

Romans
The Glory of God in the Gospel (Part 2)
Romans 11:33-36
September 15, 2019 AM
Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

Well I do invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Romans 11. Paul has completed 11 chapters explaining to the Roman believers the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, proclaiming to them what God has done for them in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; how they have been declared right with God because of the work of Christ; how their sins had been punished in Him. And now, having celebrated that gospel, having explained it to us, he just can't help himself, and Paul here breaks out, at the end of chapter 11, before he turns to the practical application of the gospel, he breaks out in doxology, he breaks out in praise and worship.

Let's read it together, Romans 11:33-36, you follow along. And I am going to read verse 33 in the way that we learned last week. And I think it is a better way for us to understand it and for it to be translated. You follow along, verse 33,

Oh, the depth of the riches of the mercy of God and the wisdom of God and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The theme of this amazing doxology is very simple, we looked at it together last time, and that is this, the gospel displays the glory of God, and therefore, demands our worship. Let me say that again. The gospel displays the glory of God, and therefore, demands our worship.

Last time we began to consider exactly how it is that the gospel displays the glory of God. That is really the message of verses 33 to 36, the gospel displays the glory of God. I reminded you that the primary cause of Paul's doxology here, his praise and his worship of God, is the rich theology that he has explained, that he explained in the previous verse, verse 32, where he celebrated God's mercy to all, in the previous three chapters where he has captured the reality of unconditional election of the people of Israel as a nation and of individuals, both Jew and Gentile for salvation. And really he is motivated, I think even more so, by the entire letter that he has written so far, all 11 chapters of the beauty of the gospel. Paul was overwhelmed with the unfathomable depth of the eternal plan of redemption.

As he contemplated the display of God's glory in the gospel, he began by meditating, as we noted last time, on God's inexhaustible attributes. Verse 33 begins, "Oh." It could be translated, "I am amazed by, Oh, the depth." That refers metaphorically to something that is

both incomprehensible and inexhaustible, like the ocean, you can't plumb its depths, and you can never use it up, "Oh, the depths."

That is followed then by three parallel genitives, describing three separate attributes of God. Let me remind you of what we uncovered last time. The beginning of verse 33 could be translated this way, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the mercy of God," which is what he has been talking about in terms of the riches in context. And two, "Oh, the depth of the wisdom of God." And three, "Oh, the depth of the knowledge of God." As Paul reflected on those three attributes, he was struck with the fact that they are incomprehensible. Not in certain ways, obviously we can understand certain things about those truths about God, but we can never fully, completely grasp all the richness that is these attributes of God. And, at the same time, they are inexhaustible. You can never get to the bottom of the riches of God's mercy or the depth of His wisdom or of His knowledge. He was lost in worship for how God had used these attributes both to conceive, in eternity past, and to carry out in time, the great eternal plan of redemption.

The gospel, you see, displays the glory of God because it highlights His inexhaustible attributes. Paul just lists three of them here, but of course, there are many other qualities in God, many other attributes that describe the nature of God, that he could have listed in addition and are in other places in the Scripture. So, the gospel displays the glory of God by revealing His inexhaustible attributes.

But secondly, and this is where we left off last time, the gospel displays the glory of God because it reveals God's unfathomable decisions and ways. You see, the attributes of God, that is simply who God is in Himself and that would always be true of God whether God acted or not. But here, in the second half of verse 33, we see how God's attributes express themselves. God's inexhaustible wisdom expresses itself in, one, His decisions, and two, in His execution of those decisions. Notice how Paul puts it in verse 33, "Oh, the depth of the riches of God's mercy, of the wisdom of God, and the knowledge of God!" And then he writes this, "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

Now you will notice Paul introduces the second half of this verse with another exclamation. Not, "Oh" this time, but "How," because he continues to be overwhelmed by these truths about God. Not only who God is in His attributes, but how God acts as a result. The next two lines, the end of verse 33, are parallel in Greek just as they are in English, but there is one thing in Greek that isn't readily apparent in English, although the translators have tried to make it so. And that is that the two adjectives, unsearchable and unfathomable, in Greek both begin with the same four letters. If I transliterate them into English it would be *anex*, that is how both of these adjectives begin in Greek. Our English translations have tried to capture that idea by beginning both of these words in English with the prefix un.

