

Romans 11: 11-15 - God Has A Plan – 20 May 2012

We have been journeying through the Book of Romans and today will be no different. I like us this morning to turn to Romans 11 and we'll be looking at some five verses this morning. So, turn your Bible with me to Romans 11:11-15.

As many of you might know, I used to work as a medical doctor before I answered the Lord's call to serve in the pastoral ministry. And I enjoyed my work. Actually I really loved it – I loved the surgical parts of it, as you know. I think it is really fun, it's exclusive to doctors to be able to pull intestines and to squeeze them, to feel them and to irritate them and to cut them and to sew them. It is a privilege very few people in this world would have and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

But I also realize, in order to be a surgeon, there is a lot that you need to know, a lot that you need to learn, a lot that you need to be familiar with. And sadly in the medical system or in the medical school system in Singapore, I was not really properly equipped to do so. I learned a lot about the facts and figures of diseases, I learnt about the treatment options, but I never got to practice surgery in the real sense during my medical school days. And so, on the very first day of work at the surgical department, when I was supposed to go into the operating theater to help or assist in the surgery, I was totally at a loss.

I didn't know what to do. I didn't even know where the surgical theater or the operating theater is. Do you realize that? When you go to the hospital, they would tell you where the x-ray department is, they would tell you where the pharmacy is, they would tell you where the clinics are, but they never tell you where the entrance to the operating theater is.

So I have been in the hospital for some time, I never figured out where that would be. So, what I did was that I followed the senior doctors after the rounds in the ward. We would go to the operating theater and it was a very interesting thing for me to get to the place. I mean, it was a very ordinary- looking corridor. It was a corridor that I must have walked by many times before as a student. It was a ordinary one lined by offices of the medical social workers, but when you come to the end of the door or end of the passageway, there is a door and there is an intercom button you would have to press.

So, I pressed the button, or the doctors pressed the button, you look upwards towards the CCTV camera and there would be a click. I feel like it is like the secret agent chamber. It looks ordinary on the outside, it's like an ordinary place until you

press the button. And then, the bookshelves would swivel and you enter into the place where weapons, and guns and rifles are stored, and I felt like that. Wow... ordinary, nobody knows, you press the button, secret door opened, except that instead of leading me into a chamber of glorious weapons, this door leads to the toilet. (Laughter in the congregation).

The very first thing a doctor has to do is to go to the toilet, the changing room, to change up. Even then, I didn't know how to change up, I didn't know how to put on the surgical scrubs. I mean, I didn't know how to tie my pants, I didn't know what size to wear, and all that is just embarrassing. All I did was to follow the senior doctors who knew what to do. They got me up to the operating theater itself. They said, "This is how you would wash your hands." I didn't know how to wash my hands in a sterile way, of course. I didn't know how to put on the gloves. I just 'monkey see monkey do'. I fear for the patients whom I have touched because I might have compromised sterility there. But all that is puzzling because I never knew what to do, I never was taught.

The surgery itself was worse. I mean, the doctors came in. They look at the case notes, they look at the x-rays and they proceeded to cut the patient. Now, I didn't know what I was there for, I didn't know what I was supposed to do. All I did was that I stood beside the patient and he (the surgeon) told me, "Hold this" and I held this, "Pull this" and I pulled that. And that's all I did the entire surgical process.

They put some cloth in, they put some metal retractors to hold the intestines back so that they could operate on the site they were interested in, where maybe the cancer was. I didn't know what was happening. The senior surgeons were frantically working, very, very hard at work, while I was just holding the retractors. And many a times I fell asleep, because really it's very boring to just hold the retractors.

Once in a while, there is excitement. Once in a while, the surgeon cuts something and blood spurts onto your face or spurts onto the gown and that's part of the excitement of surgery. He cuts out something that I thought was normal, but he said not normal, and he re-sews it and the anatomy is totally changed. I mean I was, through this whole process, not knowing what was happening. At the end of the surgery, he closes the patient up, sews it all up and I thought to myself, "Wow, wow! I was in this whole surgical process and I didn't know what happened at all." I say "Wow, blood was spurting, tissues were being cut but I didn't know what was happening at all" But you know what? It is all right because the surgeon knows what he's doing.

