

## The 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b; Matthew 14:22-33; Romans 10:5-15.**

**Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28** introduces Joseph, the one who is destined to be the final patriarch of Israel. Previously, the book of Genesis has concentrated on the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Now, with chapter 37, the attention of the writer shifts from Jacob and moves to Joseph, perhaps the most fascinating of the patriarchs.

Joseph is one of the twelve sons of Israel, each of whom (except for Joseph) will become the founder of one of Israel's twelve tribes. Joseph is seventeen years old, and he is his father's favorite son. It was this favoritism toward him and the way that their father expressed that favor that alienated Joseph's brothers from him. That alienation was enhanced by Joseph's naïve sharing with his brothers and his father of two dreams he had (37:5-11) in which his father and all his brothers bowed down to Joseph and recognized him as ruler and authority over them. Of course, those two dreams would be proven true later in the story, but Joseph's naïve sharing of these stories with his brothers didn't exactly endear him to them.

Israel proved himself unwise in the way he treated his sons because such performance could not result in anything else than the animosity they shared toward the two favored children of Israel's favored wife (Rachel) – Joseph and Benjamin. In Joseph's case, Israel (i.e. Jacob) freed the young man from many of the wearisome chores that all were expected to perform (like caring for the family's flocks and herds). But he also gave to Joseph special clothing that indicated his favoritism.

The clothing that Israel made for Joseph was a coat "of many colors" (translated in the NRSV as "a long robe with sleeves"). The problem in knowing what Israel made for Joseph lies in the Hebrew that is used to name the article of clothing. The Hebrew actually states "a robe to the palms of the hands" (i.e., "a coat with long sleeves"), or it can also be translated "a robe to the soles of the feet" (i.e., a long robe with who-knows-what-kind-of-sleeves). The traditional translation, "a coat of many colors", comes from the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew, which, in turn, might preserve the tradition of a multi-colored robe. The problem is that there was nothing special about "a coat of long sleeves" or "a long robe"; both were ordinary dress of that day. Likewise, a multi-colored robe would be most unusual for there is little evidence that the technology to dye a multi-colored robe existed at that time. So what was the special clothing that Israel had made for Joseph that caused such envy and bitterness on the part of his brothers?

We do not know. But the closest guess is that it was a coat traditionally created for the heir-apparent child of a king (the same word is so used in II Sam. 13:18). This was a ceremonial vest or bodice of the finest fabric on which gold ornaments and colored jewelry were carefully appliquéd. If this were in fact the "coat of many colors" that Israel had prepared for Joseph, it would indeed be an object that would generate envy and disgust from brothers who would have resented such preferential treatment by their father and rejection of themselves from him. Although the fault lay in the action of the father, the brothers could not help but project their anger and hatred upon Joseph. And his sharing of dreams that suggested he was superior to them could not help but add to their animosity.

The result was inevitable. “And Israel said to Joseph, ‘Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.’ He answered, ‘Here I am.’ So Israel sent Joseph from the valley of the Hebron” (37:13, 14).

Joseph goes in search of his brothers, who are tending their father’s goats. The story that is told makes it clear that Joseph was totally unaware of the anger and rejection that both he and his father had generated in his brothers. On top of that, as if to add insult to injury, Joseph wears his coat of many colors. That, in itself, was amazing because that vest was of the finest cloth and worth a great deal because of the gold and jewels appliquéd into it. To wear such a coat while traveling was begging for it to either be stolen from you or to be ruined by the dust and dirt of the journey. But one gets the sense of an innocent, naïve boy who is proud of his coat and wants others to see it and is totally unaware of the impression he is creating wherever he might go.

Joseph’s brothers see Joseph coming from a long way off. And they can tell it is he because of his glittering robe. Pressed to the limits of their tolerance, they make plans for a reception for him totally unanticipated by either their father or their brother.

