Sunday 25thOctober, 2026

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

In Ezekiel 34, we are reminded of God, as the shepherd for His people.

11 "'…this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.

12 I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

14 I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land.

16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak…"

Let's pray

Heavenly Father,We come to you lost, injured, tired and weak. We are lost in sin. We are injured by own failing. We are tired in this fallen world. We are weak in our faith and weak in our trust in you. Forgive us, LORD. Restore us. Bind us up in you love. May we know you, as the good shepherd, who searches for His people, gathers them to himself, and tends for them with kindness and blessing. May we rest in your forgiveness. May we rest in your goodness. May we rest in your sovereign hand.

In Christ's name we pray.Amen

Song – Almighty Maker https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ytCHkA-V3Y

1. Who but the Lord

set the bound'ries of lightHung the stars in the night?Who but the Lord

drew the face on the moon Made the planets to move?Who but the Lord

tells the clouds when to pour Thunder to roar? Amazing are Your works

Chorus:

Almighty MakerYou command heaven and earthBy the power of Your WordBe praised foreverAlmighty MakerAll creation sings of YouGlory fills all that You doBe praised forever, ever, evermore

1. Who but the Lord

could have dreamed of the plan

That would save fallen man?

Who but the Lord

washes rebels with blood

Making mercy a flood?

Who but the Lord

could give life through a cross

Rescuing us?

Amazing are Your ways

Chorus

Bridge: All things are from You

All things are through You

O God, the great I AM

All things are for You

All things are to You

O God, the great I AM

Chorus

Bible Reading –Romans 11:1-24(NIV)

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of braham, from the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? 4 And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. 7 What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened,8 as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day." 9 And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. 10 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."11 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. 12 But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring! 13 I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry 14 in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. 15 For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? 16 If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. 23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

Announcements

Focus for the month: God's word. This week why don't you read Psalm 119, in its entirety! It is all about the writers love for God's word. As you read it ask that you might have the same love, the same passion, the same desire to be in God's word and allow God's word to be in you.

Vanuatu Mission. Would you like a cross-cultural experience of mission? A chance to see how the gospel works in another country? Well, our January mission to Vanuatu might just be for you. For two weeks each year we take a small team over where we connect with two churches during some physical work, some kids and youth ministries, while building relationships between brothers and sisters in Christ. All in a safe and supportive environment. For more information speak to either Stephen or Cheryl by the end of October.

Help for our morning service. It is good to be a part of our weekly service, it is even better to be part of the team that puts together our weekly service! We are currently looking for new helpers for both the mixing desk, the computer operation during Church services, musicians, singers and kids talker. Also we need help for someone to print out our weekly Church bulletin, a task that takes between 60-75 minutes each Friday or Saturday. If you would like to know more please see Stephen or one of the elders.

Next preaching programme – Swansea/Charlestown AM.

Romans 9-16 "In view of God's mercy."

25/10Romans 11God’s great mission

1/11Romans 12:1-8Your (whole) self!

8/11Romans 12:9-21Overcoming evil with good

Resource. Every year Hunter Gospel Ministries runs a Bible teaching workshop for both men and women Bible teachers. The aim is to get to grips with a book of the Bible, think through its theology and big issues and get an idea of how to teach it to their church or small group. This year the book is Isaiah and it will run by Kirk Patston from SMBC (and a previous minister of this Church!) It will be on Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th November at Grace Evangelical. See Stephen for more details.

Church Administrator. The bulk of our administration has gone back to Stephen but he is committed to responding in a timely manner. Please keep sending your questions and requests to the admin@cpres.org email – what you have to say is extremely important to us.

Big Topics. We are hoping to provide a chance to get together and discuss some big topics. These will not be seminars but round table discussions where those who are interested will read (or watch) something in preparation, before meeting up to pool ideas. The first of these topics will be AI and Us and will be held at the Charlestown Church from 11:45-12:45 on Sunday 25th October. There will be some pre-reading to help stimulate this discussion so if you are interested in this please contact Stephen.

Operation Christmas Child. It’s time to bring you boxes back in, for today is the last day. If you have any questions, please speak to either Kathryn O’Callaghan or Grace Baker.

Save the Date: Christmas & Clay – Saturday 21 November, 2–4pm. Ladies, join us for afternoon tea, an evangelistic talk on the hope of Jesus' birth from guest speaker Jenny Martin, and clay ornament making. Who could you invite?

Meal Co-ordinator We are looking for someone who could co-ordinate (not always cook) meals for those whose circumstances have changed and need some practical short-term help. If you would like some more details, please see Elise.

