

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

Rejected For Our Acceptance

Romans 11.1-2a, 29-32

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 15)

Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

DIAGNOSIS: Your Turn

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Your Turn To Be Rejected*

Two fifth grade girls sit on a playground bench during recess. Their heads are close together as they talk and giggle. They are best friends. But two days later one of the girls is talking and giggling with a different friend. What happened to the first friend? Why is she sitting on a swing with a sad smile? Such a scene can be created by adults also. For half a year we refuse

to see a good friend who lives three doors down. We choose not to invite our mother-in-law to the yearly family reunion. Business proposals are rejected. Loan applications are rejected. An application for a job is rejected. It even seems that God plays favorites—trading his favorite people, the Israelites, for the Gentiles. It's one thing for us humans to reject one another. But if God can switch favorites as easily as we do, how dependable is God?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Dejected Are the Rejects*

The little girl on the swing is not happy. Rejection hurts. So we grow angry, angry at the one who rejected us—whether a friend or a bank or a place of employment or God. When rejected, we tell our selves that we will never deal with that [fill in the blank] again. We won't deal with God either, if God so quickly can reject those whom God once chose. We doubt God's dependability. How can we trust a God who would reject others and so could reject us?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Ejected from the Game of Life*

We get mad at God for daring to reject God's chosen people. We think God has made a mistake or that God has done something evil. We cannot comprehend that the rejection is a result of our distrust of God. We have dared to challenge the judge when there is no challenge allowed on such decisions. We have been disobedient by our lack of trust in God and are permanently put on the disobedient list. And all those on the disobedient list are without God's favor, without God's life, and death is our final rejection.

PROGNOSIS: Jesus Is Despised And Rejected

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Nobody Had A Turn at Being Rejected. We All Were.*

For we all were disobedient in that we did not love God most of all. Yet by God's grace, Jesus was sent to us as God's way of mercy for the rejected. Jesus came to give us his mercy and forgiveness. He chose us to be his own. But we did not trust his offer either and he became despised and rejected above all others. He was crucified, died, and was buried. Then God raised Jesus from the dead! God raised up the most rejected. God raised up the one we thought least likely to be chosen. God raised Jesus up so that God could have mercy on all of us for the sake of Jesus. God has mercy on all those who rejected Jesus—Gentiles and Israelites.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Jesus Says It Is Our Turn Now*

As God raised Jesus from God's final rejection called death, Jesus gives us the benefit of his resurrection. He offers it as forgiveness. His offer is ours by faith. We trust the dependability of Jesus because of his resurrection. For by his resurrection we are given the irrevocable gift and call of God. This call was first given to the Israelites, but by their refusal of it all others have been given mercy. And, by the mercy of Christ that all others have received, the Israelites are offered that very same mercy of Christ.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Injecting Christ's Mercy into the World*

We are now givers of Christ's mercy to those who have been rejected. We give Christ's mercy, not by saying that God is with us in times of rejection or trouble, but by actually giving them Christ's mercy to them in explicit words, "Christ is for you." "Christ has forgiven you." "Christ is God's mercy for you." With such words God's irrevocable gift is given. God's gift of Christ is given to everyone, not only our favorites. Congregations don't get to choose favorites but are called to give Christ to all people. Families don't have to exclude members, but get to

give them Christ's mercy and all the gifts of the Spirit of Christ. When others are hurt by life's daily rejections, we can inject them with Christ's goodness so that they are given God's irrevocable gift to overcome the rejection.