So let's look at these two parallel concepts about how God's attributes act in the world. First of all, notice the focus is on God's decisions, "How unsearchable are His judgments." Take, first

of all, the word unsearchable. The Greek word for unsearchable comes from a root word which means, to make a careful or thorough effort to learn something. In English, we might translate it as to search, to examine, to investigate. And then Paul adds the negative prefix, which means that this word describes something that is, so deep, so profound, that you can't adequately investigate it. You can't really, we could say, get to the bottom of it. Even a thorough investigation of this will never bring you to a comprehensive understanding of it. It is beyond our capacity to fathom.

In fact, this Greek word that is translated unsearchable here is synonymous with the English word unfathomable. Although that word is used for the second adjective, in reality, it is this first word unsearchable in Greek that perhaps better could be translated with this word unfathomable, because that is the idea. You can investigate as far down as you want and you never get to the bottom; you can't investigate it thoroughly. In nautical terms, before modern technology existed and modern depth finders, the ocean floor, if it was too deep to find the bottom, if your rope didn't reach all the way down that you measured fathoms with, then you said that, at that point, the ocean was unfathomable. It couldn't be fathomed. It couldn't be measured in fathoms.

The concept of fathoms is actually an ancient one. It traces back at least to the Greeks and probably further. In fact, the Greek word appears in our New Testament in the story of Paul's shipwreck. In Acts 27:28, we read this, "They took soundings." Literally, the Greek says, "They threw out the lead," because what they used to measure fathoms in those days was a piece of lead tied to the end of a rope, secured to the end of the rope. So they threw out the lead with the rope attached, and it went down into the sea. And it says, "and it was found to be twenty fathoms."

Fathoms is the English word. The Greek word literally means outstretched. Because here is what you would do if you were a sailor in that period of time, you would take that lead weight, if you wanted to know how deep the water was at that point where your boat was or your ship was, you would take that lead weight with a rope attached, you would let it down, and you would let it down slow enough that you could feel it hit the bottom. And once you knew it had hit the bottom, then you would begin to pull the rope back up. And before you could carry your tape measure with you everywhere, it was awfully convenient to measure things based on the human body. And so they would take that rope and the sailor would pull the rope a full body width, arm to arm, fingertip to fingertip, that was one fathom. Then he would grab the rope again at that point and pull a second full body length, that is the second fathom, and so forth, measuring the entire depth of the ocean with arms outstretched. That is the idea here.

That same measurement, by the way, fathom, is still how we measure the depth of water and it gave us the English word fathom. Encyclopaedia Britannica writes, "The Viking sailor," so now we fast forward in time from the Greeks, "The Viking sailor took soundings with a lead

weight on a line,” same technology, “hauling in the line and measuring it by the span of his arms. Today, depths are still cited in six foot intervals called fathoms from the old Norse word *fathmer*, which simply means outstretched arms.” That is where a fathom comes from.

So, back to our text in Romans 11. What is it that can’t be thoroughly investigated, that can’t be searched out by the human mind? What can’t be fathomed? What is unmeasurable? Notice Paul says, it is God’s judgments. Now this word is an interesting word. As you know, it often refers to a sort of courtroom context and the legal decisions that are offered by the judge, that are rendered by the judge. So the judge sits, he hears the case, he renders a legal decision, that is his judgment. This word is sometimes used in that way, but it is not only used in that way.

It also refers to the executive decisions of a ruler. Now we are not in the technical courtroom sense, we are talking about a ruler, a president, or a prime minister, or someone in authority who makes executive decisions. Now why would the word be used both ways? Well, Charles Hodge, in his commentary, explains. He says, “As in the ancient days, the ruler was also the judge. To judge often means to rule. Therefore the same word is used for the decisions of the judge and the decrees of the ruler.”