“Come now,” they decide, “let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams” (vs. 20). The oldest brothers, Judah and Reuben intervene and convince the other brothers to take less drastic action. So what they do instead is to strip Joseph of his coat, throw him into a pit, wait until some Ishmaelite traders come along, and sell Joseph to them as a slave. (Incidentally, think of the irony that it is Ishmaelites – descendants of Ishmael, Isaac’s wronged brother – who purchase Joseph and sell him into slavery in Egypt. By so doing, they contribute to the further formation of salvation history, for Israel must go to Egypt and become slaves there in order for them to be later brought out by God through Moses and thus create both a history and the Hebrew tradition of God as the God of liberation of the exploited and oppressed of the earth). The brothers slaughter a goat and submerge the coat in its blood in order to display to their father as their means of substantiating their claim that Joseph had been killed by wild animals. And Israel never thought differently about that explanation. So this story ends, “And the Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt” (vs. 28b).

This story exists in order to “set up” the larger Joseph narrative (Genesis 37:1—50:26), for without it, there would be no explanation as to how the favored son of the patriarch Jacob (Israel) came to be in Egypt as a slave. Nor would there be adequate explanation for Joseph’s rise to imperial authority, his intervention on behalf of his family to save them from starvation, their subsequent move to Egypt, their collapse into slavery from a “pharaoh that did not know Joseph”, and their eventual liberation under Moses. All of Israel’s salvation history depended upon a story that would get Joseph from Canaan to Egypt, and from favored son to slave. And this was the story!

But the story tells us something else, as well. It is the painful story of an amazingly dysfunctional family! But this was not the first dysfunctional family among the patriarchs. Trouble in the clan began with Abraham and Sarah, Abraham’s unwillingness to trust God for the birth of the son he so desperately wanted and, consequently, his (and his wife’s) intervention through the forcing of Hagar to become his concubine, which then resulted in the birth of

Ishmael. There was the trauma with Abraham's aborted sacrifice of Isaac, which might have proved Abraham's trust in God, but must have been psychologically devastating for Isaac. Abraham's and Sarah's dysfunctionality was passed along to Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and the deceit and manipulation that occurred in that family as the result of Rebekah's determination to deprive Esau of his rightful birthright and inheritance in favor of her favorite, Jacob. Living by deceit and manipulation was passed on to Jacob, both in his dealings with Esau and with Laban, and of his preferences for his children born to his favorite wife Rachel, rather than to Leah, Bihah and Zilpah. Now, that dysfunctionality had passed on to the fourth generation and symbolized in this story both by Joseph's oblivious understanding of the impact of his actions and words upon his brothers, and by their decision to either kill him or sell him into slavery. The patriarchs, indeed, personalized the warning of that commandment, "For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of their parents, even to the third and the fourth generation" (Exod. 20:5). If faith is not lived out nor practiced in the home, in the market-place, in public life and in one's values, then it can leave behind it scars of such depth that they can outweigh the good words one might speak or the apparently fine life one might appear to live, even when it is lived to the glory of God! For, as one person put it, "My deeds must be my life; when I am dead, my actions must speak for me".<sup>1</sup>

**Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b** is the first of two psalms (Psalms 105 and 106) that celebrate and rehearse the sacred history of Israel. So rather than concentrate on God as creator, it is building the argument of trust in God on his trustworthy nature, as proven through the history of Israel. It begins,

"O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him; sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually. Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered" (105:1-5).

Thus begins a recital of the mighty acts of God as such acts both impact Israel and bring about its salvation. The psalmist begins with God's choice of Abraham and the covenant made with Abraham which God carried out through the patriarch's descendants in Canaan (vss. 5-15), Joseph and his rescue of both Egypt and Israel from certain starvation (vss. 16-25, the subject of the Old Testament lesson for this Sunday's lectionary), Moses and Aaron and their confrontation with Pharaoh (vss. 26-36), the wilderness wanderings and God's protection of them in such harsh conditions (vss. 37-42) and then, finally, their entrance into the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants (vss. 43-45).

