

Intro before Bible Reading:

For the month of October and probably November too Pastor Michael and I are going to be preaching on themes of the Protestant Reformation. 500 years ago this month, Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the church door in Germany. He wanted to start a dialogue within the Roman Catholic Church about indulgences. The church was selling those to people in order to give them assurance of salvation. That is often considered the start of the Reformation. So we're celebrating 500 years of God's goodness to the church when he helped us get back on track, you might say. We got our doctrine from the Bible once again and that's what we hope to continue to do until the Lord returns.

If you've been around reformed churches for a while, you may be familiar with the five Solas of the Reformation. Sola is a Latin word that means only or alone. And the Reformation highlighted 5 pillars of our faith which we'll look at over the coming weeks in the morning worship services. Today we'll start with the one that is often put last in the list but they don't have to be in any particular order. Really, the Glory of God Alone is the overarching doctrine.

We're going to read from the end of Romans 11. And you won't understand the power in those words unless you understand everything that Paul has written beforehand. The words of our text today are really the only fitting response for the Christian once we realize how wonderfully and completely we are saved in Christ Jesus.

I was almost driven to tears recently when someone asked me about the assurance of forgiveness for sins. I assured this person that Christ has covered all of our sins, regardless how big we think they are. We confess our sin to him and we are forgiven—fully and freely. I helped this person pray a prayer of forgiveness and the moment we were done, the person shouted out, "Oh, I feel so good. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord Jesus!"

And that's the sort of response to God's forgiveness and grace that we find here in Romans 11. Paul has spent several chapters talking about our sinfulness and our condemnation under sin. Then he gets to grace and writes several chapters about how Christ has paid the debt of our sin and taken away our condemnation. Romans 8 is a highlight that begins with those words, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" And ends with the comfort that nothing can "separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Then Paul talks about God's sovereignty in bringing people to salvation, his pursuing and persistent love for rebellious people. Paul is pretty much just basking in God's amazing love. That's when he breaks out into the words of our text today, entitled *Doxology* in the NIV.

So now listen as we read from Romans 11. Please open your Bibles and follow along with me from there if you can. And maybe we could start a new tradition at Trinity which is along tradition in many churches. When the reading is done and the pastor says, "This is the Word of the Lord," let us all respond by

saying, “Thanks be to God.” Some of you say it quietly already because you know that tradition. But lets see if we can make that a congregational response. One practice run: The Word of the Lord.... Thanks be to God!

Soli Deo Gloria—Glory to God Alone
Trinity CRC, October 8, 2017 AM
Series: *Five Solas* (with Pastor Michael)

Romans 11vv.33-36
Rev. Richard deLange

Dear family of God,

What is the glory of God? We hear it all the time. It’s Christianese. It’s something Christians say quite often. To God be the glory. Let the Lord be glorified. If it brings glory to God. We say things like that but I’m not positive that all Christians even know what it means. I find it helpful myself to just stop and think about it again.

What does it mean to say, “Glory to God Alone!”?

God Gets the Credit

For starters, glory to God alone is another way of saying that God gets all the credit for salvation.

I didn’t watch the Oilers season opener the other night. But some might say it was a glorious game. They mean that the Oilers ruled the Flames and came out victorious. People say that it is, in no small part, because Captain McDavid had a hatrick. Connor gets the glory! He gets the credit. Others might say that Todd McClellan gets the credit because he’s the coach. Still others might point to McDavid’s parents. Others to his line-mates who feed Connor good passes. And some might even give credit to Calgary for being so lousy that McDavid could just skate circles around them.

All of those things could be factors. But we could take this to a higher level and say that Someone created Connor with the skill he has. Someone created his parents and team mates and the coach. And that someone is God. So God gets the glory. Yes, Connor is good and Connor has had to hone the gifts he was born with. But God made him so God gets the ultimately glory. The credit.

A different debate about glory was happening in the middle ages, in the years before Martin Luther came on the scene and the Protestant Reformation took root in Europe. It eventually led the Roman Catholic Church to its own reformation. But this debate was about the glory of God in salvation. Prior to Luther and other reformers, the church, we could say, was robbing God of his glory.

