



**HAMILTON TRINITY SUNDAY 2009**  
**Pastor Lance Steicke**

**“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the LORD or who has been his counsellor or who has given a gift to him to receive a gift in return? For from him and to him and through him, are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11: 33-36**

There are many things in this world and in our lives which we just can't understand.

There, for instance, is a father and mother, kneeling one on each side of a little bed. Their child is seriously ill. On their knees they've prayed desperately for healing. But healing doesn't come.

Who can understand that?

Or there's a little band of people making their way home from the graveside – a father and his three children. They've accompanied their wife and mother to her last earthly resting place.

The father's a believer. But now rebellion steals into his heart. How come his children are motherless?

How come he's deprived of his life's companion and the one he loved so much? And what's God's hand in all this? The question 'why' rings through his mind. Why, O why, O why, did it happen?

Life's full of mysteries and unanswered questions. You visit Nagasaki or Hiroshima, the sites of the first atomic bombs and you ask, Why? Why did it happen? Why war? Why man's inhumanity to man? And could God have stepped in and intervened and prevented it?

Even life is a mystery. We are all alive. And yet what really is life? And no matter how hard you try you find you can't adequately give a description or definition of life.

Martin Luther points out just how ignorant we are of ordinary everyday affairs when he tells us that we can't even fully understand the blade of grass we trample underfoot.

The Book of Romans is **the** great doctrinal book of the Bible. For eleven chapters Paul gives a comprehensive account of the gospel. He takes in time and eternity, history and the future, the present times and the end times, sin and salvation and how we're put right with God.

Right at the very beginning he grapples with the question of homosexuality and the abuse of God's gift of sex. How come something so beautiful and wonderful can become so debased?

He grapples with the human condition. We're all in the same sinking boat, he says. And so we all need rescuing. How can we find the way out?

Paul finds the way out in Jesus Christ. And so he grapples with the miracle and mystery of our salvation.

That leads him to grapple with the grace of God. Here is a mystery if ever there was one, Paul concludes. People slap God in the face, curse him, blaspheme him, turn away from him and reject him. And God? What does God do? He loves them. He showers his love on them., He acts in grace and mercy.

Paul grapples with the coming of God's Son into this world. Born as an infant. How's that possible? It's beyond our comprehension. Elsewhere Paul says, **GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS. GOD HAS APPEARED IN THE FLESH.**

He grapples with the question of what he calls **A GROANING CREATION.** Why the ravages and suffering of creation? Why creation's frustration, futility and failure? Why earthquakes, famines, floods? Why tornadoes, twisters, typhoons and tsunamis?

The solution to all this, the solution to the questions and dilemmas of life is to live life on God's terms. Nothing, Paul shouts out in sheer amazement as he stands in awe before the mystery if it all, nothing, **NOTHING WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FOM THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.**

And now in Chapters 9 – 11 of Romans Paul grapples with the question, will Israel be saved? Paul was appointed as missionary to the Gentiles. The Gentiles had come into the kingdom in their droves. But what about God's chosen people, Paul argues, people of my own flesh and blood, surely they won't be rejected forever? Surely God has some plan for them? He wrestles with this. And finally he bows before the mystery of God and his amazing dealings with us.

Now he stops, out of breath as it were. Analysis and argument, teaching and instruction, must give way to adoration. Theology gives way to doxology.

He begins with an astonishing exclamation, **OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGEMENTS AND HOW INSCRUTABLE HIS WAYS!**

Paul had battled with this heart-breaking problem of the salvation of his own people with every resource his great mind possesses. Paul knew that God has given us a mind and wants us to use it to the very limits of human thought. But Paul also knew that the mind can go so far and no further. And, when that limit is reached, all we can do is to accept and adore.

Paul doesn't say that he's solved the problem. He does say, that, having done his best, he's content to leave it to the love and power and mercy of God.