Bulletin Printing Marilyn has printed the Sunday bulletin without any fuss for the last few years and we really appreciate her faithful service. Her circumstances have changed and she is unable to do this vital task. If you have a spare 60-90 minutes on a Friday or Saturday could you please see Stephen or Marilyn.

Song – Standing on the Promises

Christian Gospel Choir - Standing OnThe Promises [with lyrics] - YouTube

1. Standing on the promises of Christ my King,3. Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,Through eternal ages let His praises ring,Bound to Him eternally by love’s strong cord,Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,Overcoming daily with the Spirit’s sword,Standing on the promises of God.Standing on the promises of God.

Chorus*Standing, standing,Standing on the promises of God my Savior;Standing, standing,I'm standing on the promises of God.*

1. Standing on the promises that cannot fail,4. Standing on the promises I cannot fall,When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,Listening every moment to the Spirit's callBy the living Word of God I shall prevail,Resting in my Savior as my all in all,Standing on the promises of God.Standing on the promises of God.

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for Turkmenistan. (Population 6.7million. Christians 95,000). There is no freedom of religion and Christians are closely monitored. Pray for unity among God's people in Turkmenistan. Ask that God breaks down walls and that the love of believers will be on display. Many church leaders are heavily monitored by the totalitarian regime. Ask God to give them safety and courage. Muslims who decide to follow Jesus in Turkmenistan may face rejection. Pray for healing and hope.

Pray for Operation Christmas Child. Give thanks to God for everyone involved in Operation Christmas Child, and for the opportunity to share his love with children around the world through these simple gifts. Pray that each shoebox opens doors for the gospel, that children and their families will hear about the Lord Jesus, trust in him, and discover the lasting joy of salvation. Ask God to strengthen local churches and ministry partners as they distribute the gifts, follow up with children and families, and help many grow in their knowledge of Christ.

Pray for the US midterm elections. Pray that the midterm elections in America will be conducted peacefully, fairly and transparently, with voters able to participate freely and confidently. Ask God to grant wisdom, integrity and humility to candidates, political leaders and voters, so that decisions will be made for the good of the nation and the wellbeing of its people. Pray that the elections will not deepen division and hostility, but that Americans will treat one another with respect across political differences, and that Christians will demonstrate grace, truth and love while placing their ultimate hope in God rather than political leaders.

Pray for our young people, that they would be taught and modelled God's word at both home and in Church. Pray that they might starting putting their faith in Jesus at a very young age and that faith will only grow as they get older. Pray for our SPARKLERS, kids Church and IMPACT leaders that they will provide flesh and blood examples of what being a Christian really looks like.

Bible Reading – Romans 11:25-36 (NIV)

25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited:

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, 26 and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. 27 And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." 28 As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, 29 for God's gifts & his call are irrevocable. 30 Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God

have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, 31 so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. 32 For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" 36 For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Sermon:God's great mission(Stephen T)

Earlier this year, during the Christ College mission many of us got to hear Zane Ceeney's testimony. Zane grew up in Singleton. He had heard about Jesus from his aunt as he was growing up, but he was interested in far more exciting things, so he rejected it. But then, in his early thirties, Zane ended up in prison. In fact, he was in solitary confinement for two and a half months. He had very little to do, so out of absolute boredom, he picked up his Gideon New Testament. And started reading it. And something changed.

Reading John's Gospel, he began to understand Jesus differently. He came to see the love of God displayed in the death of Christ, and in that prison cell he came to trust Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. And then his life began to change. He started attending church, was discipled, developed a deep desire to study the Bible, and eventually moved to Sydney to study at Christ College. He is now in his last year of study preparing for full-time ministry in Newy.

Imagine looking at Zane alone in his solitary confinement. You might think, 'I can't see how anything good can possibly come out of this.' But God sees what we can't see. For Zane, a prison cell became the place where God brought him to himself and through Zane, he is already bringing others to himself as well.

Slide 2

That is very close to the theme of Romans 11: **God is working through the apparently failure of Israel's rejection in order to bring the whole world, Jew and Gentile back to Himself. He was working in Paul's time and he is doing exactly the same thing in our time. If only we could see what is at the heart of God's great mission. For it begins with the fact**

Slide 3

1. **That God's preserves… a remnant. (Verses 1-10)**

"I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means!" Romans 9 & 10 has already told us that Israel on the whole has rejected their God. So, will God give tit for tat and reject Israel in return? Will he give them back what they obviously deserve? No way, Jose! He keeps his promises for within Israel; there is always been a faithful remnant; & exhibit A is Paul himself

“I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.” Paul says I am living proof that despite my past as a blasphemer and a persecutor of the Church, God still chose me to be a part of the faithful remnant from his special people. So, if God can choose someone with that much blood on his hands, he can choose anyone. Now Paul stops there but he need not have. Because he is not alone, in fact most of the first generation of Christians were also Jews.

