

Someone Else's Party
Small Group Discussion
Romans 11:11-32

Intro questions

- This week's sermon and small group discussion deal with the implications of "The Big Story" on the relationship between Jews and Christians. Do you have relationships with any Jewish people? If so, describe the nature of those relationships. (If you yourself are Jewish, how have you found your way here to a church and a small group?)
1. Read Romans 11:1-6. Then discuss the following.
 - a. What was the over-arching question that Paul was asking? Why did it matter for his audience? Why does this question matter for us?
 2. Read Romans 11:11-14. Then discuss the following.
 - a. We know from God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, as well as in multiple other Old Testament references, that God has been planning all along to invite Gentiles (non-Jewish peoples) into his kingdom through Christ. But at the present moment, what does Paul say is God's purpose in opening his kingdom to Gentiles? (See especially v. 11b and v. 14).
 - b. How can envy be a good motivation?
 - c. Have you ever had anyone say that there is something winsome or contagious about your life with God, that made them want what you have?
 - d. Do you feel equipped to answer when someone says, "What's different about you? How can I have what you have?"
 - e. According to v. 12, what will be the end result of Jews and Gentiles being in God's kingdom together?
 - f. **Pastor Josh said that God has been moving history toward an inclusive vision:** in other words, God temporarily allowed the Jewish rejection of Jesus so that both Gentiles and Jews could ultimately enjoy his salvation *together*. How is there a greater richness to be found in sharing life in God's kingdom with people of very different backgrounds?
 3. Read Romans 11:17-21, then discuss.
 - a. What tendency is Paul addressing, that could be an issue for Gentile Christians? (See especially v. 18a and 20b). Is this a struggle for you (feelings of superiority, even based on your trust in God—relative to Jews or other people?)
 - b. Paul uses a horticultural analogy. Flesh this out—especially if someone in your group has a green thumb. What's the point of the metaphor?

- c. **Pastor Josh said that humility will be our hallmark when we see our (Gentiles') place in God's inclusive vision.** This claim comes from two reasons that Paul gives, as follow.
- i. *Because we are utterly dependent on our Jewish roots.* From what you know of the Big Story of the Bible, give some examples of how this is true.
 - ii. How do you feel about the assertion that you are dependent on Jewish roots?
 - iii. Secondly, *we only stand by grace, through faith.* How does this fact affect your view of Jewish people or others who have not embraced Jesus?
- d. Have you ever experienced anti-Semitism personally? Have you ever been one to perpetuate anti-Semitism? What do Paul's words have to say about this?
- e. What does it mean to "continue in [God's] kindness?" How can we do this in daily practice? How would this affect our relationships with Jewish people or others?
4. Read Romans 11: 25-32, then discuss.
- a. What does Paul say will happen with Jewish people in the future? (v. 26) What are the possible ways to interpret this? What would Paul's words in Galatians 2:21 imply for these interpretations?
 - b. Pastor Josh said, "I take this to mean that there will be a future season when the majority of living Jews will recognize and receive Jesus as their Messiah." How do you feel about this event? What would it look like for this to happen in our day?
 - c. How are we to interpret the difficult words in v. 32? (Pastor Josh said, "God has allowed us to wallow in our disbelief until we recognize how desperate we are for his grace.")
 - d. What motivation on God's part drives this entire historical process? (See the "so that..." of v. 32. In Josh's words, "**God's driving desire is to unleash his kindness on all peoples.**")
 - e. What might change in your life if you were to **let the kindness of God flood your life and mark your interactions?**
 - f. If you have relationships with Jewish people, what might these principles mean for those relationships and your future interactions? What are some practical steps you can take in response?

Prayer

- If you are in relationships with people who God might be drawing to himself, partially through your influence, pray for them by name.
- Share your needs with one another and spend some time praying for them.