

July 24, 2011
 Sermon for The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Romans 8:28-39

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Romans 8:28-39 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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¹ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version*. Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

As we look at our Epistle Text for today we begin to see some life changing, or life challenging questions that we need to consider. We are all familiar with the questioning words that we learned in school; the who, what, where, when, why, and how, but these just deal with the basic facts—important ones to be sure—but not really challenging or life changing.

But other questions are. What are you going to do with your life? College or work?, Married or not? And then there are the purpose questions. Who am I? What is my purpose? What will become of me?

And finally, there are the faith questions. Jesus asks us, Do you love me? Furthermore...do you trust me? These are the questions that really call us on the carpet. As they have to do with your entire life...even your eternal life. These are the sorts of questions that our Text raises today.

One of the first questions that Paul raises in the Text is “What then shall we say to these things?” What things is he talking about? Well of course all things. We know that there are lots of things in this world and not all of them very pretty. So what do we say in the face of those things?

Well, here’s what Paul says to all those things: “...we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.”

We often quote this verse to encourage people who are suffering or having problems. But sometimes we don't make it clear that it's God who has the power to bring good out of bad. It's God who transforms the tragedy and death of Good Friday into the joyful celebration of Resurrection on Easter.

But sometimes when we say "all things work together for good," sometimes it sounds as if we believe all things to be good; and it comes off like we're dismissing their pain and sorrow. We should be careful in using this verse in such a way so as to not cause someone to despise God's Word. When someone is in the midst of pain and sorrow, sometimes it is better to let them know that God is with them and that you will be praying for them. And sometimes just a silent presence and a shoulder to lean on is all that is needed. Words can come later, yes, even the healing Word of God has much more impact as they might be numb to anything else at the time.

God indeed works in all things, using those things to work together for good, even when we can't see it at the time. God isn't the cause of bad things; we live in a broken world that has been corrupted by sin. But God works everything for good.

Let me bring up an example. You have probably heard this one before, but I'm gonna use it anyway. A mother was trying to teach her child this very same lesson. She was teaching her child how to make a cake from scratch. Now the individual ingredients in a cake don't taste that great alone. Think of flour, salt, raw eggs, sugar, baking powder and certain spices. She had her child taste each ingredient by itself first.

Other than the sugar, the ingredients were bland, bitter or just plain gross. But as they mixed the ingredients in the proper amounts and baked them at the right temperature for the right amount of time. A very tasty cake emerged. Although this is an imperfect example, it gives us a hint of how God works.

Each event in our lives is like an individual ingredient in that cake. When the bad times strike, it's not very good. But when God takes all of the ingredients and combines them in just the right way, the outcome will be good.

God causes all things to work together for good!

This means that we can't judge the goodness of God's creation until the creation is finished. Have you ever been in a rush in any project of your own? Quite often the outcome is bad. If you are making lemonade and leave the sugar out because you were in a rush, the outcome is quite bitter. If you change your oil and forget to put the drain plug back in, you are looking at a mess or an expensive mistake as you turn the key. Or if you get in a rush to make yourself a success and you forget to come to church or forget to raise your children in a godly home, again, the outcome can be quite bad.

There are going to be bad things in our lives...and some of them we bring upon ourselves. Paul asks, "...who can be against us?"

We can come up with a whole host of people and things against us. Disease, war, money problems, thieves, murderers, depression, medical problems, and the list goes on and on.

But we can't leave the first part of the verse off, we have to ask the whole question. "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

More directly for those that call upon the name of the Lord, we can say, “Since God is for us...” That is really what Paul is saying. Since God is for us. Who can really stand against Him? All of our enemies and problems could gang up on us, and still, we will be delivered as we put our trust in Him.

After all, what has God withheld from us? Nothing, not even His only Son. God sacrificed His Son, Jesus Christ that we might have life eternal through faith in Him. Furthermore, because of Christ’s sacrifice, no one can even condemn us before God. Looking back a few verses, Paul tells us in verse one, “There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom 8:1) Let anyone speak against our salvation; bring satan himself up to make his accusation...because that’s all he can do is accuse. For those that are bought by the blood of Christ Jesus, have been fully paid for by that blood. The one who will return in judgment has already died for you... No matter what you might have done, no matter the circumstances of your death, if you call upon Jesus’ name in faith, you are forgiven. Because really,

Who can separate us from the love of Christ? “...neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God said it, I believe it, and therefore, we can rise above anything that satan and this world can throw at us, because as Paul tells us, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” And that Him is none other than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

So conquers in Christ, rise and go forth in the name of Jesus and carry
His Gospel to all the nations. (MT. 28:19-20)

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and
minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.