Calvin Seminary’s Professor Matthew Tuininga writes, “For example, the church encouraged believers to pray to saints rather than directly to God in time of need. It called them to seek salvation through acts of penitence, pilgrimage, or patronage, or through participation in the sacraments of the church, rather than by trusting in the cross of Christ. And it insisted that sinners could prepare themselves

to receive God's grace and had to cooperate with that grace if it were to be effective in their lives. On top of all that, the Roman church claimed for the papacy and the church hierarchy a glory that should have been reserved for Christ himself. The net effect of all of this was to rob God of the sole credit and glory for salvation. It was to distract human beings from the God on whom we depend for every good thing." (Forum, Spring 2017, p.12)

You see, friends, it's so easy for us human beings to insert a little of ourselves into the things where God alone should be getting credit. And granted there is a response to the gifts of salvation that involves us but even that is a gift of God, which will be discussed in other sermons. When it comes to our salvation, God supplies everything and we receive it as a gift. And a gift is free. It is undeserved, unmerited and usually a surprise!

You can only imagine what a surprise it was for Martin Luther. This guy had been trying so hard to live by the code of salvation that the church had given to him. He was praying more than anyone else ever did. Probably. Up to six hours a day in the confession booth trying to clear his sins one by one. He punished himself by laying in the snow for hours and hours as a sign of his repentance and sorrow for sin. He climbed the stairs of the church on his knees over and over again. This guy was beating himself into heaven, you might say. And it's not that he was a nut-job. He was so devoted and concerned about getting to heaven that he did everything the church said and then some. But nothing gave him ultimate assurance of forgiveness. Nothing he did could satisfy his guilty soul.

The Apostle Paul had a spiritual journey somewhat similar to Luther's. He came from a life of thinking he was in God's good books because he was such a great disciple of God, a great keeper of the law of God. But when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus in a bright light that knocked him off his horse, Paul began to see that his best efforts and greatest obedience was only as filthy rags in the sight of God. And nothing we do can make us right with God.

But thanks be to God, he sent his Son to be our Saviour, our substitute, our payment for our sin. Complete payment so that there is nothing more for us to do. And nothing left for us to do, except to give glory and praise to God as Paul does in Romans 11:36 when he writes,

*Rom 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Church, the Reformation went back to making our triune God the sole object of our worship—the One to whom we give glory for our full salvation! We have nothing to add to it. That's why the Heidelberg Catechism instructs us that our Lord requires our exclusive worship and that we are to "avoid and shun all idolatry, magic, superstitious rites or prayers to saints or other creatures" (Q&A 94). Why? Because nothing but Christ alone satisfies the debt of our sin. Nothing but Christ alone gives us access by prayer to the throne room of God Almighty. Nothing but Christ alone through sacraments and his Word draws us closer to God. Therefore God alone deserves the glory. There's nothing we can add to Christ's gift that makes us worthy of salvation. It's God's good and free gift to us. He gets all the glory!!

God Gets Our Life

Along with God getting the credit for our salvation, giving God alone the glory means giving God our life! When we live as we were created and redeemed to live, then God gets to call the shots for our life. He gets our life! That's why the Apostle Paul says in v.35:

Rom 11:35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"

And the answer is no one has ever given anything to God that could pay for our sins. No one can ever repay Christ for dying in our place. It can't be done. Never. No how!

We will always be indebted to God for our salvation. NT Wright once wrote, "It is a perpetual human failing to imagine that... we can establish a claim on God [and salvation] either by our birth, our beauty, our brains or our behaviour.... we can't. Nobody is ever in the position of giving God a gift which demands repayment while they sit back smugly, knowing they are in the right and waiting for God to get his act together." (*Paul for Everyone, Romans Part 2*)

All we can do when we know and have this free gift of salvation is give God our life. All we can do is say, "Take my life and let it be consecrated all to Thee!" And then try to live that way.