The surgeon began knowing the problem, the surgeon began knowing a plan and he was tenaciously executing his plan, even though the people assisting him may not know. I see that through the mess, through the spurting and squirting of the blood, the surgeon was in absolute control.

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My friends, it reminds me today of God. In life, it looks like a mess, you do not know what is happening. But let me tell you something, the Great Surgeon of life, He knows exactly what is happening. He has a plan and God is in control.

This morning, I want to share with you from Romans 11, God has a plan. It doesn't seem like it all the time to us, but God has a plan. I reminded you last week about the red octopus. My son went swimming and the coach taught my son using a red octopus and it was a genius move. My son this week, yesterday, was still talking about the red octopus. He asked, "Are we going to see Coach Edith today?" I said yes. "Oh! Am I going to see the red octopus? Doo, doo, doo, doo doo!" Huh! He still remembers the red octopus, because he could see what was happening to the red octopus and he learnt best seeing someone else, that is, the red octopus go through what he was supposed to go through himself.

This morning, as we look at God having a plan, it is not a lesson just about Israel. The red octopus God is using in Romans 11 is Israel, but the lesson is very much for you and for me. How God deals with Israel is a picture of how God deals with us— that He always has a plan. You see, what we have been looking at in Romans 11 is that it seems that God is spinning out of control. Israel by and large has rejected Jesus, has rejected God. It feels like God has lost His plot. But Paul is going to remind us in the verses we are going to read, that God has a plan, you don't have to worry about it. God is in control!

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Did the unbelief of Israel make God unfaithful to His Word? Does it mean that if Israel will not believe, that God is now unfaithful, God will not fulfill his promises, He will go back on His Word? Absolutely no!

Last week we saw, despite or actually because of the unbelief of Israel, God sovereignly and graciously reserved for Himself a remnant – a remnant during Moses time, a remnant during Elijah's time, a remnant during Paul's time right up till today. God is still in control. However, the question we have right now is this: Is

this the way God is going to deal with Israel for all of human history? Is God satisfied just with saving a remnant at every stage of time? Is it the permanent state of Israel? That is the question in verse 11.

I say then— Have they, that is Israel, stumbled? They tripped up, they tripped up in that they rejected Jesus, have they stumbled that they should fall? Is this rejection of Jesus going to be a permanent setting aside of Israel? Is God just going to save Israel in small proportions every step of the way, or is there something different coming up? Will they crash so much that they can never get up on their feet again? That is the question Paul is addressing. Now, if you are a Jew, maybe on the Internet you are listening. If you are an Israelite, let me tell you, these words should mean a big deal to you. Because this is about the fate of your people, this is about the fate of the nation of Israel, the next two words that come up are absolutely vital. What would happen to Israel? Are they going to be permanently set aside? Paul says, “God forbid!”

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The salvation of a remnant, from Moses' time right up till today, is not going to be the permanent state of the nation of Israel. God forbid! There will be a change and there would be a glorious, grand change. I think if you are a Jew today, excitement must abound within your soul. God is going to do a great work among His chosen nation. You see, this is the point – God did not harden the Israelites in order to destroy them. God hardened the Israelites in order to bless them and we are going to see how. We are going to see how the nation of Israel will be saved in a great way like never before. We are going to see when the nation of Israel will be saved in a great way like never before. So, hold on to your seats, we are going to look at the wonderful, glorious plan of God in the history of this world.

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The Bible says, first of all, "But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles." (Rom 11:11)

So, Stage 1— Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ will result in salvation being given to the Gentiles.

All right, so 1: what happens is when Israel rejected the Messiah, the Gospel is now given to you and I. Do you realize something –that Israel's loss has now become our gain? Israel's loss has become the benefit and blessing to the Gentiles, you and me,

whether you are a Chinese, Indonesian or Caucasian. It's because of Israel's rejection that the Gospel has come to us.

