

- *Actually read vs. 1,8-15,20-21*

## Introduction

- Why are we doing Summer Focus Week?
  - because we always have?
  - because we'd get a negative reaction from some people, inside or outside the church, if we cancelled it?
  - because we enjoy doing stuff together?
  - because it makes us feel good?
  - because it makes us feel like we are doing something, having some kind of effect?
  - because we like the buildings and grounds to be busy and well used?
  - because we like having the kids around?
- What I hope stands behind and underneath the best in those concerns comes from the passage in Romans we read earlier:

## People Matter to God

- Paul is God's servant - his desire follows God's desire
  - Paul's desire is that people be saved, rescued
  - he shares his masters concern for people
  - in the context here its all the more amazing!
  - his concern here is specifically for the Israelites (v.1)
  - why is that amazing?
  - because of their rejection of their own Messiah, because their leaders killed the Saviour, because they persecuted the church, because they really hated Paul himself and his preaching...
- Salvation is offered to everyone (vs.12,13)
  - no difference between Jew and Gentile, perhaps the greatest religious divide of all time
  - no-one is excluded from the offer of salvation, no matter how good or bad or how religious or irreligious...
  - the offer is made, it just need to be accepted
  - see again in the verses right at the end of the chapter, Isaiah speaking God's words, as if from God's lips...
  - reveals himself even to those who have no initial interest... God holds out his hands (in welcome and invitation) to those who are disobedient and obstinate
  - doesn't prejudge their response!
  - but on God's side, the welcome, the invitation is there - the offer of salvation is open
- People matter to God
  - he loves them... he loves us...

## God Matters to People

- The other side of the equation is that it matters what people's response to, reaction to God, is
  - "God" and our reaction to him is not an added extra in people's lives, a kind of weird hobby or personal interest
  - rather, it is fundamental to our present and our future
- The logic goes like this:
  - v.9: if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and believe and are justified with your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved
  - saved - from what? You can't be saved if you are not in danger!!
  - the word "justified" gives us a clue

- "made as if under no condemnation from the justice system"
- the danger we are in is that God in justice, in his inherent holiness, cannot but condemn our wrong doing, our selfish attitudes, our less than perfect treatment of others... and all the ways that fundamental desire to go our own way rather than go God's way expresses itself (eg 10 Commandments)
- so as sinners we stand condemned, **not justified**
- we need saved, rescued from that condemnation and the ultimate separation from God, judgement that flows from it
  
- This understanding is what lies behind the concern of vs.14-15:
  - Paul is worried about those who will not hear the gospel message, because they face a future without God, a future of judgement...
  - Paul is worried because **God matters to people** - unless they respond to him they face a terrible fate
  - these verses would make no sense at all if everyone will be fine before God in the end!
  - so Paul is wanting to stir people up to go preach, and to explain his own ministry, because people who have not heard the gospel message are in mortal danger
  
- It matters how people respond to God - **God matters to people**

## Conclusion/Application

- So what?
  
- If people matter to God, then they will matter to us
  - so we will spend time with them, even if we don't want to, even if they are obstinate...!
  - we will go out of our way to love and care for people, listening to them, supporting them, caring for them, sharing our lives with them
  - if people matter enough to God that he left heaven and took on human flesh for our sake, then we also will walk the servant path....
  
- If God matters to people, then out of common humanity we will want to introduce them to the one who saves
  - if it matters how people respond we will not rest in seeking to introduce people to God, in praying for them to be saved, in supporting those whose particular call is to proclaim the gospel message
  
- If **People Matter to God and God matters to People** then, whether it is in the context of Summer Focus Week, or whether it is in the context of our daily relationships, we will not rest from having that deep desire that people meet their Saviour, that deep desire to love and engage with the person we sit next to at the cafe during the week, the neighbour over the fence or across the stair, the work colleague or friend with whom we chat about the week's events...