Here, in Romans 11, Paul is clearly referring to, not God’s legal decisions, but rather God’s executive decisions, or we could say His plans or His purposes, this is what God decides to do. Theologians call God’s judgments in this sense, His decrees. Let me give you a definition of God’s decrees. This is from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. It says, “The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will whereby for His own glory He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

That is the short definition, let me give you a longer one. This is from The Westminster Confession of Faith and it is exactly worded the same in The Baptist Confession of Faith dating to the 1600’s. Here is what they write, “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass. Yet, so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away but rather established.

In other words, God decided in eternity past everything that was going to happen and exactly how it would happen. But, He decided it in such a way and He does it in such a way that you make real decisions; you are not a robot just doing what God demands that you do. You make decisions, you do what you want. And yet, God shapes and directs what you want, to in the end accomplish His ultimate purpose, and secondary causes are still realities.

So what are God’s decrees? If you want to know more about this, by the way, I did a whole message on this a number of years ago; you can find it on the website and listen to a fuller explanation. But in short, what are God’s decrees? Three things you need to know, God’s decrees, number one, they are God’s decisions. Number two, before creation, or we could say,

in eternity past. Three, about absolutely everything. That is what you need to know about God's decrees. They are God's decisions in eternity past about absolutely everything. Charles Hodge writes, "History in all its details, even the most minute, is but the evolution of the eternal purposes of God." Frame writes, "The decree is God's purpose in eternity. Creation, providence, and redemption are the execution of His decree in time."

You say, is this what the Scripture teaches? The answer is, absolutely, this is what the Scriptures teach. Let's look at it together. Look at Psalm 33, and this is just a sampling, again, you can listen to that more complete message if you want a larger sampling. But Psalm 33, the Psalmist is talking about God as Creator in the first part of this Psalm and then he turns, beginning in verse 10, to God's rule over the world He created. Notice verse 10 of Psalm 33, "The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples." People make real plans, but God finds a way in His own plan to frustrate those plans. Notice verse 11, why? Because "The counsel of the LORD stands forever, and the plans of His heart from generation to generation." God has a plan and He is working that plan out. It was conceived in eternity past and it is being brought to fruition in time. And nothing, no puny human being, or some great mass of human beings, can in any way frustrate the plans and purposes of God. "The plans of His heart stand from generation to generation."

Look at Daniel 4, these are the words of Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, who I believe came to genuine faith, I think we will see this man in heaven, and notice what he writes about our God. This is Daniel 4:35, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will," notice this, "in the host of heaven." You say, okay, I got that, I expected that. "And among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand." Nobody can thwart God's purpose or God's will, nor can they legitimately question Him. "Or say, 'What have you done?'" God, why did you do this? We have no right to question God's decisions, His decree.

The same concept is taught in the New Testament. Look at Ephesians 1, as Paul unfolds the great saving purpose of God in redemption. He says, look at the end of verse 10, Ephesians 1:10, the end of the verse says,

In Him, [*that is, in Jesus Christ,*] also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined [*now watch this*] according to God's purpose [*and then notice how God is described*] who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end of His glory.

That is the decree, the eternal decree, or we could say eternal decrees of God. God, in eternity past, made decisions about absolutely everything, and God is now working that plan out without injuring your ability to make decisions, you are a free moral agent, and yet to accomplish His own great purposes.

Now go back to our text in Romans 11. In Romans 11:33, Paul is reminding us that we can never fathom, we can never measure, we can never fully get to the bottom of God's decisions or decrees or plans. They are just too deep. It is like what the psalmist says in Psalm 36:6, where he writes, "Your judgments are like a great deep." You just can't get to the bottom of them. Psalm 92:5, "How great are Your works, O God! Your thoughts are very deep."