Slide 4

Paul then follows this up with the election argument. God foreknew what the Jews would do. You see when God chose Abraham and his descendants, God knew there would be a history of unfaithfulness, even that they would reject their Messiah, Jesus. So, what has happened in the 1st century didn’t take God by surprise, he knew exactly what he was doing.

Slide 5

“Don’t you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: 3 “Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”? 4 And what was God’s answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”

Even in that time of apostasy, when it seemed like it was game over for Israel, God’s purposes had not been defeated. Elijah thought it was just him. And he was about to be killed by the evil king Ahab. But God didn’t want to join Elijah’s pity party. For the remnant of true Jews was bigger than Elijah thought. In fact, it was 7,000 strong. Elijah could only see what was happening around him. God could see what Elijah couldn't see. There were still Jewish believers throughout the country who had been chosen by grace.

Slide 6

5 “So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.” The people of God have always been defined by **grace not by race**. And grace is stronger than sin. Stronger than rejection. Stronger than anything we humans can throw against it. And that grace is so powerful that it leaks, it overflows, not just to the Jew but onto the Gentile.

Slide 7

7 “What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, 8 as it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see & ears that could not hear, to this very day.” 9 And David says: “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. 10 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.”

You see when the vast majority of the Israelites reject their God, he gives them the punishment they deserve. And one of the ways God punishes them is that he calcifies their rejection, he hardens their hearts. They have already hardened their own hearts, so they can’t blame God for any of this but God leaves them in that drunken state. He doesn’t apply the power of grace to their lives. Hardening then is a fitting punishment for a proud spirit.

Slide 8

Charles Spurgeon famously said: “The same sun that melts wax hardens clay.” The same sun shines on both. But the response is different. And there is something similar happening with the gospel. The same gospel of grace is proclaimed to all people, both Jews and Gentiles. Some hear it and trust Christ. Others hear it and harden themselves against him. But the fact that many reject the gospel doesn't mean God has failed for **God is preserving his people**.

Slide 9

Friends, just like Elijah we sometimes look at Australia & think: “Christianity is in real trouble. The Church is finished.” But at those times we need to remember Elijah. He thought he was alone but God said to him “I still have 7,000 followers” We just don't know what God is doing beneath the surface. We don't know who God is calling or preserving.

Slide 10

You might think about it this way. If you break an egg into a pan, it is made up of two parts. A yoke and a white. Paul is saying that even if the majority of Israel looks white, he still has a remnant who are the yoke. Actually, he will now go on to tell us that the chef, God, is actually cooking up a double yoker – a Church of both Jews and Gentiles. For God preserves

Slide 11

1. **And secondly, God grafts in … THE GENTILES (verses 11-24)**

*11 “Again, I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has **come to the Gentiles** to make **Israel envious**. 12 But if their transgression means riches for the world & their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!”*

Slide 12

So, is that game over for the Jews? Are they in a bottomless pit with no chance of ever getting back to the surface? No. Not at all! For the rejection of the Jews wasn’t total, God still has kept for himself a remnant and the rejection of the Jews is not final either. There is more to the story. For there is power in the overflow of God’s grace. And both the Jews and the Gentiles are dependent **upon each other** for their salvation.

Slide 13

You see God’s people are like an olive tree. In the OT the emphasis is on Israel. Remember Abraham, the father of the Jewish people was chosen out of all the people of the world and he was blessed to be a blessing. He was chosen to be a light to the world but with Abraham’s descendants, Israel, hardening their hearts to the things of God, God grace has overflowed to the Gentiles. Israel’s loss then is the Gentiles gain. The Gentiles are like a wild olive branch that has been grafted onto the vine where the Jewish branches had been broken off.

We see an example of that in the book of Acts, don’t we? Paul would go from place to place and where would he preach first up? In the synagogue to the Jews. And time and time again, in Antioch, in Corinth, in Ephesus

and then after this letter, again in Rome, the Jews reject the gospel. And so, Paul then changes his tact and preaches the good news to the Gentiles. And many of them see the wonder of grace and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Slide 14

From now on the Gentiles will take centre stage, until a point where they have reached their fullness. That will make Israel jealous, for the Gentiles are enjoying all the blessings that were promised them through Abraham & through the OT promises. That grace was meant for us, for me & when that happens this overflow of grace will return back to the Jews. You see grace is never given to anyone, or any one group, purely for their own benefit. It was given to Israel to share with the Gentiles & it was given to the Gentiles to share back to Israel

But it seems a bit strange that the envy of the Jews, the jealousy that the Israelites feel, would bring such a change. How can a bad thing, jealousy, produce such a good result? Because sometimes jealousy can be for a good thing, we can be so envious of something that someone else has, it can make us also want to have such a good thing.