The Psalm then closes with the cry, "Praise the Lord!" God has been so good to Israel in the way he has worked in their history. And so God will be good to any people whom God has chosen and called to covenant with Him!

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Girard, *The Will of Stephen Girard*, 1832.

**Matthew 14:22-33** is the final story of the pericope of three stories that deal with the work and personhood of Jesus. The first story dealt with Herod Antipas' execution of John the Baptist on a whim. The second story is of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000. Both stories are designed to compare and contrast Jesus and Herod, two kings with entirely different agendas in life. The stories are also meant to contrast the feast Jesus gave to the people (the feeding of the 5,000) and the birthday feast Herod set for himself that was the occasion of John's beheading. Herod's action and feast are a classical example of the exercise of unilateral power, concerned only with maintaining the authority and power of Herod. Jesus' action and feast are a clear example of his exercise of relational power, unconcerned with maintaining his status but seeking, instead, to minister to the immediate need of the people.

The story of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 ends with Jesus taking the bread, blessing it, breaking it and giving it to the disciples for distribution to the people. As such, it foreshadows both the celebration of the Lord's Supper – and, consequently, the Eucharist throughout the more than 2,000 year life of the Church. And it also foreshadows the resurrection of Jesus and, consequently, the heavenly banquet for all the people of God. But the conclusion of the story of the feeding of the 5,000 is not the conclusion of this three-story pericope. There is still one story remaining. And it is that third story that best answers the question initially asked in the second story, “Who is this Jesus of Nazareth (in contrast to Herod Antipas)?”

The final story – the Gospel lesson for the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – is the story of Jesus walking on the waves of the Sea of Galilee. Let's look at it more closely.

“Immediately, he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come”. So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly, you are the Son of God”” (Matt. 14:22-33).

To capture the full significance of this story vis-a-viz the other two stories, one must keep in mind that the essential question of this entire pericope is the question, “Who is this Jesus of Nazareth who invites the poor to his (Eucharistic) feast?” Even more than the story of the feeding of the 5,000, this story clearly indicates who Jesus is.

The contest, of course, is between Herod Antipas and Jesus of Nazareth. The issue of this story is “Who rules the land and the seas?” The answer of the Roman Empire was that it was the Roman emperor who so ruled. This was a particularly strategic question for those reading the

Gospel of Matthew, because one of the titles of the Roman emperor at the time of the writing of this account, Domitian, was “ruler of lands and seas and nations” (Juvenal, *Satire*, 4:83-84). This story, therefore, is told to demonstrate that this is not the case – that the proven “ruler of lands and seas” (and, consequently, “of nations”) is Jesus of Nazareth! And certainly, if Jesus is ruler and not Domitian, then who on earth is this minor tetrarch, Herod? It is a story designed to squarely put Herod – and any other political ruler -- in his place!

The real genius of this story is in its construction. It divides into two stories – the story of Jesus walking on the water (vv. 22-27) and the story of Peter walking on the water (vv. 28-33). What is of particular interest, however, is how carefully constructed these two stories are. At the time of the writing of the four Gospels, a primary writing device to stress importance was both the number of words in one or more stories, their repetition and their consequent juxtaposition to each other. Whereas today, we stress importance in a text by placing that text in bold, italics and capitalization, in the first century writers stressed a text’s importance by the number and juxtaposition of words. This was a device used often by the author of the Gospel of John and occasionally by Matthew. And this story is one such occasion.

This miracle story is divided into two acts – one about Jesus walking on the sea, the other about Peter walking on the sea. Each story is six verses long, and each story has the same number of Greek words in it. The center point between the two stories are two words by Jesus: “I AM”! And the entire two-act story and the pericope of three stories end with the words, “Truly you are the Son of God!”