So, Paul says this is what happened: 1. Salvation comes to you and I, to the Gentiles. It's not new, it is not a surprise. Jesus, when he was on this Earth, already said so in Matthew 21: 43. He said, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof", referring to you and I.

So, it's already prophesied and it came to pass in the Book of Acts– fascinating, if we trace the journey and the Ministry of Apostle Paul.

In Acts 13 (verse 46), the Bible tells us Paul and Barnabas grew bold, courageous, and said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye have put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

Paul said in Romans 1:16 "The Gospel of Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

So, that is the way Paul ministered. Generally, when he comes to a city, he goes first to the synagogues where the Jews are gathered. But, seeing that they turned away, he goes to the Gentiles. Again, we see in Acts 18:6 likewise, "from henceforth we go to the Gentiles."

And, if it is not clear enough, in Acts 28:28 "The salvation of God is now sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."

So this is Stage 1, folks. The rejection by Israel will result in the salvation of the Gentiles. But that's not all. If you read on, in verse 11, Stage 2 comes in. What happens now is that God is using the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy. So, this is the plan of God.

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He hardens the nation of Israel, and the Gospel is now sent gloriously to the Gentile nations. And when Gentiles, which is we all today, are being saved in great numbers and great blessings is upon the church of Jesus Christ today, it makes the Jews reconsider the claims of Jesus Christ. It forces them to be in the state of –in a sense– jealousy. God is motivating them, God is forcing them to take a good look at the

Savior! And for 2000 years, this is what God is doing. The people of Israel look at the church of Jesus Christ today and they are provoked to jealousy.

My friends, there will come a day when the Jews will be saved in great numbers. In Zechariah 12:10, the Bible says, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, “.....

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They are not looking at Him today, but there will come a day they will look at the Messiah who was pierced for their sins. And in chapter 13:1,

Zec 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

There is a great day of salvation, there is a great day of cleansing. Why, because the Jews, all these years, are being provoked to jealousy. This is what Paul speaks of in verse 12 when he says, ‘their fullness’, ‘how much more their fullness’. Look at this verse:

Rom 11:12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?

This is the ‘how much more argument’ of Paul, he loves it. For theologians, it is called the ‘fortiori argument.’ It is very simple in concept: if the fall or the sin of them results in the riches of the Gentiles, imagine what it would be like when many of them come to Jesus. What kind of a blessing would come upon the Gentiles, upon the world? It's the ‘how much more argument’.

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This is fascinating to me, this is fascinating to me: God hardens Israel, the Gospel is turned to the Gentiles, multitudes throughout the years are coming to Jesus, Israel is provoked to jealousy and there would be a day when they would come to Jesus in great number. And when it is a day of fullness, they bring tremendous blessings to the entire world –the genius, the brilliance of our God. Amazing and astounding.

You see, again let me go through this with you. Don't miss the plan of God– He's not working on a random basis, He is not caught off-guard. He is faithfully, powerfully,

irresistibly, and wisely working His plan throughout the ages. There is a setting aside of Israel because both of their unbelief and because of the sovereign hand of God. Israel is hardened, but Israel is not hardened to be destroyed. Israel is hardened, in order that the Gospel would go to the Gentiles, in order that the Jews would be provoked to jealousy, in order that ultimately, the world would be saved –the ‘how much more argument’ of Paul.

Ah my friends, this is the wisdom of God. I know why we have a difficulty accepting God's sovereignty in Romans 9. It's very easy –it is because we cannot imagine a God who cruelly hardened a people to destroy them. But you see, who is the clay to speak to the Potter? You have got to come to Romans 11 and you realize that God did not harden Israel in order to destroy them. God hardened Israel in order to bless them and the Gentiles alike, so that at the great feast, there would be the prodigal son and the elder brother celebrating the salvation and grace of God together.