Now folks, the fact that God's decisions are ultimately incomprehensible, again we understand what God wants us to understand, you know Deuteronomy 29:29, "'The secret things belong to the LORD, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever,'" but there are things that we will never know about God. We will spend eternity learning about God and never exhaust the character of God.

The fact that God's decisions are incomprehensible in this sense means several things. You just need to file this away. It means that you will never fully fathom God's plan of redemption. You will understand much about it if you are a Christian, you understand enough to be in Christ, and you will spend this life and eternity learning more, but you will never fully fathom, I am using that word in that sense again, you are never going to find the bottom. I mean, why did God allow evil in the world? I get that question all the time. Look, I can point you to Scripture, there are legitimate answers to that question, but it will never exhaust everything you want to know.

Why did God permit the existence and opposition of Satan in the world? Or, consider the plan of salvation itself. I mean, if you and I had been assigned by God to be on a committee to create the plan of salvation, God forbid, what would we have put in the plan of salvation? I can promise you, we would have somehow found a way to include our own merit and our own good works. Why? Because every child that is born into this world is born with that concept of how to get to God. You have to teach it out of them. We would have done that.

But what does God do? He does exactly the opposite. God says, I am the righteous Creator. I made this world. I have every right to tell you what to do. I deserve your obedience. I have given you all things. I sustain your life. And yet you have sinned against Me. You have rebelled against Me. You have broken My Laws. You have thumbed your nose at Me. You have ignored Me. You have treated Me like I haven't been the One to give you everything you have. You have lived in, essentially, as a practical atheist. You deserve My justice. You deserve to be punished. You deserve eternal separation from Me in hell.

And we did. But God's ways and His decrees are beyond our comprehension, because what God did was send His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, not sinful, but in the likeness of sinful flesh, in order to live the perfect life we should have lived in obedience to God. And then to go to the cross and to offer His life to satisfy the justice of God that our sins deserved, so that God could still be just and forgive us our sins. And then He raised Him from the dead as the proof of that great work of salvation. "Oh, the depth of the riches of God's mercy, of His

wisdom, and of His knowledge! And how unsearchable, how unfathomable are His judgments, His decisions!”

All you have to do to gain that great salvation purchased by Christ is not to work at it, not to achieve it, not to merit it, but you have to repent of your sins; you have to turn from your rebellion against God and be willing to put your faith and confidence in the work of Jesus Christ alone as your only hope of heaven. And if you will repent and believe in Him, then you will enjoy the forgiveness of your sins and perfect righteousness. “How unsearchable are God’s judgments!”

What about election? Do you think you are ever really going to grasp why God chooses to save some people and not others? Why are you sitting here this morning, many of us here who have been redeemed, who have been saved, who are followers of Jesus Christ. Go outside this building and you will find millions of people whom God has not chosen and whom He has not drawn to Himself. Why? Again, I can point you to the Scripture, and I can give you some satisfactory answers, but you are never going to fathom that in its fullness.

You will never fully fathom God’s providence in your life. Don’t think you can sort out what God is doing in all the details of your life, that you can somehow figure God out. “How unsearchable, how unfathomable are His judgments, His decisions,” about everything. You are never going to fully fathom God’s plan for your life. “How unsearchable are His judgments!”

Go back to our text, look at verse 33 again. The second focus is on God’s ways. “Oh, the depth of the riches of God’s mercy, of His wisdom, of His knowledge! How unfathomable His ways!” Now here is this English word unfathomable. As I told you, I think this word unfathomable would probably have been a better translation of the first word, the word that is translated unsearchable. This Greek word, that here is translated unfathomable, comes from a Greek word that means footprint. It literally means, not able to be tracked. It describes an animal that leaves no detectable trail and, therefore, can’t be tracked. When it is used metaphorically, as it is here, it means untraceable, inscrutable, incomprehensible.

