

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 10, 2017
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Romans 11:33-36 (NIV)

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 counselor?" 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.

Dear Friends in Christ:

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to second-guess someone? We watch a sporting event and the coach's strategy doesn't work as planned and we wonder, "Why in the world did he do that?" Then we come up with our own suggestions. If it would have been up to me, I would have done this we say. It's easy to think that we're experts even though we're not aware of all of the situations that lead the coach to make the choices he made. And it's not just coaches and athletes that we second guess. We second guess government officials, management at work, principals and teachers in the schools, leaders in the church – and sometimes people even foolishly second guess God.

People try to second-guess him about whom and how he saves, about what he decides, how he acts, how he chastises, when and how much he blesses. Such second-guessing results in setting ourselves up in God's place. It's evidence of the fact that we are no longer fearing, loving and trusting in God above all things. These are sins against the first commandment. Often in our rebellion against God we break other commandments as well.

We need the reminders about God which are found in our text for today so that instead of second-guessing God we will out of grateful love for our Savior thank and praise him and marvel at his wisdom and love as we glorify him in faith.

As we see in our text:

Theme: There's No Reason to Second Guess God

1. He's wiser than we are
2. His ways are unsearchable
3. His blessings are plentiful

We're not the first generation to question God and his wisdom. These challenges go all the way back to the garden of Eden. But perhaps one of God's most striking responses to these challenges is found in the book of Job. Beginning in Job 38 the Lord questions Job. His questions humbled Job and they will do the same for us whenever we tempted to second guess God. Here's some examples: **Where were you when I laid the earths foundation? Have you ever given orders to the morning or shown the dawn its place? What is the way to abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Do you know the path to their dwellings? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons? Do you send the lightening bolts on their way? Do they report to you, "Here we are"?**

The Lord's questions continued for 129 verses. Job's second-guessing was no more he replied: **"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. (3) You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. (4) "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' (5)**

My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. (6) Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job was humbled and in awe of God. (Job 42:2-6 NIV)

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Paul humbly expresses his awe of God with these words. In particular, he is impressed with the depth of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge. Notice how Paul overflows with enthusiasm when he thinks of God. He speaks of the depth of God's wisdom and knowledge. Instead of questioning what he can't understand, Paul adores God's wisdom and knowledge recognizing that no one has known the mind of the Lord or has served as his instructor.

Next Paul speaks of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. It impossible for us to see, measure, understand, or imagine the depths of God's wisdom. That's why we don't always appreciate the wealth or the treasures we have in his word. When Paul speaks of God's wisdom he's speaking of the facts and the thoughts that God has on his mind. God's knowledge is demonstrated by how he uses his intelligence to act.

God's knowledge, understanding and abilities are far superior to ours. The Lord speaks to us through the prophet Isaiah and says: (Isaiah 55:8-9) **"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. (9) "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

When we really stop to think about this, we realize just how important this is to us. What benefits, blessings, or help could we possibly receive from a God who is our equal or our inferior? We need a God who is superior to us in knowledge and ability especially when it comes to our salvation.

That's why we can rejoice with Paul who exclaimed: **How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!** When Paul speaks of God's judgments he has more in mind that just the punishments that God carries out on the disobedient and the unbelievers. An earthly judge doesn't just punish wrong doers. He also declares the that innocent individual is not guilty.

How can God declare anyone not guilty? There's no way you and I could come up with an answer to that question since we know that all are conceived and born in sin. Yet God found a way, didn't he? Paul tells us in (Romans 3:23-24 NIV) **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.** We are justified – declared or judged not guilty of our sins freely by the grace of God because of what Jesus did for us. Jesus redeemed us or set us free from the guilt of our sin by taking our punishment upon himself. We know these secret mysteries of God's thoughts only because he has revealed them to us.

Earlier we referred to questions that God asked Job – questions that humble us before God's wisdom. In our text, Paul also makes use of some of these same types of questions to demonstrate the folly of second-guessing or questioning God. His questions come from the books of Isaiah and Job.

"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" Can anyone read the mind of God? Of course not – even the angels don't know anything about what God's thoughts and plans are until he reveals his mind to them. In fact in his humiliation even Jesus declared: **"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."** (Mark 13:32 NIV)

Does God come to us seeking our advice? Of course not – he's the one who seeks us out through the Holy Spirit, calling us to faith and enlightening us to see and understand his gracious will and plans for our lives.

And even many of the things God reveals to us about himself are really beyond our understanding. I was explaining heaven to a friend who had not grown up as a Christian. I explained that there would be lots of people there. My friend understood what I said – but then a puzzled question came to mind. How will all those people fit in heaven? I had no logical answer – but I know what God has told us was the only response I could provide to the question. Who of us can fully comprehend heaven, eternity, or the Trinity, or the fact that Jesus is both true God and true man?

What makes us think that we could ever possibly be in a position to give God advice? There's no reason to second-guess God. His ways are unsearchable and his gifts are plentiful. Again Paul uses a question to help us focus on the wonderful gifts of God. **35) "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"**

No one has ever given to God first. God doesn't owe anyone anything. The blessings he gives us including our blessing of salvation are given out of his undeserved love. By nature, we have absolutely nothing to give him, we are totally powerless to serve him. And after he has called us to faith, our service to him merely reflects our love and gratitude for his gifts as the Apostle John reminds us: (1 John 4:19) **We love because he first loved us.**

Indeed it is impossible for us to give anything to God. **For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!**

God is the source and the creator of all things. He is the one who preserves us and the world through natural and supernatural means. All will be done according to his glory either willingly or unwillingly. All things belong to him who loved us, who redeemed us, who called us to faith and who promises to preserve us in the faith unto eternal life.

Sometimes when difficult times enter in our lives – we're tempted to second-guess God. We ask why did he let this happen to me? We've forgotten – at those times – that all that we have comes from him. The words of Job – **The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord** – put things back into perspective for us. There's never a reason to second-guess God. His blessings are plentiful. His compassions never fail, they are new every morning.

As we consider the wonderful wisdom of God who planned our salvation and his wonderful judgment of not guilty, together we with his plentiful gifts – we're humbled by his wisdom, his unsearchable ways and his plentiful gifts. There's no reason to second-guess God but we have every reason to thank and to praise him, to serve and obey him, to glorify him in faith and to marvel at his wisdom and love.

Open your hymnals to hymn 460. Together with the hymn-writer let us stand in awe of God's love, his ways and his gifts as we read the verses of the hymn: How Can I Thank You, Lord

How can I thank you, Lord, For all your loving-kindness,
That you have patiently Borne with me in my blindness!
When dead in many sins And trespasses I lay,
I kindled, holy God, Your anger ev'ry day.

Lord, you have raised me up To joy and exultation
And clearly shown the way That leads me to salvation.
My sins are washed away; For this I thank you, Lord.
Now with my heart and soul All evil I abhor.

Grant that your Spirit's help To me be always given
Lest I should fall again And lose the way to heaven.
Grant that he give me strength In my infirmity;
May he renew my heart To serve you willingly.

O Father, God of love, Now hear my supplication;
O Savior, Son of God, Accept my adoration;
O Holy Spirit, be My ever faithful guide
That I may serve you here And there with you abide.

Amen.

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