

Romans 11 pt. 3 The Olive Tree

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, May 31, 2026
PASSAGES	Romans 11; Genesis 12; Genesis 32; Psalm 14; Isaiah 43; Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 15; Colossians 1; Romans 9; John 8; 1 Corinthians 10; John 15; Titus 3
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:03:08 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Paul's olive tree has branches that come and go, but only one root — and the root is Christ, who was holding the whole thing up long before Abraham was born. So the invitation is not to join a religion or an ethnicity. It is to be found hidden inside a person. And a branch that has been grafted in for free has nothing left to be smug about.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Israel is a man and a nation at once. Jacob represents the tribes that came from him, the way Adam represents everyone who came from him — and that logic of one person standing for many is what Paul is building on all through Romans.
- ◆ Branches can be removed or replaced and the plant lives. Remove the root and it dies. Whatever else the root includes, take Jesus out of it and there is nothing left.
- ◆ The patriarchs were saved the same way you are. There will not be one group in the kingdom hidden in Christ and another group there by some other arrangement.
- ◆ Branches were broken off for unbelief, not to make room for you. Grafting is a gift, so humility is the only sane response to it.
- ◆ Faith is not a system you memorize or a machine that dispenses an outcome when you feed it the right thoughts. Faith rests on a person.
- ◆ God's severity is that he insists salvation stays free. He will not take your payment.

- ◆ Whether someone can be grafted back in is a question about God's power, not about how many times they have said no. Nobody in your life is a lost cause on those grounds.

► 1:03:09

Three weeks into Romans 11, Matt stopped to do something he does not always do: back all the way up and tell the story from the beginning, for anyone in the room who has been hearing the word *Israel* every Sunday without a firm sense of what it refers to. Paul keeps talking about Israel because Paul is writing chapters 9 through 11. So it is worth knowing who is being talked about.

1. Israel is a man, and Israel is a nation

► 1:04:46

God made promises to Abraham — land, descendants, blessing, and the line that has always set the scope of the whole project: in his offspring all the families of the earth would be blessed. Every family means every family. Matt's word for it was that all the peoples of the earth are in God's crosshairs for his love. The promise passed to Isaac, then to Jacob, who wrestled through the night and came away with a new name ([Genesis 32:28](#)).

► 1:05:20

Jacob had twelve sons who became twelve tribes, and the whole collection took his new name. That is not a case of a good name being reused. Scripture goes the other direction and calls the nation *Jacob* — “let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad”, and “he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel.” The man stands for the people. Paul has already run that move once, in [Romans 5](#): Adam is one man walking around a garden, and all of humanity is walking with him. Hold onto that, because it is doing quiet work in the plant metaphor that follows.

2. What is holding the tree up

► 1:07:35

“For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

ROMANS 11:15-16 ↗

Matt waved off the long debate about exactly which Jewish farming practice Paul had in mind — he will send you an article if you are desperate — because the idea is plain enough: something sacred represents the whole. The people in view are his fellow Jews of the first century, and the firstfruits are plausibly the believing remnant, or the faithful foundation running back through Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David.

► 1:09:44

But Matt thinks something older sits underneath even the patriarchs, because Jesus, who comes from Israel ethnically, precedes them. “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day” — Abraham, in his own lifetime, was already leaning forward toward Christ. And then the sentence that ends the argument: “before Abraham was, I am.” Paul says the same thing in his own vocabulary: Christ raised is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep; he is before all things, and in him all things hold together; he comes from the race of the patriarchs and is also God over all, blessed forever.

► 1:11:57

And once, Paul simply says it outright about the wilderness generation:

“Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1–4 ↗

Matt's point from the plant is blunt and hard to argue with. Branches can be removed or replaced without killing anything. Pull the root and it is over. God could conceivably have made those promises to some other man in some other place — but there is no version of this where you swap out Jesus and the program runs the same. He is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, which means the most ancient patriarch is redeemed by exactly what redeems you: grace, through faith, hidden in Christ. “There's no chance at all that you'll be in the kingdom and find a bunch of people hidden in Christ and then a bunch of people there by some other means.”

3. “Do not be arrogant toward the branches”

► 1:15:00

“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.”

ROMANS 11:17–20 ↗

Matt read verse 19 in a small, self-satisfied voice, because that is the tone Paul is imitating — *they were removed so that there would be a spot for me*. Yes, they were broken off. No, it was not about you. It was unbelief, and your standing is faith, and neither of those is an achievement. The whole question, start to finish, is belief against unbelief — not ancestry, not ethnicity, not culture, not kosher, not circumcision.

