Evergreen Presbyterian Church

Pastor Adam Parker

November 22, 2027

Sermon Title: Ingrafted Gentiles, Jealous Israel

Sermon Text: Romans 11:11-24

Rom. 11:11 ¶ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

Rom. 11:12 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!

Rom. 11:13 ¶ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry

Rom. 11:14 in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

Rom. 11:15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

Rom. 11:16 If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Rom. 11:17 ¶ 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,

Rom. 11:18 do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

Rom. 11:19 Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”

Rom. 11:20 That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.

Rom. 11:21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.

Rom. 11:22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.

Rom. 11:23 And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

Rom. 11:24 For if you were 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.

Main Point: Looking upon the kindness and severity of God strips away Gentile presumption, warns us against trusting in outward religious privilege, and calls us to pray with expectant hope for the natural branches to be grafted in again.

Outline:

1. The Divine Purpose in the Stumble (v. 11-15)
2. The Tree and the Root (v. 16-18, 24)
3. The Call to Holy Fear (v. 19-23)

Introduction

What is the future of the Jewish people, according to the Bible? This is a big question.

In v. 7-10 of the last chapter, Paul showed that even though God hadn't completely cast off the ethnic people of Israel, they had most certainly been hardened against Jesus Christ. Their table had become a snare, and their eyes had been darkened.

And hearing that pointed out could do a couple of problematic things for various readers or listeners. One thing is, if you were a Gentile you might hear that and think that it's right to become insolent and arrogant and start to hate and torment the Jewish people as if they never can or never will come around to Christ and be saved.

The other thing that you could respond to this with is, if you're Jewish you could surrender to despair. And so Paul asks a questions that both interested parties are probably thinking if they're following along with Paul up to this point. And the question is, "Did Israel stumble in order that they might fall?" It's a question that Paul is going to spend all of this week and next week's text getting at.

Because of that, let's get the question straight: when he asks on behalf of his readers, "Did they stumble in order that they might fall?" he is asking a big picture question. He's not asking whether Israel believes or not. Of course by and large they don't. This is a question about God's big purpose and what God's real ultimate big purpose for literal physical descendants of Abraham is. What is he really doing with this people group?

The way Paul responds puts both of the problematic responses I just mentioned to rest. What he is about to say here does not give Gentiles a reason to be proud and hateful toward the Jews. And he also doesn't give the Jews a reason to be hopeless. What he's about to say is infused with reasons for Gentiles to be totally humbled by their inclusion in God's people. And he also gives hope to the Jewish people as well, which is something we will see both this week and next.

It is very important to Paul that Gentiles especially hear about the hardening of Israel, and that as they do, that they listen with lowly, humble, receptive hearts that aren't lifted up in pride against the Jews. Paul cares about what we do with what he's saying. It would be pretty easy for us as Gentiles who believe in Christ (if we are Gentiles, anyway) to stand over the Jews as a whole in a sort of triumphant judgment. And Paul knows that temptation, which is *why* he says in v. 20, "So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you."

He needs to say this, because it would be really easy for someone to twist what Paul is saying into a pro-Gentile triumphalism and an anti-Jewish judgmentalism. And what he does here disarms both.

1. The Divine Purpose in the Stumble (v. 11-15)

So Paul lays out the beginnings of the answer here. First, he says, the stumble has a purpose. He says, their unbelief has become the occasion for the gospel to go out into the whole world. Because most Jews did not believe, the same gospel was preached to the Gentiles, many of whom *did* believe.

And what we start to see here is that there was this intentional movement of the gospel being explained for us: first, the gospel was given to the Jews in the Law, in the Prophets, in the writings. He's already told us that Abraham believed, and so many other Jewish people up to the time of Christ really believed and had faith in Christ. But when the gospel didn't catch fire in Israel the way you might have thought, then God caused the gospel to move… to go out to everyone else! So Jewish unbelief became an occasion for the rest of the world to hear the good news, too.

So then Paul says that the current state of things is that the church seems to largely be made up of Gentiles, and that his own approach to this, according to verse 13 and 14, is that he preaches the gospel to the Gentiles in this optimistic hope that Jews will see what is happening for the Gentiles, they'll see what they are missing out on, and experience "jealousy" so that they want the same gospel for themselves.

So there is this hopeful optimism in Paul's heart that even as he's being faithful to his calling and telling Gentiles about faith in Christ, that the Jews will catch on and they'll say, "I want that too!" In fact, you hear this optimism and hope that Paul has for the future conversion of the Jewish people in verse 15: "If their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, *what will their acceptance mean* but life from the dead?"

So here is the explanation: the Jewish people have rejected Christ, but that rejection is temporary. It's for a time, but it is not the permanent state of things.

Paul is envisioning a time when they will be accepted by God again, through faith in Jesus.