“Who is this Jesus who invites the poor to his (Eucharistic) feast?” In the first story, the disciples are in a boat in danger of capsizing on a storm-ravaged sea. Jesus comes walking to them on the water, and says to them “Courage. I am. Do not be afraid”! In the second story, Jesus draws near the boat containing the troubled disciples, and Peter asks to walk on the water to Jesus. Jesus invites him to do so. Full of faith, Peter steps out of the boat and does, indeed, walk toward Jesus on the water. Like his teacher, this disciple is also overcoming all the forces of nature – but doing so because of his faith in Jesus. But then he wavers and begins to doubt. Immediately, he starts to sink and cries out to Jesus, and immediately Jesus reaches out to him and Peter stands on the water once again! Thus, in the second act, a believing disciple and an enabling Messiah conquer the elements and demonstrate to the other disciples (the Church) the unbelievable power the Church has through its savior to transform even the world (much less, the political, economic and religious systems of Roman Empire or Herodian throne)!

The attention of the entire story is fixed upon that two-act story’s key words: “Courage. I AM. Do not be afraid!” That is the message to the Church intimidated by the Herods and the Domitians of this world. The NRSV translates these words, “it is I”. That is a poor translation. The Greek actually says, *ego eimi*. It is the Greek words used by God to translate the Hebrew in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible in Exodus “I AM (*ego eimi*) has sent me to you” (Exod. 3:13b). It is, in other words, the sacred name, “Yahweh”. It was because Jesus used the sacred words, I AM to refer to himself, as well as the miracle that he performed, that caused his disciples to exclaim, “truly you are the Son of God”. Otherwise, they would have likely said, “you are the Messiah” or “you are the chosen one of God”, but the strict monotheists that they were, they would not have named Jesus as God if he hadn’t put the thought into their heads!

What is most startling about this story is the number of Old Testament references and allusions used in it (in fact, there are a number of such allusions throughout the entire pericope). Knowing that his readers were primarily Jews, Matthew knew how well they knew the Hebrew Scriptures, and so would use such allusions in order that his readers might make the necessary applications.

The story, of course, is dominated by Matthew's use of the holy name, Yahweh, for Jesus. That makes allusion not only to Exodus 3, but the entire exodus narrative and the giving of the Law, but also Deut. 32:39, Isa. 41:4, 43:1-4 and 10, 45:18-19, 48:12 and 51:12. Further, it is used in the Hebrew Bible in conjunction with the command "Courage", "do not be afraid" or "take heart" (all English translations of the identical Greek and Hebrew words) in Gen. 15:1, 26:14, 28:13, 46:3, and Isa. 41:13.

Other Old Testament allusions used in this story are references to God walking on the waters (Job 9:8; 38:16; Ps. 77:16-20; Isa. 43:16), Jesus acting and talking like God (Exod. 3:13-15; Isa. 41:4; 43:10), God lifting up his disciples who are about to sink into the waters (Ps. 69:1-3) with God's (Jesus') hand saving him (Exod. 3:20, 14:9-31; Ps. 69, 107:23-32; Isa. 43:15-16), and God calming the sea that is terrorizing God's followers (Ps. 89:9-10; 107:23-32).

These are not the only Old Testament allusions in these stories. Besides the overwhelming use of Hebrew Bible images in this pivotal story of Jesus walking on the water, each of the three stories in this pericope has a primary parallel with Old Testament scripture. Thus, the story of the threat against John the Baptist because of the offense Herodias (Herod's "improper wife" because she was the wife of Herod's brother) took at John and Herod's action to behead him would immediately remind the Jewish reader of the story of the prophet Elijah, the efforts that Queen Jezebel (also an "improper wife" because she was a foreigner seeking to destroy Yahweh worship) made to get rid of Elijah, and of King Ahab's efforts to try to carry out Elijah's execution (I Kings 17-22). Likewise, the story of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 in the wilderness could not help but cause Jewish story-listeners to think of God's miraculous feeding of the children of Israel in the desert with manna (Exodus 16:1-35). The final story of Jesus calming the seas and walking on the water would immediately recall for a Jewish audience God's miraculous parting of the Red Sea so that both Israel could be delivered from another tyrant and that evil king's empire (and its army) would be defeated (through the plagues and drowning at the Red Sea) (Exodus 7-14).

