**Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32**

**1** I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **2**  God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry **14** in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. **15** For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **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 forefathers. **29** For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. **30** For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, **31** so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. **32** For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

**“All Mercy For One & One Mercy For All”**

In the Name of Jesus Christa our blessed Lord and Savior, Amen. In turbulent times, plenty love to monopolize on the mayhem. What mostly affects our lives is what makes the news, gets the attention, and ends up missing other matters altogether. Only for brief moments is a cry for mercy heard in the world. The strong have no need for such words, but the 29,000 children dead in Somalia only wanted a crumb to fall from the table. Famine, displaced families, and terrorism are driving millions to seek help in Kenya. The world’s largest refugee camp is now four times past its capacity with 1,500 new people arriving every day. Bishop Obare our friend from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya has said, “We need to save lives, we need prayers so we can be a hand to reach out to these people.”[[1]](#footnote-1) More than humanitarian efforts by governments, the hand of Christ governs His Church toward acts of mercy.

The source of mercy for life in the world comes from God’s merciful work of life for the whole world by His Son. After the death and resurrection of Christ, the tables had turned from what we see in today’s texts. The Gospel reading emphasizes the Samaritan Woman’s situation like a dog before Israel, but still being able to receive the grace given by Jesus Christ. When St. Paul came to the point of writing his letter to the Romans in 55 a.d. the situation had completely changed. The Gentiles Christians were now to show mercy back toward the Jews. Yes, they had their chance and lost it. Yes, they crucified God’s Son on the cross. Yes, they sought salvation by the Law. Yet, this was not a time for arrogance or a foolish chant of “we win, you lose.” St. Paul knew it was to the advantage of the Gospel to have crumbs fall from the Gentiles with concern for the Jews. The desire of God is all mercy for one and one mercy for all.

“As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God 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.” God has made up his mind to be merciful by His Word. It is not a decision based upon humanity’s goodness, because by nature we are sinful and unclean. It is outside the potential of whatever a person could do or be because the strong and weak are in the same situation. Instead, this mercy resides in the enduring love of God for sinners. He does not give up. He does not change His mind. His gifts and call are endless. Just as the Jews despising God’s Son benefited the Gentiles by driving this good news of Jesus to them. So too, the Jews being enemies of the Gospel still had the same love of God’s mercy evident in their past. We read from Deuteronomy, “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers” (7:7-8a). The Old Testament only brings more glory to the mercy given by Jesus in the New Testament.

Where many things are unstable today, God remains with His mercy. It may not seem this way, when the stock market fall, when people are starving, or few can find jobs. Yet, God does not give up on sinners. He wishes to save them. Instead of silence, His Word comes to turn our hearts and minds to Him. At the same time, the human nature naturally opposes such mercy made right in Jesus. As we dig into the past as Lutherans. We discover our fathers declaring,

“The reason for such contempt of the Word is not God’s foreknowledge but man’s own perverse will, which reject and perverts the means and instruments of the Holy Spirit which God offers to him through the call and resists the Holy Spirit who wills to be efficaciously active through the Word…” (Tappert 623:410).

No matter the resistance or ridicule, the redeeming love of God stands. The gifts and call of Jesus Christ remain open to enemy and friend alike. While some drive Him away, He only becomes a benefit for others. Nothing changes the fact that the Son of God suffered and died for all in a sinful world. His mercy resides in the enduring promise made by the Word that goes out to the ends of the earth.

“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 also may now receive mercy.” St. Paul made sure the Gentiles could hold nothing against the Jews. If they did, it would make a mess of the Gospel stealing the glory of Christ alone. Mercy from God’s point of view has nothing to do with the merit of men. St. Paul claims all to be “disobedient” which is more than a bad behavior, but means having false belief. In other words, “The history of man is a history of disobedience to God” (Bul’s notes, 10). The pride of the Gentiles came from the glory of Rome just as much as for the Jews it came from Moses and the Law. Both received mercy when the tables turned over time only to reveal the same Savior of sinners. Jesus came to suffer the punishment of the Lawless just as to fulfill what none could achieve by following the Law.

How quickly we forget the foundation of God’s love comes only from Jesus. It is easy to make a mess of His mercy when it serves any other purpose than Him as Savior. He brings His righteousness to those who are not right, so they can repent and believe in Him. There is nothing to hold against anyone else and yet it comes so easy. We look at our neighbor’s life scorning their situation with our own success. We shake our heads at what we hear or see only to want nothing to do with the situation. We treat others with a lesser degree but act like a child demanding the greatest attention. Christ covers our disobedience with His obedient life for all. St. Paul shows us the mercy of God saying,

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:3-5).

Being part of the baptized is to believe Jesus works for us. It is strangers finding a refuge in the redeeming promise of God. His perfect obedience as Savior gives no one center stage, but comes with forgiveness in the form of the cross. It is a cry beyond what the world hears, but to the Father in heaven who hears His Son.

“For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.” As different as the Gentiles and Jews were from each other, they shared the same sinful disbelief. No history, culture, family, and traditions would ever change this fact. Neither had anything to hold against the other for God did not withhold His mercy from any. Jesus straightens out of the mess. His victory is what matters for sinners. Mercy received is mercy that makes us bold to share in the most unlikely situation. The Lutherans in Kenya witness this even as their own land suffers. They stretch out their hand to strangers. As Luther stated in a letter about helping a person in need,

“Some foreigners found refuge among the people of Israel too, and they turned out better than many an Israelite…From this we ought to conclude that we should assist such people for Christ’s sake. We should do so even if, as sometimes happens, our gifts are lost on wicked people, for we should not make godly people suffer on account of the wicked” (Letter of Spiritual Counsel 186).

There is more mercy than evil in the world not by men, but from God. Christ claims it by His sacrifice. It is all mercy for one and one mercy for all. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. http://mercyforever.lcms.org/2011/08/obare-east-africa-famine/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)