Slide 15

There is a wonderful modern illustration of this. Randi Mitchell had a husband and three teenage sons who were trail runners. She watched them go running together. They would come home muddy, exhausted and smiling. They were clearly enjoying something together.And eventually she said: “I started running because I was jealous.” She didn't want them to stop running. She wasn't jealous because she wanted to take their enjoyment away. She was jealous because she wanted to be part of what they had found. Their enjoyment made her want to experience it herself.

That's something like what Paul is describing. The Gentiles have received the blessings promised in Israel's Scriptures. They had found forgiveness, reconciliation with God, the Holy Spirit, they were now part of God’s people. And Paul hopes that the Jewish people will look at Gentile Christians and think: “Those are the blessings **God promised us.”** “Ah, that's what our Scriptures must have been pointing towards.” “We want that too for ourselves.”

For friends grace should be deeply attractive. What we do week by week should be attractive to the Jews in our community and to the non-Christians. They should see the fruits of the spirit in us, they should see our faith, hope and love and say “I want a slice of what she is having, I want an injection of what they are on!” Then the grace we have received should overflow to those around us who need that grace.

Slide 16

But that should put give us a big take home as well. *17 “If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.”*

Surely those who have been saved by grace should be humble and definitely not feel superior to others. This vine was not ours by nature but by grace. Our salvation is not all about us and how good we are but its about how good the root structure is that allows the life-giving sap to pump through our veins and still produce the fruit that God requires in us.

Slide 17

19 "You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith." We need to keep walking by faith. Remain in God's grace. Don't be a Jew as we saw in Romans 10 and 11 who tried to earn their salvation. That's the surest way to feel the gardeners pruning shears.

"Do not be arrogant, but tremble. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. 22 Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness."

Slide 18

We are only in God's family because of God's mercy. Don't take that for granted. And don't keep it just to yourself. Instead, regularly reflect on the kindness and sternness of God. Kindness to those who put their trust in God, people like us and sternness to those who harden their hearts, people we once were and don't want to be again.

Slide 19

"Otherwise, you also will be cut off. 23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree"

Slide 20

Friends, that has an important implication for us in relation to modern day Israel and modern-day Jews. We should have a special part in our heart for the Jewish people. Not necessarily the Jewish state, for on the whole, the stet of Israel has rejected the Lord. So, when they are involved in injustice we need to call them out like any other nation, including the ways that the surrounding nations have unfairly targeted the Jews.

But we should be respectful of the Jewish people and not be involved in anti-Semitism, after all we have a Jewish Bible and a Jewish Messiah. As well as that we should also be involved in some way in Jewish evangelism. For we want the overflow of grace given to us to flow back to them.

Slide 21

1. **God preserves, God grafts & thirdly God bring together Jews & Gentiles (v. 25-32)**

That's the mystery that Paul wants to bring out into the open. *25 "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, 26 and in this way* ***all Israel will be saved****."*

The hardening (in part) is not total and it's not final because one day, when the full number of Gentiles have been saved, God's grace will flow back to Israel. And get this. ***"All Israel will be saved."***That's a big call by God there. A massive reversal of their current fortunes. So, let's take this phrase word by word to work out exactly what it means.

Israel. Does that mean, the Jews or just the true Jews? The people who live in the land or Israel, the faithful remnant of people that live in the land of Israel or maybe the Church that stands currently in the place of the OT people of Israel? As you can imagine there are a lot of good people who disagree on this. But for the whole chapter Paul has been talking about the actual Jewish people and I think that is the natural meaning of that word.

But here comes the really hard part. **"All** Israel will be saved." Does that mean every single one without exception or a vast majority of those who are from the nation of Israel will be saved? Once again if we follow Paul's logic it seems that this means there will be a great mass of Jewish people, some of whom had previously hardened their hearts and some of whom were in the remnant, the believing minority, that will come back to faith in God. Not every single one, but it will look like a wave of new believers coming God's way.

"All Israel will **be saved**." The promised deliver Jesus will come to them. Take away their sins by his death on the cross. Offer them his grace and they will respond to it with faith. There is only one way to be saved, Paul has said in the book of Romans and that is to respond to God's grace by having faith in Jesus Christ. The hope of the patriarchs, the election that was promised by God, the mercy and grace that once flowed to the Gentiles, flows back to this mass of Jewish people. In the final days God will bring together the Jews & the Gentiles.

