

July 27, 2014
Sermon for The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
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Romans 8:28–39 (ESV)

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.

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

Amen.

Our text poses some life-changing questions for us to consider. We're all familiar with some of the basic questions of life: who, what, where, when, how, and why. These questions deal with the basic facts and information—important, but not always life-changing.

Other questions are life-changing: What job will you have or what college will you go to? What do you want to do when you grow up? Will you marry me? Then there are the purpose questions: Who am I? Where am I going? What will become of me? What's my purpose for being here?

Finally, perhaps, there are the faith questions. Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" This question is colored by another: "Do you trust me?" These are the sorts of questions that will really change your life, even your eternal life. It's real life-changing questions that our text today raises.

The first question Paul raises in our text is simply this: "*What then shall we say to these things?*" (v 31a).

What things? "All things." *All* things?

You may recall from last week's Epistle that Paul talked about creation and we ourselves groaning, suffering the effects of this sin-corrupted world and longing for the glory that's to be revealed in us in the future.

Lots of things aren't pretty in this fallen world. What then shall we say in the face of those things—*all* those things, including the un-pretty ones?

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*" (v 28).

We often quote this verse to encourage people who are suffering. When we tell them that "all things work together for good," we fail to make clear that it's God who has power to bring good out of bad—who transforms Good Fridays into Easters.

However ... be careful, when we say "all things work together for good," it might sound as if we believe "all things" **to be good**—that we're not considering or dismissing their pain. If we seem flip about it, the phrase "all things work together for good" comes across as uncaring, as if we were saying,

"Don't sweat it—it's going to be okay."

If that becomes the case, we shouldn't be surprised if the sufferer dismisses our good intentions—and dismisses us as spiritual caregivers as well.

The real point of the verse is this: "We know that God works in all things." Or "God causes all things to work together for good."

God isn't the cause of bad things; we live in a broken world because of sin. God works in all things for our good. That's good news.

To illustrate, the ingredients that go into a cake are not very tasty when eaten individually. Flour, sugar, shortening, eggs, salt, baking powder, and spices are not something we want to eat one ingredient at a time.

But mix all of these together in just the right proportions and then bake the combined mixture, and you have a delicious treat.

Each event in our life is like one ingredient in a cake. It may not seem good by itself, but when mixed by God with other events, it will surely produce what is good.

God causes all things to work together for good. This means we can't judge the goodness of God's work until His plan is finished. Have you ever been too hasty in testing the cake batter? Almost always the result is less than good. Until God's recipe for our lives is complete, we shouldn't judge God's cooking.

So that's the first thing we want to say about these things, all things.

The next life-changing question our text asks is "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" (v 31b). The question is not simply "Who can be against us?" You could answer that one. Who's against you? Disease, inflation, exhaustion, calamities, earthquakes, hurricanes, you name them. We can easily list our foes. But that's not the question. The question is "If God is for us, who can be against us?" More directly, the thrust of the text is "Since God is for us." Paul is saying that since God is for us, it really doesn't matter who's against us. All our enemies could gang up on us at the same time, and even operating together, they're no match for God.

Again: *God is for us!*

Perhaps we should say those four words every morning as we awake.

This is how God is working all things for good!

Now to the pivotal question: "*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?*" (v 32).

How far is God willing to go for us?

What limits has He placed on His love of us?

God has gone to the extreme limits for us.

He did not spare His Son, but sent Him to the cross for the love of us.

We shout again, God is for us!

And here we go again with those words “all things.”

Will He not give us all things, not only all the things of our salvation?

All things? Did God save us so that we'd be slaves to worry about all the things of this world? Would He go to the cross for us and then rob us of the joy of living? Why would He go to the cross for us and then turn a deaf ear to our prayers? We can trust His Word, “all things.” We say again, God's love is for us!

“Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?” (v 33).

Satan in the courtroom scene turns up the heat with his accusations. Our answer: Since God is for us, what other opinion matters? Every voice that accuses us, even our own voice, holds no court in the presence of a God who spared nothing for us. We say again, God is for us!

“Who is to condemn?” (v 34). We go back to Rom 8:1:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

There is no one to condemn because God is for us. The only one who has the right to condemn is Jesus; He has already answered the question with the offering of His own life. Just think: sitting next to God is the one who died for us.

Our defense attorney continues to speak to us. God is for us.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (v 35a).

Paul makes a list in order of increasing intensity. *“Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?”* (v 35b).

This list is an exercise in futility in full view of God’s love for us.

If we are moved by our sinful nature to believe the intensity of this list, our great God invites us to take another look at His love for us. We die with Him to our sin, and we are raised with Him.

Nothing, *“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”* (vv 38–39),

and

Since Nothing Can Separate Us from Christ Jesus, God Is for Us—the Answer to All Life-Changing Questions.

Because God is for us, we can rise above every adversity, not merely cope, but conquer. Because nothing, absolutely nothing can separate us from God, because of His Son’s death and resurrection, we possess all things with him. And we know this for sure because God is for us.

Amen.

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

Amen.

Nothing Can Separate Us from Christ Jesus, God Is for Us
Romans 8:28-39

1. What then shall we say to these things?
2. He who did not spare His own Son, how will He not give us all things?
3. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?