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God did not randomly harden the people. He had a plan, the infinitely wise God has a plan. And Paul went on to say, “I speak to you Gentiles, in as much I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office.” Now, Paul is obviously commissioned to the Gentiles. But do you know something about Paul? His heart never left Israel, he never forsook Israel, the people could never say, “You are a traitor, you are a turncoat” –no, because even though he magnifies his office to the Gentiles, it is because he knew it is the plan of God to ultimately save Israel.

This is what he says: “If by any means, by being an apostle to the Gentiles, I may provoke to emulation, jealousy, them which are my flesh and might save some of them.”

(Rom 11:13-14 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.)

Oh, this is a man who knew the plan of God! That's why he wrote it for you. He knew the plan of God and that's why he's rejoicing in being an apostle to the Gentiles. All along, Paul is saying “It is my heart's desire and prayer that Israel would be saved. I am willing to wish myself accursed that they might be saved.” His heart is for the people of Israel, but he doesn't say, “God I don't want to be an apostle to the Gentiles, I want to be an apostle to the Jews.” He says “God, your plan is best. I will be an apostle to the Gentiles, in order– in order to provoke my people to seek after You.”

Look at this glorious verse in verse 15,

“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world...” –the fortiori ‘how much more argument’ again– “...what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”

(Rom 11:15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?)

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If, by casting away, there is a reconciliation of the world right now, can you imagine what it would be like when Israel is received? In other words, whilst we rejoice in multitudes of people coming to Jesus today, whilst we glory in revival and revival accounts that have been written of times past, Paul is saying, "You ain't seen nothing yet!" This is just the tip of the iceberg! The day, the Jews are coming in their fullness, there will be a worldwide salvation like never before. It is like ‘life from the dead’. That is a stark difference, my friend, obvious difference. You ain't seen nothing yet!

I believe this refers to the time of the Tribulation, where there are some 144,000 Jews, if you read of it in Revelations 7 and Revelations 14: twelve thousand Jews from each tribe, going forth throughout the world proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus. And that will be a day where great proportions of people will come to Jesus.

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If today the Jews rejecting Jesus result in salvation of many Gentiles, imagine what it will be when many Jews are saved! There will be a worldwide salvation like never before. You speak to church leaders, you speak to pastors who have Jews within their midst and they will generally tell you: if you get a Jew saved, he is a missionary for Jesus Christ, he is on fire, he is passionate, he's like an apostle Paul, you see. Imagine 144,000 of them in a time of great pain, tribulation and sorrow, and they will go all out in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Oh, the mind of God, the wisdom of our Supreme Ruler! His sovereignty is not intended to kill or to destroy. My friends, His sovereignty at the grand picture, the big picture of God is intended for the salvation of the multitudes. The message I have for you this morning is this: God has a plan.

As I have said, it doesn't feel like it a lot of times. Often in your life, it feels random. Life seems to be spinning out of control, you don't understand why your life is in a mess, you don't understand why cancer struck, you don't understand why your family is breaking up, you don't understand why the future looks so bleak, you can't even figure out why God is putting you in this place. You have been praying to God for a long time and He doesn't answer you according to your desires, according to your plan. It seems like the rug is pulled out from underneath your feet. Things are random, haphazard, but let me say this, folks. God has a plan.

It looks so bad right now that Israel is rejecting God. And people may wonder, "What are you doing, God?" But let me tell you: God has a plan for Israel. When I saw the surgeon operating, it looks like a mess— blood squirting all over, tissues being cut but let me tell you, the surgeon has a plan. And our God clearly has a plan.

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Let me tell you about the will of God, the plan of God. It tells me first of all, God's plan is always sovereign. Sovereign, He is sovereign. Don't ever for a moment assume that the unbelief of the nation of Israel caught God off-guard. It did not catch Him by surprise, folks. It is according to the way He has willed it. The twists and turns of life did not catch God by surprise. In Romans 9, we are told that God sovereignly hardens who He hardens, saves who He saves. In Romans 10, we are told that they are hardened because of their own unbelief. Romans 11 tells us there is a purpose, a sovereign purpose, and the unbelief of Israel is not a surprise to God.