4. Faith in a person, not in your faith

► 1:17:54

Which raises the obvious follow-up: faith in *what*? Not a system you memorize, and not a vending machine that returns a fixed outcome when the right thoughts go in. Matt put it as carefully as he could: “I don't trust in my trust of Jesus. I trust Jesus. I don't have a ton of faith in my faith regarding Jesus. My faith is in Jesus directly.” Responding in faith is good — the altar, the tent meeting, the smell of the canvas you still remember. But “really, you're saved because Christ went to the altar.”

► 1:18:42

One more plant, he promised, and then no more:

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

JOHN 15:4–5 ↗

So the anxious questions dissolve. Does a Gentile need to become more Jewish to be upgraded? Does a Jewish believer need to stop living Jewishly to prove the point? Moot, both directions. “It's not that you've been invited to join the Christianity team. You're invited to join into Christ himself, the person.” Matt does not want benefits arriving downstream from something Jesus did over there. He wants Jesus.

5. Kindness, severity, and the power to graft back in

► 1:20:36

Paul sets kindness and severity side by side, and Matt located the severity somewhere most people do not expect it. God's severity is that he insists the gift stay a gift. "The master of the banquet insists you don't pay. That's the only way he'll have it."

► 1:21:45

Then verse 23, which Matt called remarkable, and it is. Paul does not set terms — no window that closes, no cap on how many refusals are too many. He frames it entirely around God: *God has the power to graft them in again*. "So people who are, in your mind, way far gone, super-duper rejecting of Jesus, and have been for a long time — it's God's power." That is Paul's affection for his own people showing again, the same affection that opened chapter 9.

And the one being trusted is worth the trust. Jesus is God and man without seam — no Mondays off where he is only a man, no lunch break where he is only God. Manger, tomb, resurrection, ascension, and now: a perfect harmony, which is exactly why he can be our covenant of peace with God.

6. We are only branches

► 1:24:13

Whether the olive tree's root takes in the patriarchs or is mostly Jesus alone, Christ is behind it either way — and either way, you and I are branches. Others were broken off only by unbelief; we were added only by faith. So the arithmetic never works out to superiority. "We only bear fruit because we're in him. Apart from Jesus, we are unfruitful." Matt guessed the impulse is often insecurity — you scan whatever bus you are on and decide you are probably above average. In what way, exactly, would a branch have the right to feel better than the people not yet on the tree?

► 1:26:37

"...to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another."

TITUS 3:2-3 ↗

The *we* is the redeemed sitting in church on a Sunday. Matt read the list of vices back as the description of someone we might write off, and the room laughed, because it is our own résumé. Nobody is too far

gone to be worth telling. Someone brought the light of Christ to each of us, and probably kept bringing it after we said no the first time. The temptation is to spend our words only on warm leads. His counter: “Oh, I don't know if this is going to work — but do it anyway.”

How the message ended

► 1:29:06

Not with an application list, but with a silent prayer and three questions to sit in: What are you saying to me through this text? What are you saying to me about being grafted in for free? What are you saying to me about the humility of accepting that I am not simply better than others? Then, aloud, one request — that God would stir up our faith in him, and help us abide in him confidently.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Genesis 32:28](#)
- [Psalm 14:7](#)
- [Isaiah 43:1](#)
- [Romans 5:12](#)
- [Romans 11:15–16](#)
- [John 8:56](#)
- [John 8:58](#)
- [1 Corinthians 15:20](#)
- [Colossians 1:17–18](#)
- [Romans 9:5](#)
- [1 Corinthians 10:1–4](#)
- [Revelation 13:8](#)
- [Romans 11:17–20](#)
- [John 15:4–5](#)
- [Romans 11:22–24](#)
- [Titus 3:2–3](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt argued that Christ is the root under the root — there before Abraham, and the reason the patriarchs were saved at all. What does that change about how you read the Old Testament?
2. “I don’t trust in my trust of Jesus. I trust Jesus.” Where do you notice yourself inspecting your own faith instead of resting on him?
3. Paul imitates a smug voice in verse 19. What does that arrogance sound like in our mouths today, toward people outside the church or toward other kinds of Christians?
4. God’s severity is that he refuses your payment. What are you still trying to pay him with?
5. Who have you quietly written off as too far gone — and what would it look like to bring them the light of Christ this week anyway?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvREispTzPg&t=3788s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.