

I.N.I.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 22, 2013
Romans 11:33-36

In Christ Jesus, whose ways and judgments are beyond us, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Two weeks ago was the somber remembrance of the tragic events of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the crashing of the hijacked plane in Pennsylvania. I remember back to that day as I am sure many of you can, and the words I heard from so many was “how could God allow this to happen?” or “Where was God?”

Just about anytime and it seems almost every time a disaster strikes, or a terrible mass murder occurs, people are quick to blame God. They don’t realize that disasters and suffering, murder and disease, don’t come from God, but from sin and sin came from man—from Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden.

And even if we did not and do not blame God for the problems and troubles and disasters in life we all have at times questioned God’s actions, or His timing, or His will.

In our first reading Moses questioned God’s reasoning for telling him to command Pharaoh to let God’s people go. For since he did that Pharaoh made life miserable for the people.

Remember Job who patiently accepted the loss of his children and his servants, of his cattle, sheep and goats, and then of his health. He first said, **THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY; BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND, SHALL WE INDEED ACCEPT GOOD FROM GOD, AND SHALL WE NOT ACCEPT ADVERSITY?**

But after the suffering continued Job justified himself in saying that he had not done wrong and then complained: **OH, THAT I HAD ONE TO HEAR ME! HERE IS MY MARK. OH, THAT THE ALMIGHTY WOULD ANSWER ME.** He felt that God was not being fair to him and ruling his life right.

In the Psalms, both David and Asaph questioned God’s ways when it came to the prosperity and bounty of the wicked over against the suffering and sorrow of the believer.

It is a universal sin of not only the unbelievers to blame God, but even of the believers to question God’s actions and ways.

Paul knew that and that is why he begins our sermon text, verse 33 with this interjection of exclamation and admiration in the Greek, **OH!** It is a word expressing thoughts too marvelous for words. It is like being speechless!

One commentator wrote: “Paul here is demonstrating the open-mouthed awe and respect, the fear of God the First Commandment requires!”

Paul continues: **OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD!**

Paul marvels at the depth of God’s wisdom and knowledge. God’s mind is unfathomable. Instead of questioning what he can’t understand, Paul simply stands there in amazement and adores God’s wisdom and knowledge. Remember who wrote these words. Paul had one of the best minds of his day. His religious education was the very best. He was also inspired by the Holy Spirit. If he couldn’t see to the depths of God’s wisdom and knowledge, who can?

So Paul’s encouragement is our theme this morning:

DON’T SECOND-GUESS GOD!

I: He’s Wiser than we are.

II: His Ways are unsearchable.

With each term Paul compounds his adoration of what God knows and plans and thinks. Not just “Oh, the wisdom and knowledge of God!”—not just “Oh, the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”—but “Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

The depth of God’s wisdom and knowledge cannot be seen, measured, understood or even imagined. The riches of His wisdom and knowledge are beyond our calculating.

God’s wisdom and knowledge in regard to His plan of our salvation is a mystery in the sense that we would never have been able to plan or devise anything like it. And even after God in His infinite wisdom devised it, we would never have been able to figure it out if He had not graciously revealed it to

us. And even after He revealed it to us, we would never have been able to believe and accept it had He not sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts to create that faith to believe it! How amazing!

How dare we second-guess God! God's wisdom far transcends our puny human minds!

Paul continues: **HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT!**

Wisdom and knowledge are similar. Wisdom indicates the facts and thoughts of God and knowledge indicates how that pure intelligence is demonstrated by the way God acts. This leads to the "judgments and ways of God."

God's judgments are not only the punishments God has carried out and will carry out on sin; this term also includes God's determination to bless, rescue and save in mercy—His Gospel judgments: **FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.** And: **HE WHO BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED WILL BE SAVED.**

How dare we second-guess God! God's ways far transcend our puny human capabilities!

Paul says God's ways are "past finding out." Literally it reads, "Can't be tracked down." Trackers in the Old West were quite good at looking for signs and horseshoe prints to find someone. We can't track God's ways with our own minds and thoughts, so how dare we question what He has done, is now doing or is going to do in the future in our lives.

I: He's Wiser than we are.

II: His Ways are unsearchable.

Paul now lays before us three rhetorical questions to demonstrate the foolishness of second-guessing God. All three are answered by a resounding **NO ONE!**

FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD? OR WHO HAS BECOME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM AND IT SHALL BE REPAYED TO HIM?

Can anyone read God's mind? Of course not! If we could, we would be God. Then how dare we judge His wisdom? What we know about God is only what God has revealed to us. And many of the things He has revealed to us we still cannot fathom; like the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, eternity, the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper.

The president has many advisors. Wise people he looks to for advice. Has God ever needed our advice, or asked us to help Him figure out something He could not?

How dare we then think that we can know the mind of God or offer to act as His advisor in telling Him how He should govern our lives.

God doesn't owe anyone anything! The blessings that we have been given so abundantly, including our eternal salvation through Jesus, He has given to us out of His undeserved love. By nature we have absolutely nothing to give Him, except our sins. By nature we are spiritually dead and helpless, powerless to save ourselves and even powerless to serve Him without the Holy Spirit.

There are times when we need to say to someone: "I owe you an explanation" as to why I said or why I did that. God doesn't owe us or anyone an explanation for any of His decisions or ways!

And why doesn't God owe us anything. Paul concludes: **FOR OF HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS, TO WHOM BE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.**

He is the source and creator of all things...He is the one who preserves us and all things through natural and supernatural means...and all will be done to Him, for His glory!

III: His gifts are plentiful.

I read somewhere that some pastors arrange their sermons under the following topics: malady, means and goal.

The **malady** in our text is that it is our sinful tendency to question God, to second-guess Him in His dealings with us and His actions or non-actions when things go wrong in our lives or in this world. This leads to sins against the First Commandment, making ourselves out to be like God, not fearing, loving and trusting in God above all things.

The **means** is the Law and Gospel. The Law pointing out the foolishness and the wickedness of any of us fallible, creatures trying to figure out the unfathomable Creator and tell Him how He should rule. For these sins we need to repent.

And the Gospel. Who would have guessed that sending Jesus, born a Jew, to be the fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies as their Messiah, would bring about the rejection, by and large, of the Jewish people and the salvation to countless hundreds of millions of Gentiles.

If God's wisdom has resulted in our salvation, free through Jesus, what wisdom is there in questioning anything God has done or will do in the future?

The **goal** is to teach us out of thankful love for all that our loving God has done for us, to not question God's wisdom or His ways. Instead God wants us to praise and glorify Him and to marvel at His wisdom and His ways!

Perhaps you have heard the saying, "Let go and let God!" Well, we also need to "let God be God!" Satan tempted Eve long ago to want to be God and mankind ever since has thought that he can do a better job than God or at least second-guesses Him.

Our proper response to God, for His wisdom, knowledge, judgments, salvation through Jesus and loving ways is to adore Him and praise His name now and forevermore.

Amen.