Remember back in Romans 10:19, God had already said, "Did not Israel know?" I mean, isn't this already declared? Back in Deuteronomy 32:21, Moses had already said, "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not a people, and by a foolish nation, ignorant people, the Gentiles, I will anger you." So, is the unbelief of Israel something that God did not know? No. He knew it, He ordained it. But it is not ordained in order to put aside Israel permanently, but it is ordained that Israel will be ultimately blessed and the nations of the world be blessed through them; (it) did not catch God by surprise.

You see, God does not have to change His plans. For us, we often have to change plans, isn't it? We always have plan A and if plan A doesn't work, we will have plan B and if plan B doesn't work, we will go to plan C and if plan C doesn't work, we will try to figure out plan D. And we are something like that— if plan A didn't work, the alphabet has 25 more letters, stay cool! (Laughter in the congregation)

And so my friends, this is the plan of God. It is sovereign. You are not a victim of cruel fate, of misfortune, of bad luck. You are in the safe hands of the sovereign all-wise and good God. Our Lord God Omnipotent reigns. This is the God we worship and as you see the way He ministers, you see the way He works in the nation of Israel. Rejoice! He is sovereign, He has a plan.

Secondly, God's plan is not only sovereign but He is always looking to save. It is a plan to save, it is a saving plan, it is a '*salvific*' plan.

You see, when we see Romans 9, we feel as if God hardens Israel in order to destroy them. No! The big picture is that it is done in order to bless the nation. God is always looking to seek and save that which is lost. Have you ever wondered why God doesn't bring us straight away to heaven? I mean you could think to yourself: the moment I am saved, God could say "Eh, done deal, let's all go to heaven, I've really gotten a first-class ticket." "God, I think I am ready, take me home." Rapture comes, and that's the end of human history, and the rest of the world, all the best to you.

Why is it that after so long, after Adam and Eve sinned, God is still not ready to come in judgment? Why the tarry? Why the wait? This is the question people ask back in the Bible times.

In 2 Peter, there are people who ask this question. These are the scoffers walking after their own lusts saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? He says He's coming, where is He? We have been waiting for Him for a long, long time. I think He is not going to come." And the question in our minds is: "Why is God not coming?" Let me tell you why— 2Pet 3:9, because "the Lord is not slack." It is not because He is not going to fulfill His Word. He is. He is going to come but He is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

(2Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.)

He did not shortcut His plan, He is patiently waiting for those who would come and believe and be saved. He is waiting to 'see out' His plan of salvation. Do you know that every day the Lord doesn't come is a day of pain and grief to the holy God of the heavens? Do you realize just how grievous it is to a holy and righteous God? He could come at any time in judgment and end it all, but He doesn't because He's grace, He's patience, He's longsuffering. He's working out His full plan of salvation.

Sometimes, we think that God is slow. Why so slow, God? And sometimes, we may be even tempted that we love souls more than Him. No! He has a plan, it looks slow but He has a plan. He's not going to rush it, it's going to be fulfilled exactly the way He has designed and intended and decided it to be, right from the word 'go'.

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You see, God's plan is always a saving plan, it is a redemptive plan. He is always seeking to draw men and women to Himself. That is the will of God, that is the plan of God, that is the summary of human history: God is drawing, redeeming people to Himself. This is the heart of God, folks.

As you look at the way He's going to deal with Israel and the Gentiles and the world, it offers you a glimpse into the heart of your Father— a heart of compassion, a heart of love, a heart of grace, a heart of patience, seeking to save that which is lost. Oh my dear friends, there is a third component to the plan of God: God's plan is always sovereign, it works towards salvation but God's plan is sometimes very surprising. It is sometimes very perplexing. We don't understand. I think the Jews, when they were hardened... the world as they see the Jews be hardened, they don't quite understand why. It's a mystery that God's special people would be set aside, it's a mystery.