Slide 22

What a wonderful picture that is? The mustard seed that once looks so small has become a tree where the people of the world can all shelter under it. The olive vine which represents God's people includes natural branches, the Jews and wild olive branches, the Gentiles. There are not two trees here but one. And that tree, that vine, is fruitful. Extremely fruitful. For the life-giving sap that comes from Jesus himself give all of us life and vitality.

Slide 23

Friends can you imagine that last day? People of every nation. People of every background. People of every age group coming together as one. All saved by grace. All dependent upon God's mercy. All with faith in Jesus. It didn't look like it would ever, ever happen. You look around us today and it looks like God's kingdom is on the

retreat. But it's not. Its advancing. There's life. There's growth and it's all because of the gardener. Which is why lastly

Slide 24

1. **God receives … the GLORY as the GARDENER. (verses 33-36)**

33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments & his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them" 36 For from him & through him & for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

It is like after 11 chapters of explaining the gospel to his Roman audience, Paul stops because he is completely out of breath. He has hiked to the top of the summit and he is overcome with the view before him. Salvation is all of God's idea so he should get the glory. Salvation is all about grace so he should get the praise. Salvation is for the whole world so everyone should be singing and shouting for joy at this point.

Slide 25

Salvation is not really about us but about the gardener. Not the branches, not the tree itself but the one who planted it, pruned it, fed it and gave it growth, the gardener. For from him, for he is the source of all of this, and through him because he is the sustainer of all of this and to him, for he is the goal of all this, are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

God wants to set you on fire with wonder and gratitude and worship at what He purposes to do, what He will surely accomplish, and how He will use even you and me to get it done. So, friends, marvel at the masterplan and get up and go to the world and bring the nations with us into the joy of everlasting praise. May God make it so. But also remember this truth.

Slide 26

As John Piper once wrote "*Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church, worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity, but worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of mission.*" Which means yes let's go out and be involved in mission. But remember that the goal of mission is worship and so lets always make time to give God the glory, praise and honour he deserves.

Slide 27

Imagine walking into a nursery looking for an olive tree. The nursery owner takes you over to one in the corner. It doesn't look like much. There are some branches that have been cut off, and another branch has been grafted in. It looks a little strange and unfinished. You think, *"I'm not sure I'd buy that. I'm not even sure I'd buy into that."* And then the nursery owner says, **"Let me show you one I prepared earlier."** He takes you around the back and there it is: a magnificent, mature olive tree—beautiful, flourishing, full of branches and fruit. You

look at it and suddenly you understand what the gardener was doing. You don't need any more convincing. You nod your head and say, **“Yes. That's exactly what I want.”**

That's something like the perspective Paul gives us in Romans 11. Right now, we don't see the finished picture. We see branches cut off, wild branches grafted in, Israel's unbelief, Gentiles being brought in, and God's purposes unfolding in ways we don't fully understand. But Paul knows there is a Gardener who sees the finished tree.

Slide 28

One day we will see the fullness of what God has been doing, and we will understand why Paul finishes this chapter not with an explanation but with worship: **“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!... For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”** We may not always understand the Gardener's work—we may not always understand the gardener’s ways or mind but we can trust the Gardener. And when we finally see the finished tree in all its glory, we will look at what God has done and say, **“Yes, Lord. That's exactly what you were doing. Praise God!”**

Song – Facing a Task Unfinished https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOpt_bulJxY

1. Facing a task unfinished3. We bear the torch that flamingThat drives us to our kneesFell from the hands of thoseA need that undiminishedWho gave their lives proclaimingRebukes our slothful easeThat Jesus died and rose

We, who rejoice to know TheeOurs is the same commissionRenew before Thy throneThe same glad message oursThe solemn pledge we owe TheeFired by the same ambitionTo go and make Thee knownTo Thee we yield our powers

1. Where other Lords beside Thee4. O Father who sustained themHold their unhindered swayO Spirit who inspiredWhere forces that defied TheeSaviour, whose love constrained themDefy Thee still todayTo toil with zeal untired

With none to heed their cryingFrom cowardice defend usFor life and love and lightFrom lethargy awake!Unnumbered souls are dyingForth on Thine errands send usAnd pass into the nightTo labour for Thy sake

Chorus: We go to all the worldWith kingdom hope unfurledNo other name has power to saveBut Jesus Christ The Lord

Closing. **"***Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!... For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen"*(Romans 11:33 & 36)