All three of these stories are designed to bring the reader to only one answer to the question, "Who is this Jesus of Nazareth?" This Jesus of Nazareth is God incarnate, the Son of God, Emmanuel, God-With-Us! This marginalized rabbi of Galilee, rejected by the political, economic and religious leaders of his day and used by the ordinary people for their own benefit, is none other than God in the flesh, the savior and liberator of the whole world. He, and only he, is the one in whom you can trust and rest, even when faced with the storms of life, even when facing the horrendous needs of human beings cast off by the systems, even when confronted with the political, economic or religious powers of your day concerned only with their own domination of the world. Like Peter, we too are called to step out on faith, seeking to do in our comforting of the afflicted, our afflicting of the comfortable and in our calling of the world to embrace his kingdom all that Jesus does. In undertaking such a frightening and intimidating

ministry, we might waver and begin to sink. But if we call out to Christ, he will sustain us in the human struggle and will remind us that we may have “little faith” but not “no faith”, he will love us and sustain us just the same “until the wind ceases”. That is what it means to be serving on the same team as he who is “truly the Son of God!”

**Romans 10:5-15** is the continuation of Paul’s argument regarding the Jews. In this section, Paul is interested in contending that God’s salvation through Christ is intended for all people.

“Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that ‘the person who does these things will live by them.’ But the righteousness that comes from faith says, ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim), because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame”. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”.

“But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Rom. 10:5-15)

Paul’s argument thus far has been that the Hebrew heritage is an all-encompassing reality. It is a magnificent heritage, because as Israelites, the Jews understand themselves to be children of “the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises (of God), to them belong the patriarchs and from them comes the Messiah” (9:4-5). What a heritage to have. God chose the Jews. God revealed his glory to them at the burning bush. God made covenant with them through Abraham, Moses and David, so that they became God’s shalom community by God’s grace. God gave them the Law at Mount Sinai which demonstrated how the covenant was to be lived out in public as well as private life, in the world of politics, economics and religion as well as individually. God gave to Israel the true worship God wanted them to do by “doing justice, showing mercy and walking humbly with their God” (Micah 6:8). They received God’s promises to “open the eyes of the blind, to bring prisoners out of dungeons, to free those who sit in darkness” (Isa. 42:6-7). God gave them the patriarchs who established them as God’s people, and the Messiah who set them free to transform the world into the world as God intended it to be.

All this was the heritage of the Jewish people, and something for them to treasure and of which to be rightfully proud. But, Paul continued in Romans 9:19-10:4, that heritage has a dark side, as well – and that dark side cannot be ignored! Because Israel is *chosen*, it is very easy for it to become *exclusive* in its thinking. It is very easy for it to assume that it is the only people who are chosen by God. Paul quotes a number of Old Testament passages (e.g., Hos. 1:10, 2:23, Isa.

10:22-23; 52:7) to demonstrate that God chose Gentiles to both receive God's love and to display that love to others. It is easy, Paul argues, for Jews to miss the point of God's election of them. Because they are expected to obey the Law as the way they demonstrate their commitment to God's covenant, they can assume that it is their obeying of the Law that earns them that righteousness, not God's grace. But it is not their obedience that wins God. Rather, obeying the Law is a sign of God's choice of them that has already occurred. Obedience to the Law is testimony to the Jew's belief in God, not the condition that makes belief possible!

The argument really comes down to a single question: "Who is in charge around here?" If a human being makes himself righteous before God so that God is forced to accept him, then the human being is in charge of God! But if God is in charge, then God is free to choose whomever God wishes to choose. And that means, God can choose Gentiles as well as Jews!