On many occasions in our lives there's nothing left but to do the same, to say, I've thought, I've prayed, I've searched, I've probed, I've studied all the circumstances,

Lord, but I can't grasp what you're on about. I can't grasp your mind and will. But with all my being I trust you. Your will be done.

Those parents that I cited earlier and that father of those motherless children had to come to that if they were to find peace and purpose for the future. The relatives of the February bush fire victims have to come to the same.

You here in this congregation have to come to that, too. Your probing and searching and questioning and even accusations must move on to acceptance of reality and to complete trust in the Lord for the future in order to have the peace of mind and of congregation that is needed.

Having said all of that, moving forward doesn't necessarily mean solving all the problems. Mysteries in life remain. And unresolved issues in life sometimes remain.

Let's take the Godhead as another example of a mystery, an unsolved issue, the Trinity.

I can't explain God to you. We simply bow before the majesty and mystery.

There is one God.

There are three persons.

We let these two great truths of the bible stand side by side. That's the teaching of the bible.

There is the Father. There is the Son. There is the Holy Spirit.

Three persons. Not three gods, but one God.

All sorts of illustrations have been used to try to explain this to accommodate it to our way of thinking. None of them really very satisfactory, certainly not entirely satisfactory.

The best illustration I know is that of a woman – mother, wife, daughter.

Seen from different eyes and different perspectives, three different people – daughter, wife, mother.

Look at God from the perspective of creator, carer and provider, and you think of the Father.

Look at God from the perspective of redeemer, saviour, and you think of Jesus, the Son.

Look at God from the perspective of counsellor, comforter, guide, leader, director into truth, behind-the-scenes worker and you think of the Holy Spirit.

But when all is said and done, we can't fully understand God. We simply bow before the mystery of who he is and give way to praise.

**OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD!  
HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGEMENTS AND HOW INSCRUTABLE HIS  
WAYS! FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD? OR WHO HAS BEEN  
HIS COUNSELLOR?**

It would be absurd to claim that we know the mind of the Lord and have offered our advice to him. We are not God's counsellor. He is ours. We depend entirely on him – in everything.

## **FOR FROM HIM AND TO HIM AND THROUGH HIM, ARE ALL THINGS.**

Paul refers to the three great questions – where, how and when.

1. If we ask **where** all things came from in the beginning, and still come today, the answer must be **from God**.
2. If we ask **how** all things came into being and remain in being, our answer is, **through God**.
3. If we ask **why** everything came into being, and where everything is going, our answer must be, **for and to God**.

**FROM HIM, THROUGH HIM, TO HIM** indicate that God is the creator, sustainer, and purpose of everything, it's source, means and goal. He is the Alpha and Omega, and every letter of the alphabet in between.

And then Paul concludes it all with a final doxology, **TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOREVER.**

Theology and doxology!  
Teaching and praise!  
They should never be separated.

There can be no doxology without theology, no praise without a reason for it.

It's not possible to worship and praise an unknown God. All true worship is a response to God making himself known to us in Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures. It was the tremendous truths of Romans 1 to 11 which provoked Paul's outburst of praise. The worship of God is invoked and inspired by the vision of God, who he is and what he has done.

Worship without theology is bound to degenerate into idolatry. That's why the crucial place of the Scriptures, the bible, in both public worship and private devotions. It's the word of God which calls forth the worship of God.

If there's no doxology without theology neither is there theology without doxology.

There's something very flawed about a purely academic interest in God. God isn't an appropriate object for cool, critical, calculated, detached scientific observation and evaluation. No, the true knowledge of God will always lead to worship, as it did for Paul. Our place is on our knees before him in adoration.

So, as we stand before the mysteries of life'

- whether it's the heart-rending questions which come as a result of the loss of loved ones
- or the marvels and mysteries of creation and nature
- or the miracles and mysteries of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- or the amazing dealings of God with us in his grace and mercy

As we stand before these mysteries, our questions, our grappling, our struggles, give way to praise and adoration - **FOR FROM HIM AND TO HIM AND THROUGH HIM, ARE ALL THINGS. TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.**