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It's a mystery why Joseph who received a dream from God that he would be a ruler one day, should be sent to Egypt. It's a strange thing. God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. It's a strange thing for God to lead the people of Israel to a dead end before the Red Sea. And my friends, it's an absolutely strange thing that the Son of God should die on the cross. The priests shout out, "If you be the Son of God, come down!", but it's a strange way God works— perplexing to the human mind. God works in ways that are higher than our ways, His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. If you think you have figured God all out, think again. Because His ways are surprising, often times, to the ways of men.

Some two, three weeks ago, I believed it's during one of the public holidays, I can't remember which one, I brought my son to the Singapore Science Center. I remember Singapore Science Center— when I was very young, I remember it as quite rundown, not so high-class. But I was really pleasantly surprised in this trip. It is really nice, it is exciting, it is interesting and I thought that as a four-year-old boy, I better expose him (my son) to some curious things, to stoke his interest in being interested and

curious about things. So when we got in, the first exhibit we saw was a little disappointment in my mind.

We saw this Science Center first exhibit and you see something like this: You have got to see it this side, alright. What do you think this is? It's a ship, it's a boat, anything else? Looks like a mess. I mean I'm not sure whether this is a boat that crashes onto rocks or are these waves? "This is bad," I thought. "What is this about?", until I turned and saw the sign that explained this exhibit. It calls us not to look at the picture but to look at something here. So, I blocked it out, don't let you see it (Laughter in the congregation).

And so I turned my gaze to look at this pillar made of reflective glass and this is what I should see. You know what you're supposed see? No? Can't see? Okay, let me point out to you. Okay, who has seen it already? Raise your hands! To those who can see, more shall be given, and to those who can't see, it shall be taken away from you! (Laughter in the congregation). Ha ha, I am kidding, ok, let me show you, alright?

Looking at this, can you see the nose, the beard, the hair, the ears and the eyes, can you see it? If you really cannot see, then you are sovereignly hardened! (Loud laughter in the congregation). Can see or not? Who can't see, I would explain it again? Now nobody dares to raise the hand. It is a beautiful picture of a man, his face, can you see that? When I saw it, it was like 'Wow!' Wow, no wonder it is the first exhibit, it is exciting. To say the least, it was surprising. I didn't expect that.

What a picture! Your life looks like this, you know. It's a mess, don't know what's up. Is my boat crashing in the waves, or it's crashing in the hills, crashing in the rocks, or crashing on the mountains? I do not know. It doesn't make sense until you take a look at where you should look and you see the hand of God, the face of God, the approval of your heavenly Father. It makes sense only when you know God, you see. God's ways are surprising, surprising. And it's often using the stage of sorrow to bring forth the greatest triumph. God does that all the time.

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Look at the Bible, folks. When is the time that God demonstrates His glory greatest? It's when the people are in the greatest of tragedies and misery and pain and sorrow and that's when God shows Himself strong in the mess that we are in. He works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform.

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But I close with this: God's will, God's plan is always sovereign, God's will and plan is always to save, God's will and God's plan is often surprising, but God's will and God's plan is always splendid. Splendid, it's splendid. It's always good, it's always perfect, it's always satisfying. God's plan is always good.

Romans 12 tells me that we can prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. The Bible tells me that all things synergize together for the good of them that love God. It is always good.

When you draw— and there are some very good artists in our church I know— you use a whole spectrum of colors. You use a bright yellow, the cheery orange, the beautiful red, the glorious purple but there are times also that you splash onto it the black, the grey. It looks dull by itself but when you put it all together, it's a beautiful portrait of life. My friend, God uses that in your life. He's drawing a splendid thing, working out a glorious purpose in and through you.

I love this verse also in Jeremiah, and you must read it in ESV because in the King James, you would not quite get the point and this is what it says: “For I know the plans I have for you”, God is working his plan for you, folks, if you have believed in Jesus Christ. God has a good and glorious plan for you. “I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil to give you a future and a hope”

(Jer 29:11 (ESV) For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.)