What exactly can’t be traced, can’t be tracked? What do we not see the footprints of? Notice, it is the ways of God. The word ways has to do with a person’s ways of acting or their conduct. Here the emphasis is very specific, it is on the paths that God uses to arrive at His destination. The paths that God chooses to accomplish His decisions. So you have in the first line His decisions, now you have the means that He chooses to enact those decisions.

You have, in the first line, you have what God thinks, His decisions about everything. In the second line you have how God acts, what He does to carry out those decisions. And notice Paul says, all of that is beyond us. Paul is saying that the means God chooses to accomplish His decisions, His plans, His decrees, those means are untraceable. The ways God accomplishes

His eternal decree don't leave a trail; they don't leave footprints you can follow. God's means for accomplishing His plans simply can't be tracked.

Let me show you that this is the message of Scripture. Go back to Job, Job 9. Of course Job was dealing with this in his own life, and sometimes he dealt with it well and other times not as well. But notice what he says in Job 9:10, after talking about God as the Creator, even the manager of the constellations, he says in verse 10, "God does great things, unfathomable." If you will notice the NAS marginal note for the word unfathomable, it says, "until there is no searching out." God does such great things you can't search them out, you can't fathom them, you can't measure them, you can't get to the bottom of them, "wondrous things without number."

Go over to chapter 26, Job 26:14. After recounting God's work in the created world, he says, verse 14, "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?" In other words, he is saying, look, we just see and hear a little about God, but who can begin to comprehend all that can be known about God? The bottom line is this, you can't penetrate the mind of God, and you can't completely understand His ways of operating. God's ways are untraceable and untrackable.

You see, the paths that God chooses are often contrary to our thoughts. That is true in a couple of categories. But first of all, it is true, God's ways, the paths He chooses, are untraceable in the great plan of redemption. You can't fully fathom all that God is doing in the plan of redemption. Do you remember that great gospel invitation of the Old Testament, Isaiah 55? God says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

You know what the next verse says? "For," because, the reason I want you to come to Me for pardon. You may think that that is unbelievable, God would do that? And God says,

"For My ways are not your ways,
Neither are My thoughts your thoughts.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So much greater are My thoughts and My ways than yours."

When you look at the great plan of redemption, it is untraceable. God's ways, the paths He chose to accomplish it, are simply untraceable, untrackable.

Listen to Lloyd Jones, "The ways of God are past finding out. You see it supremely, of course, in the case of our Lord, having planned in His judgment or His decrees, this way of salvation, He sends His Son into the world. How would you have sent the Son of God into the world? You would have sent Him to Buckingham palace or some other palace. But He was sent to a

stable. You would have sent Him to a place of wealth and affluence. He was born in abject poverty, in the most lowly manner conceivable. You would have sent Him to study in the greatest schools of rhetoric and philosophy. He was a carpenter and had no formal training. You would have arranged that He should save the world by uttering some great statement, some liberating word. Instead, He saved the world by dying in utter weakness upon a cross. His ways are past finding out.”

The same thing is true, this untraceableness, untrackableness of God, it is true in the details of our lives. I shared this with the women’s Bible study earlier this week, several examples, and I just couldn’t get away from sharing them with you because they perfectly illustrate what I am trying to say here. You can’t track God’s footprints across your life. Have you ever thought about the lives of those in Scripture in this way?

Take Abraham for example. Abraham was promised a son, and that from that son would come a great nation. God made Abraham that first promise of descendants when Abraham was 75 years old; he lived 75 years without it. At 75 God says, you are going to have descendants. I mean, let’s just be honest, some of us would have said, Lord, why in the world did you wait so long? I am 75. God reiterated the promise to him at 85. Fourteen years later, when Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 90, God told him that Isaac was going to be born. Twenty-five years passed between the promise and the birth of Isaac. When Abraham was 100, Isaac was finally born. But for 99 years, think about this, think about somebody you know who is 99, for 99 years he was called Abram. You know what Abram means? Father of many, when he didn’t even have one child by Sarah his wife. Father of many. Hey, I want you to meet Father of many. Oh, how many sons do you have? Well, actually Sarah and I have no children.