I would argue that we are still in this temporary season that Paul is talking about here. The Jewish people by and large have rejected their messiah. And all the while the gospel is going out into the rest of the world. And verse 25 tells us that there is coming a day when the "fullness" of the Gentiles will enter the church. Verse 12 uses the exact same word, "fullness" to describe a future state when the Jewish people will also experience their own "fullness" coming into the church. Paul is saying, God has a plan for bringing in a fullness of the Gentiles, *and* a full inclusion of the Jews.

He isn't saying that this "fullness" means that every Jewish person will come to Christ, but he does seem to be saying that there will be a future state when there is a turning of the fortunes for Israel and Jewish people will experience a renewed interest and desire in coming to Christ. And verse 15 then gives us an optimistic view of why that will be good for the whole world. What Paul does here is an argument from the lesser to the greater: if it's a blessing for the world that Jews currently *aren't* believing, imagine the greater blessing that will come when there is not only a fullness of the Gentiles, but also a fullness of the Jews!

Paul is clearly distinguishing here between Ethnic Jews and Ethnic Gentiles and dealing with both of them as unique and individual groups. He is not talking here about "Israel" or the "Jews" as a mixed multitude of Jews and Gentile elect people. This will be important later when we look at the next passage next week, but for now I just want to lay down these bread crumbs for you that Paul has a lot of optimistic views of what is coming for the Jewish people one day. So here are some of the optimistic bread crumbs about the Jewish people:

- Paul speaks of "their full inclusion" (v. 12).
- He speaks of "their acceptance" which would mean life from the dead (v. 15).
- He says in verse 23, "God has the power to graft them in again."
- He says in verse 24, "these, the natural branches [will] be grafted back into their own olive tree."

Even here, Paul is hopeful for more than just the idea that you have your occasional stray Jewish person like himself who will come into the church, but that

something greater than that is coming. He speaks of "*their* full inclusion," "*their* acceptance," "*these*, the natural branches." He's using the plural. He doesn't speak of the occasional Jew coming to Christ, but of "them." There is a corporate hopefulness here that something great will still come that will be better than the current status quo where the church is almost entirely made up of Gentiles.

But the way that we get there in salvation history is through the current period of redemptive history in which we live, where they largely are not included and are not accepted. But as we'll see next week even more clearly, there is coming a day when they will be.

But until that day, the current moment is about jealousy, and letting the Jewish people see what they are missing out on. So Paul keeps the Gentiles from becoming proud by reminding them that the status quo is not always the status quo. And he keeps listeners from being hopeless for the Jews by reminding them that there *is* a future hope.

2. The Tree and the Root (v. 16-18, 24)

Second, Paul gives us this illustration of the tree and the root.

He also uses the illustration of dough in verse 16. But I do think that Paul's shift to the illustration of the tree and branches makes the point he is aiming at a little simpler (at least for my purposes in this sermon).

What Paul says is, that the "root" is holy. What is the root? The "root" which Paul says is holy is the patriarchs of Judaism: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It helps to understand this if you look ahead to verse 28, where Paul says that the Jews are "beloved for the sake of their forefathers." Those forefathers (whom the Jews are beloved for the sake of) are the root that the Judaism of Paul's day had grown out of. Now, *why* are the patriarchs so important? Because they are the ones who received the covenant and promises of redemption and of the coming Savior.

It is not that these were great men. It's not that they were so incredibly righteous throughout their lives. It was that God made a promise in Genesis 17 that He would be their God and the God of their children. It is the promise of God made to them that makes the root holy. God committed himself to them. It is not that

there is something biologically special or superior about the Jewish people, but the fact that God bound his name to them and made promises to their offspring.

Paul's argument is, "okay, so you have the root," the root of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And out of that root grows a nation of people. But the holiness of the root doesn't automatically guarantee salvation or moral purity to every individual branch. Physical birth and genetics don't transmit righteousness, they transmit original sin. Every child born from Abraham is a child of wrath in Adam by nature.

What *is* transmitted from the patriarchs that marks the Jewish people is an external covenantal nobility: access to the promises and prophecies and ceremonies that preached Jesus Christ year in and year out. But just being a child of Abraham doesn't mean automatic salvation or personal righteousness. They may be connected to the root of Abraham, but if they won't come to Christ by faith, they don't enjoy the gifts of Christ: justification, adoption, forgiveness, peace with God, glorification… none of those things.

Still: being in the covenant gives huge blessings, incredible advantages that Gentiles just never had. The covenant preaches those blessings in Christ. This is why the whole Old Testament speaks of Jesus: because the point was for the Jews to see the ceremonies, believe in Christ, and to refuse to rely on their own righteousness. That's what the OT is preaching to them.