It is at this point in the argument with which our Epistle Lesson for the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time joins Paul's argument. Jewish ecclesiastical leadership interprets the Law to say what it actually does not say, Paul argues. And that is that they misinterpret Leviticus 18:5 so that they perceive it as saying, "the person who does these things (i.e., keeps the Law) will live by them".<sup>2</sup>

But this is not what scripture teaches. Rather, it says, "(God's grace) is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us, so that we may hear it and observe it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' No the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe" (Deut. 30:12-14; cf. Rom. 10:6-8).

We do not have to make God love us, Paul is stating. We do not have to make God choose us by our actions or by our obedience to the Law (again, that is manipulating God into receiving us). We don't have to go up to heaven to assault God there, and force him to receive us. We don't have to go to "the other side of the sea" (i.e., to Jerusalem) to worship at the Temple and to participate in all the ceremonies (like Passover) to make God be happy with us. God actually wants us to respond to him. God already loves us and holds out his arms to us. All we need do is to respond to that love and to receive it by embracing God back by embracing the hurting of the world. And how do we do this? Paul tells us in one of the most definitive statements on salvation that appears in the Bible.

"If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved" (10:9-10).

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<sup>2</sup> It actually argues that if Israel is to build a "Promised Land" as a shalom community around political justice, economic equity, the elimination of poverty and relationship with God and each other, then they will do so by following the "statutes and ordinances" (found primarily in Deuteronomy), which provide the specific laws and instructions for living in such a community. It is *not* saying, "it is through keeping these statutes and ordinances that you personally will become right with God." But that's the way the religious authorities of Paul's day interpreted it in order to justify their defining for the people God's commands to them and thus protecting and building their power!



God's liberation of a person from the lust for power, greed, domination, fear, anxiety or whatever is defeating him is what God wants to do for us! God is right here before us, and is always right here before us, calling us to what we can become in him. The only relevant question for us is, "Do you believe this?" If you cannot believe, then you are not among God's called. If you can, then your very act of believing it and speaking out loud that belief ("Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief" – Mark 9:24) so that you can hear yourself say it confirms that reality in your life. No obedience of rules, no performing of correct liturgical worship, no reciting of words, no desperately trying to be good, not even making yourself work for justice will save you. Nothing that you *do* will make you right with God, for God has already done it all through the actions of Jesus Christ. All you need is to believe – to accept that God has already accepted you! And that very act of accepting your acceptance is the sign to you that you are, indeed, accepted!

Paul then concludes this argument by applying to Jesus and Jesus' work in us the words of the prophet Joel (2:32). "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"" (vss. 12-13). In other words, Paul is stating, "When Jews perceive themselves as being *exclusively* chosen by God, and so chosen because they are "born-and-bred" Jews and obey the Law of Moses, they make a grave mistake. Their own scriptures tell them that everyone and anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And that scripture that says "everyone" means, "everyone"! Whether they are a "born-and-bred" Jew or a Gentile who has never heard the name "Yahweh", God wants both to respond to God's acceptance of them. If they "call on the name of the Lord", thus indicating that they are already chosen by God to be in relationship with God, that miracle happens and they discover that they are already in relationship with him and, consequently, a part of the people of God. So your national origin is irrelevant! Your background is irrelevant! The level of your education is irrelevant! Your place in society is irrelevant! God is God. You are you. And God wants relationship with you. Will you respond? If you respond and you're a Jew, you are in God's family. If you are a Gentile, and you respond, you are in God's family. If you are a Jew or a Gentile and you are committed to making God accept you, you can't – and by your actions, you demonstrate you are not among God's chosen! But the fact remains, God wants you!

"But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to share about God's love? And how are they to share him unless they are sent?" Therefore, Paul in essence says, "Once experiencing it, we all have to share God's love. Because people will not know of that love and allow themselves to be open to that love unless we share it with them". Therefore, no matter who we are, we have an obligation to share God's love as demonstrated by Christ. As Francis of Assisi so wisely put it, "In everything that we do, share Christ. Use words when absolutely necessary!"

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