When he was 99, although he was still childless, God told Abram, look, I am tired of you being called Abram, you know, Father of many. We are going to change your name to be Abraham. Oh, well, what does Abraham mean? Father of many nations. And you know what? Abraham changed his name and he announced it publicly. “How untraceable are His ways!” Would that have been your plan for Abraham?

Take Joseph. Joseph was sold into slavery at 17. God gave him, you remember, before that, two dreams about his ruling over his brothers and he unwisely told them. Note to self, if you ever have a dream about ruling over your siblings, don’t tell them. They decided, of course, to kill him, but one brother talked them out of the plan. And instead, they decided to sell him because, wouldn’t you know, at that moment, who would happen along but Midianites who were slave traders and who, oh by the way, happened to be headed to Egypt.

They get to Egypt, they put the slaves that they brought on the market for sale, and who should happen to need some help at that time but Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s bodyguard, and he bought Joseph from them. You know the story. God prospered him in Potiphar’s house, but then Potiphar’s wife made wicked sexual advances against him, then lied about him when he

fought for his purity, and he was imprisoned unfairly. And just in case you think otherwise, this was not an easy life. Listen to Psalm 105:18,

They afflicted his feet with fetters,
He himself was laid in irons;
Until the time that his word came to pass,
And the word of the LORD tested him.

Then you remember, during that time, the chief baker and the chief cupbearer of Pharaoh were both incarcerated because of the accusation of insurrection, and they had dreams, and Joseph interpreted both of their dreams. And you remember that when the cupbearer was cleared and returned to his position, he forgot Joseph even though he had promised to remember him.

Two years passed, Pharaoh had a dream, and finally, the cupbearer remembered that Joseph had this ability, and so at 30, he becomes Prime Minister of Egypt, and we all celebrate that. Listen, I hate to tell you this, but for 13 long years his life was not as pleasant as what you saw on the teacher's flannel graph in Sunday School, some of you. It was horrible. His life looked completely contrary to what God had promised him. "How untraceable are His ways!"

Moses was adopted by the most powerful woman in Egyptian history, a woman named Hatshepsut, probably not a name that will be your next child's name. But she was, without question, the most powerful woman in all of Egyptian history. She was, for a time, for some 22 years, if I remember correctly, she sat on the throne as the ruler of the nation. In God's providence, when his parents put him in that little bulrush basket and sent him floating down the river, they were hoping somebody rich and influential might save his life and adopt him. Who should gather him in but this woman. She nurtured him as her own son. He was raised in the palace at Thebes. He received the best education possible in the world at that time.

Acts 7 says he became a powerful man in both words and deeds, but when he became a man he made a deliberate choice to associate with the people of God, Hebrews 11 tells us, "because he considered the reproach of the Messiah greater treasure than the riches of Egypt." He was clinging to the promise made back to Abraham in Genesis 15, that God would bring his people out of Egypt and give them the Promised Land. He chose to identify himself with his people, the enslaved Hebrews, forfeiting the advantages that he had spent 40 long years gaining. And you know the story, eventually he was forced, by his own decision, to flee Egypt by his own precipitous actions. And he ended up, think about this, spending the next 40 years, four decades, as a shepherd in the desert. How many times do you think during those 40 years Moses questioned the ways of God? "How untraceable are His ways!"

Or, have you ever thought, really thought about the life of our Lord? He was born to an obscure Jewish couple under circumstances that caused people His entire life to question the legitimacy

of His birth. He grew up in Nazareth, a small little village that had such a bad reputation, the first time anybody heard about it they said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

His father, Joseph, apparently died when Jesus was a young teenager. You see Joseph when Jesus was 12, in that episode at the temple, and you don’t hear from him after that. Most agree that very shortly thereafter, Joseph died. That means Jesus would have become the surrogate head of that home in a Jewish setting. And so He became responsible for supporting Mary. He got a job. He took over His father’s business as the carpenter. He became known as the carpenter.