But as we saw last week, most of the Jewish nation refused to follow the law, the prophets, and the writings and believe in their Savior.

So what happened?

As Paul puts it here, "branches were broken off." Paul says that God cut them off. That's why Paul tells us in verse 22 that we should behold the severity of God. Ultimately, it is God who cut people off for unbelief. But in a sense, it is also their unbelief that has cut them off from the patriarchs when they refused to believe the gospel. They were broken off from Abraham. Now the Jewish people may still talk about Abraham, but he's almost like a ghost to them, a phantom, a vision of what they could have had. He's a figurehead, a mascot to them almost. Why? Because they didn't believe in the salvation that Abraham believed in and hoped in and received by faith alone.

So they get the external benefits of the covenant, but don't go by faith where the covenant is leading them, you see.

Before we move to Paul's application that he has for Gentile Christians in our conclusion of this passage, I want to point out something very important for us.

We might look at this whole situation and just sort of shake our heads and look down on the Jewish people: ("How could they possibly think that just externally doing all this stuff and having the right parents and going through the motions of the covenant would be enough? Why wouldn't they just believe?").

Christian, this is still a temptation for us today. We are given sacraments by God. He has given us baptism and the Lord's Supper. But these can be a snare for us if all we care about is the external performance. The covenant temptations of the Jews might have different ceremonies attached, but if *we* hear the preaching of the word and don't believe, we're like the branches that were cut off. If we receive the sacraments without faith, we're a lot like them. Listen to how Peter Martyr says this:

> "No one receives any grace by partaking of the sacraments unless he receives it by faith. We receive the sacraments as seals of grace and of a gift already obtained. And nothing comes to us from them by the power of the work performed. Whoever partakes of the sacraments approaches either worthily or unworthily... yet we will by no means grant that the outward action itself confers grace."

Later on Peter Martyr talks about how easy it is for children of the covenant to do all of these things, but never actually come to Jesus for themselves. Listen to this:

> "When the children of the godly grow to maturity, they must *personally* grasp this promise by faith and give assent to it... Otherwise they will not attain salvation, nor will the piety of their parents and ancestors benefit them in any way."

We have so much in common with the Jews, don't we? More than we often realize.

We understand how easy it can be to place our hope in external things, in fleshly things, in our ancestry and all that, without going to Christ whom those things are preaching to us and pointing us to. The answer for us is the same as it is for the Jews. The answer is the same for all people: come to Jesus Christ by faith, repent of your sins. Repent of your righteousness. Repent of anything you have held on to that you think makes you acceptable to God apart from faith in Christ.

3. Conclusion: The Call to Holy Fear (v. 19-23)

In Paul's conclusion of this section, Paul calls us to a holy fear.

In fact, look at how he states it in verse 20: "Do not become proud, but fear." If we are proud, Paul is saying, we are not fearing. We should fear. Holy fear is appropriate.

The opposite of holy fear in this case is a presumptive, faithless pride that says, "My ancestry is solid. I've been baptized. I'm externally part of all this. Meanwhile, these Jews might as well be pagans."

Well, let me just say that if *you* rely on those external things, then *you* might as well be pagan as well! If you are sitting here, swollen with pride because you are a Christian, but aren't truly believing in Christ for yourself, refusing to repent of your sin, refusing to go where the gospel preaching you hear is sending you, then you're proud, and you're just like the people you are gloating over. Paul says "do not become proud."

The internet is such a toxic place. I have never spoken with anyone who thinks of themselves as proud. But the internet tells a different story. Where online figures talk about Jewish people as if they are active civil enemies, subversives, or cultural corruptors to be despised or excluded, Paul reminds the Gentile church: "Do not boast against the branches... remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you" (v. 18). Paul says, "do not become proud, but fear."

While unbelieving Jews do oppose the gospel and are even called enemies of the gospel by Paul in verse 28, believers aren't permitted to be malicious, mocking, or attacking towards them.

I appreciate how Peter Martyr puts it here:

> "Because they are the enemies of God, they must likewise be accounted enemies unto us. Yet this posture is not that we should afflict them with injuries or do them harm... Do they stubbornly refuse to believe the truth? Let us labor with all diligence that they may be brought to believe... On the other hand, if we contemplate the divine election, and if we consider the holy Patriarchs from whose loins they sprang, we will conclude at once that they are beloved of God... 'Boasting against the branches' means to take malicious delight in their spiritual downfall... The root supports you, not you the root. And those who foolishly fight against their own sustaining root cannot long endure."

Christian, hear these words and put away any and every trace of arrogant contempt, whether online or in your heart. You did not earn your place in this tree; you were dragged in from the wild by God's pure, unmerited mercy. Do not boast against the broken branches. Bow your head, lay hold of Christ with empty hands, and fear the God who alone has power to graft you in.

Let's pray.