I think this is one of the most loving things you can think of. And there is no condemnation and there's no evil, wicked, bad things that is on me, in order to work against me. Even the difficult bad, sad, sorrowful things in my life are used for my good because this is God's plan for you. He will give you the red, the orange, the yellow, He will give you sometimes the grays and blacks but at the end of it all, it's all for your good. This is our sovereign God.

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If life is in the hands of fortune and luck, how sad it would be. If all your life is in the matter of statistical possibilities, how sad life would be. But my friends, your life is in the hands of a sovereign, splendid God. He works His surprising ways but it is always for your good.

And you know, as Paul writes Romans 11, he can't contain himself. I can't contain myself– I am absolutely excited and thankful to God for Who He is, as He reveals Himself in the Bible. And therefore I jump ahead, I jump ahead to where Paul jumped ahead in Romans 11:33.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Time stamp in audio 0:44:39.6.

Sometimes, we are just so prone to try to figure life out ourselves. My friends, it is far better to trust in your God. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not unto your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He would direct your path. What kind of a path is it? You say, “Lord, what kind of plan you would have for me today?” Let me tell you this, friends. God has a plan for you, it is a sovereign plan, He never lets things spin out of control, it's never random, it's never haphazard, it's always the way God intends it to be. And this plan is a redemptive one– He's always looking to draw you to Himself, He's always looking to change you into the image of His glorious Son. And this plan does take faith to believe because it often comes in surprising packages. It's not the way you expected it to be but trust Him, follow Him, believe in Him because His plans are always splendid.

This is the God we worship today and He has beautiful plans for those who hath believed in His Son. Let's bow for a word of prayer.

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My heart is thrilled–thrilled because God has chosen to reveal Himself as such, thrilled because I so often tend to doubt and question God in my life, thrilled because I know I may not know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future. It is a God who loves me richly in Jesus Christ His Son, a God who has plans of welfare and not of evil, to give me a future and a hope, a God whose plans are always sovereign, saving, sometimes surprising but always splendid. This is the God I serve, this is the God I believe, this is the God I love and if you worship the same God, bow before Him in your hearts and let the questions, perplexities, sorrows, frustrations, miseries of life melt in the light of His presence. Trust Him with your life that He knows best and He works for you His best. His way is perfect.

My friends, if you today do not know Jesus, all these, I cannot say, is for you. But my friends, God doesn't want you to stay out of His blessings. He so loved us, He so

loved you that when you are now yet a sinner, He sent His Son to die for you on the cross. Yes it was for you, His Son died for you. And if you today believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you believe in your heart that He is God, Jesus is God who died and rose for the sins of man, if you believe in your heart, the Bible tells us you shall be saved and in the most amazing transaction of life. You, a sinner, are now His dear son and all His riches and all His blessings and all that we have spoken of applies to you. Would you cease from sin, turn from your wicked ways and give your life over to Jesus, your Savior and Lord?

My friends, there is no better life than to have our lives lived in the hands of a loving heavenly Father. This morning, I believe, He is still working out His saving plan, His '*salvific*' plan, to draw you and I closer to Himself. And as we have sung, let's turn our eyes unto Him, let's acknowledge and trust His way is perfect.

If you today need to make a decision before the Lord, whether to believe in Jesus as Savior, or if you as my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you are murmuring, complaining, you are doubting God and you want to say, "Lord, I surrender my life afresh to you", would you do that right here, right now? God hears your heart, God hears your cry. May the Spirit of the living God draw you to Himself.

Father, we thank You. We thank You because we serve You, a sovereign, strong and loving God. Through the storms, the winds and ways of life, we know You are in control. We thank You for it and as we may be struggling today in our lives, teach us to look upwards, teach us to believe. Oh the riches, the depth, the knowledge, the infinite wisdom of God, we praise You today. We love You, dear Lord. We love You because You first loved us. Bless Your people this morning, draw us all closer to Yourself. We ask and pray this humbly in Jesus' name, amen. God bless.