He worked for 15 years or more in manual labor every day, making sure to provide for his mother. But much more than that, Jesus had at least six younger siblings. We know his brothers, he had four of them, their names are given to us in the New Testament. And we are told he had sisters, plural. So there were at least six younger siblings and they were very young, because Jesus was in his teenage years. Jesus had to work to support a family, a large family, in difficult circumstances.

But He became their teacher. In the Jewish home He was responsible to teach them the Scripture. And no family ever had a better surrogate father. No family ever had a better teacher, a better example. And yet, His “kids,” His siblings, His younger siblings, all grew up to reject Him, even as the rabbi, much less as the Messiah. In fact, they thought He was out of His mind. They showed up to take Him home, thinking he had gone crazy. Not one of them believed in Jesus until after His death. He died with every one of His siblings rejecting Him.

Once He began His ministry, the religious leaders of the nation rejected Him. They called Him a drunkard. They called Him a glutton. They even accused Him of being in league with Satan. And after just a short ministry of three-and-a-half years, the Sanhedrin convicted Him of being a blasphemer. They delivered Him to the Romans, and Jesus was tortured and died a death reserved for the absolute worst of criminals in Roman culture.

Now why do I tell you those stories? Listen carefully, if you missed all that, don’t miss this. In light of these biblical examples, and countless other ones I could tell you, do you really expect the details of your life to unfold in such a way that you will be able to track the footprints of God? Of course not! “How unsearchable are God’s judgments and unfathomable His ways!”

Last week, I pointed out that our response to God’s inexhaustible attribute should be exclamation. Oh, I stand amazed by! I also pointed out we should respond with meditation. This is a poem in Greek. It means you should think about these things, meditate on them, and with adoration, this is a doxology of worship and praise in response to theology.

But let me ask the question this morning, what should our response be to God’s unfathomable decisions and ways? Well, I would add to those three one more, submission. Accept God’s

right to make these decisions and to operate the way He operates. You don't and can't completely understand God's decisions or ways. So folks, let God be God. Submit to and accept God's decisions and ways in the details of your life. Don't question God, don't say, you know God, let me give you some advice about how my life ought to run.

Submit to and accept God's decisions and ways when it comes to the great plan of redemption. Don't try to create your own path to God. Accept the way God has established through His Son. It is the unfathomable decrees of God in the plan of redemption and His untrackable ways in accomplishing that plan that we celebrate when we take the Lord's Table together. Take a moment and prepare your heart as the men come.

Our Father, we do ask You to help us respond correctly to what we have learned this morning about You. Lord, help us to submit to and accept Your decisions about everything, about how salvation should unfold, about how You will choose to save, about whom You choose to save.

Father help us, as well, to accept Your providence and plans for our lives, Your decisions about and Your ways in executing those decisions in our lives, in the details of our lives. Father, remind us that Your ways can't be tracked; we can't look in our lives and expect to see Your footprints. Help us instead to trust and to submit.

And, Father, as we come to the Lord's Table, I pray that You would remind us in new and fresh ways of Your unsearchable decrees regarding salvation and Your unfathomable paths to execute those decisions and plans. Lord, we never would have imagined this as a way to redeem. We worship You. We submit to Your plans.

Father, I pray for those who aren't in Christ here this morning. I pray that they would come, even through hearing the gospel, some in hearing it preached and now in seeing it enacted in front of them in the Lord's Table, that they would come to see their need of Christ, and that they would respond in repentance and faith; they would come Your way and not their own.

Lord, for the rest of us, as we turn to the Lord's Table, cleanse our hearts. Lord, we want to come in a way that honors You, that honors the sacrifice that our Lord made, by not holding onto some sin, by refusing to repent, refusing to confess. Father, help us to open up the dark corners of our souls to You, and freely, willingly, give up everything and seek Your forgiveness. And thank You that You will forgive. You have never turned anyone away who has come with a broken heart before You. Receive our worship now, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.