You see, the words of Romans 11:35 are probably a quote from Job in chapter 41:11 where God speaks to Job about his sovereignty over creation and each of our lives, including our salvation. He says,

*Job 41:11 "Who has a claim against me that I must pay?
Everything under heaven belongs to me."*

We need to get our bearings right. We live in an age when people are told to seek their own interests and find their own happiness and fulfillment in whatever form that takes. From childhood on, many of us seek to be the centre of the world. We want everyone to jump when we say "jump." But that's nonsense for those of us who claim to follow Christ. Everything under heaven—that includes you and me—belongs to God and ought to serve his purposes. It ought to have the desire to bring glory to him. That's what we confess as Reformed Christians in particular. But it's true for everyone. We were created to glorify God and we do that in every part of our life. And that's not because God is in any way like the recently deceased Hugh Hefner who lived for selfish ambitions and got his thrills at the expense of anyone else, especially beautiful woman. No, our life finds it's greatest joy when we live in relationship to the One who created us. When we live the way he designed us to live—in fellowship with him and in loving service to our neighbour. We put to death the sinful desires of our heart and focus on what honours our Lord Jesus. That's how we enjoy life the most. Then we find the greatest and truest satisfaction in life. This is how we glorify God.

And it looks different for all of us. We can go out like our young people and get to know and share life with those on the street so that we recognize that these people are also image bearers of God and worthy of dignity and love. We can do it by biking across the country to help alleviate poverty in our world. Similarly, we can

do it by helping out the Mosaic Centre. But we can do it at work by doing our best to reflect how God does all things well. We need to be aware that Christ's glory is in us and we reflect his glory. We are so incredibly blessed by our God and he's living in us and through us, for all to catch a glimpse of God's glory as we offer our life to him.

The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism used in Presbyterian churches begins, "What is the chief purpose or end of mankind?" And the short but powerful answer is: "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." In other words, when we make the aim of our life to glorify God, then we will also be able to enjoy him forever and enjoy life to the fullest, which Jesus redeemed us to enjoy. When we make the goal of our life, as our Cadets sing, "living for Jesus a life that is true, striving to please him in all that I do" then we are on the pathway of blessings. Then we're on the road where we find the greatest enjoyment in life. We're on the road where our life says, "Thank you, Lord, for all you've done for me! I just want my days to show that I'm living for you. I dedicate my life to you alone!"

And that's Paul's point in saying that in Christ "we live and move and have our being." We'd be nothing without him. So we give our whole life to him! And he gets the glory—the credit, the praise, the honour—for all the good that we do. We give it to him because we know that we'd be nothing without him. That's because our Lord Jesus has saved us so completely and wonderfully. To God alone be the glory.

Morning Worship

October 8, 2017 10:00 AM

Notes: * indicates please stand if you are able

LUYH#s???

BRINGING PRAISE TO THE LORD

Welcome & Announcements

We Greet One Another

* Gathering Song: *Revelation Song*

* Opening Prayer

Pastor Michael

* Call to Worship

* God's Greeting

* Song: *You're Worthy of My Praise*

CELEBRATING MISSION

The Youth Group at Mustard Seed

Sea to Sea cycling for poverty

* Song: *Hosanna* (we pray for God to give us a heart for what is on his heart.)

RECEIVING THE WORD OF GOD

Children's Message

Harmel Potvin

Ages 3 to Grade 4 dismissed for Wee Worship

Prayer for the Word

Pastor Rich

Bible Reading: Romans 11:33-36

Sermon: ***Soli Deo Gloria – Glory to God Alone***

* Song of Response: *Sola*

REDEDICATING OUR LIVES TO GOD

Prayer of Confession

Words of Assurance from God

God's Will for Our Lives

* Song: *Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)*

BRINGING PRAYERS AND OFFERINGS TO GOD

Congregational Prayer

Pastor Michael

Tithes and Offerings:

1. God's Work through Trinity CRC

2. Hope Mission

Offertory: *Youth @ Mustard Seed* video

GOING OUT WITH NEW HOPE

* God's Parting Blessing

* Song: *Because of You*