Christ by their own goodness and efforts.

The fact is that the Gentiles came to hear the Gospel and some of them also believed in Christ, because of God’s mercy. This came about in this way; The Savior of mankind was promised as the Messiah of the Jewish people, Israel, the nation God in the Old Testament chose to be his own. But the majority in Israel despised the

promise, then rejected Christ in unbelief, and also rejected the Gospel of Christ the crucified and risen Savior as preached by the apostles. Then when the Jews rejected Christ and the Gospel, the Lord took the Word from them and sent the message of salvation to the Gentiles. This is what Paul says in our text: ***“...You who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience.”***

The Gentiles, the heathen nations outside of Israel, were at one time disobedient to God, for they had no knowledge of Jesus the Savior, and no faith. The Bible says: ***“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”*** Hebr. 11:6 When Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers who formerly were Gentile heathen, he told them: ***“Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth ... at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.”*** 2:11,12

The specific instance of the Jews rejecting the Gospel and their disobedience resulting in God’s mercy in Christ to the Gentiles is recorded in the Book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews: ***“We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”*** Acts 13:46-48

This is how God chose to show his mercy to the Gentiles who had formerly lived in disobedience. When the majority in Israel hardened their hearts against the Gospel, that became a golden opportunity for the Gentiles. They could hear the Gospel of Christ crucified and learn of their salvation. And since ***“faith comes from hearing the message,”*** (Rom. 10:17) the elect among the Gentiles came to believe in Jesus and were saved. To such Peter wrote: ***“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*** 1 Peter 2:10.

Now once again, we turn our attention to the Jews. We learn from our text that the elect among the Jews will receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy on the Gentiles.

2.

Our text says that ***“Israel has experienced a hardening in part.”*** Not all the Jews hardened their hearts against the promised Christ and his Gospel. However, because the majority of the Jews did reject the Gospel, Paul told the Roman Gentiles: ***“As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account.”*** That the Jews were enemies of the Gospel worked out to the benefit of the Gentiles because they then had the Gospel preached to them.

Now Paul says that the mercy shown to the Gentiles will yet result in God’s mercy being shown to the Jews. Paul says in our text: ***“Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you.”*** The apostle explains this further in the words before our text. Paul, speaking of the Jews, said: ***“Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.”*** Rom. 11:11 When the Jews see the blessing the Gentiles have received through the Gospel, this will make them envious so that they too will desire the blessings of the Gospel in Christ. This is a fulfillment of what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy, which Paul quotes, saying: ***“I will make you envious by those who are not a nation...”*** Rom. 10:19 So the elect among the Jews will receive mercy yet as a result of God’s mercy to the Gentiles.

It must be this way because, as our text says, ***“God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”*** God is not subject to changes of mind. He is unchangeable; he makes no mistakes. Those whom he chose from eternity as his own in Christ, by his grace he also brings to faith in Jesus and they are saved in the life to come.

The end result of all this is that all the elect of God, both Jews and Gentiles, will be saved through Jesus.

3.

We have already heard from the Book of Acts that when the Gospel was brought to the Gentiles, ***“all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”*** Acts 13:48 And so it will be through the ages until the Last Day. The end will not come until all of God’s elect come to faith in Jesus and are saved.

But our text speaks mainly of the elect among the Jews. They experienced ***“a hardening in part”*** but some also in Jesus’ day did believe in the Savior. Finally, by the time the Last Day has come, all the elect in Israel will be brought to faith. Paul says that in these words: ***“And so (that is, in this way) all Israel will be saved.”*** This passage has been used through the ages by various false teachers to teach that finally all the Jews will be converted before the Last Day. This teaching is contrary to what our text teaches and contrary to many other Bible passages. The key is to understand the word Israel. Paul explains in a previous chapter: ***“Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.”*** Romans 9:6. Not everyone who is a descendant of Abraham has Abraham’s faith in the promised Messiah. Paul also quotes Isaiah who wrote: ***“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.”*** Rom. 9:27 from Isaiah 10:22,23 Therefore, the word Israel in our text means all the elect in Israel. Those Jews whom God by his grace in Christ chose from eternity, will be his own in eternity. All of the elect Jews will be saved.

Paul sums it up in the last sentence of our text: ***“God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.”*** No one, whether he be a Jew or a Gentile, is saved by his own merit or works. Paul says: ***“It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.”*** Rom. 9:16

All are saved through Jesus. Israel of old was promised in Isaiah’s prophecy: ***“The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”*** Isaiah 59:26-27. This is not speaking of Jesus coming as a deliverer in an imagined 1,000-year reign on this earth before the Last Day. Isaiah foretold of the Savior’s first coming which was nearly 2,000 years ago. The Deliverer would come out of Zion, Isaiah said, just as Moses had said that the promised Savior would come from the midst of Israel, from their brethren. (Deut. 18:15)

By the grace of God, the promise of the Savior is also for us who are from Gentile forefathers. Jesus is not the Savior of some people, but of all. He ***“gave himself as a ransom for all men.”*** I Tim. 2:6 Paul says that God ***“did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all...”*** Rom. 8:32 ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.”*** II Cor. 5:19 It is in Christ Jesus the Savior of all men, that all the elect are saved for all eternity. If only all would believe in Jesus!

Therefore, let us first be concerned that we hear the Gospel of Christ. Then let us work that others who do not now know the Savior may yet hear the Gospel and by its power come to faith in Jesus. We need not be discouraged even though many do not believe, for the final roll of God’s elect will be filled up. Some who do not now believe will yet according to God’s eternal election of grace come to believe in Jesus. Then they and we together may rejoice in heaven to all eternity. Amen.

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