

“I am saying all this especially for you Gentiles. God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles. I stress this, for I want somehow to make the people of Israel jealous of what you Gentiles have, so I might save some of them.” Romans 11:13-14 NLT

lectio // Romans 11:13-32

The Apostle Paul gives us a brief history and a family lesson on what God is up to when it comes to all these Gentiles, these pagans, getting “saved.” What would Israel, God’s chosen people possibly be jealous of? It’s a hint in what Paul calls the gentiles. We are a bunch of wild olive trees! Gentiles are wild, but they are also free. Free from what? Free from the impossible burden of the law that permeated every aspect of Judaism. And that wild branch has been grafted into their tree, their inheritance, their future! They see the gentiles come with all their abominable sins and God actually extends MERCY. The gentiles have no rich heritage about behaviors, rules or respect for God’s law and yet they have faith and are given GRACE. And that is a huge stumbling block for them. How many times in the Old Testament story did the patriarch pass over the first born son and give their blessing and inheritance to the other son? But it was tradition to give it only to the first born! It’s like the story of the prodigal son was played out over the entire history of the Jewish people. How dare the rebellious, traitorous son even think about being welcomed into the family. And yet, here we are wild olive trees forgiven and transformed by Jesus and accepted by God. Did you ever think someone would be jealous of your intimate relationship with God? The Jewish tradition doesn’t allow that kind of intimacy with God, it took a priest to mediate that sonship, relationship for them. It’s like getting super close to your nanny, but never really knowing your own father. Hint: folks that still live by the law and not by grace are still jealous of what you have in Jesus!

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Dad,

Just the fact that I can start my prayer with such an intimate expression like that bothers people. They might think, “you can’t call the creator of all that exists.... Dad!” But I can because you offered that right to me when I committed my entire life to Jesus. I often wish that I didn’t come from such low-brow, dysfunctional, irreligious stock. I am often embarrassed by my station in life. However, I LOVE the idea of being a wild olive tree grafted into the family of God by your grace. Thank you, thank you, thank you for making me a part of your family.

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root