

And I'm going to read the last bit of Romans, chapter 8. I'm going to read verses 34 through 39. Who then is the one who condemns no one? Christ Jesus, who died more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written, for your sake, we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. You can go ahead and have a seat.

And as you do, I would invite you to get comfortable. Take a few deep breaths. Just be centered on the presence of the Holy Spirit with us. As Sean brings the word this morning, he is going to bring just that, the word, scripture, start to finish. And that's where we will spend our morning as we reflect on the love of God that makes us more than conquerors.

Let's pray.

God, thank you for your word.

Thank you for your love. God, as we hear this scripture this morning, would you help us hear it as if for the first time? Help us hear it in a fresh way with an open heart. God, let these words wash over us and transform us and point our hearts to you. So in Jesus name we pray these things.

Amen.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light.

And there is light. Then God said, let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness. So God created mankind in his image, in the image of God. He. He created them.

Male and female. He created them. God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

And there was evening and there was morning. The sixth day.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden. The Lord

God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

Now, the serpent was more crafty than any of the other wild animals the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, did God really say, you must not eat from any tree?

The woman said to the serpent, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden. But God did say, you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not touch it or you will die. You will not certainly die. The serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat from that tree, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

When the woman saw that the fruit on the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some of it and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of day. And they hid from the Lord God among the trees in the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, where are you? And he answered, I. I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked. So I hid.

And he said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? And the man said, the. The woman you put here with me. She gave me some of the fruit from the tree and I ate it.

And the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done? The woman said, the serpent deceived me, and I ate it. So the Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head. You will strike his heel.

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the Earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human

heart was only evil all the time.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord because of the Lord's great love for us. We are not consumed for his compassion never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness, I say to myself, the Lord is my portion, therefore I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.

It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. I called on your name, Lord. From the depths of the pit you heard my plea. Do not close your ears from my cry for relief. You came near when I called you, and you said, do not be afraid.

Then Moses said to him, if your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth? And the Lord said to Moses, I will do the very thing you have asked because I am pleased with you and I know you by name. Then Moses said, now show me your glory.

The Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving, wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sin of their parents to the third and fourth, fourth generation. And Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.

Praise the Lord, my soul, all my inmost being. Praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul and forget not his benefits. Who forgives all your sin and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. And he will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on all who fear him.

In those days, Israel had no king, and everyone did as they saw fit.

The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors.

God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to those I carried off into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. When 70 years are completed in Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future.

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart.

He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart. They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.

The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his namesake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit in me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the Joy of my salvation. And grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

You, God, will not despise who. Who is a God like you, who pardons sins and forgives. You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us. You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all of our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light on those living in the land of deep darkness. A light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince Peace.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph. But before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Joseph, son of David.

And do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. And they will call him a man who.

Which means God. With us the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father full of truth and grace. And the next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin sins of the world. I have seen and I testify that this is God's chosen one.

For God so loved the world that he did not that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, they muttered to themselves, this man welcomes sinners and. And eats with them. And then Jesus told them this parable.

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, father, give me my share of the estate. And so he divided up his property between them. Not long after that, the Young son got together all that he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth and wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a

severe famine in that whole country and he began to be in need.

And so he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have food to spare? And here I am starving to death. I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.

And so he got up and he went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to his father, father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to the servants, who quick, bring the best robe and put it on him.

Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive. He was lost, and then he was found.

And so they began to celebrate.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering. Yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him.

And by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned our own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed. My God, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will, but as you will.

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And with a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person. Though for a good person, someone might dare to possibly die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life? Why do you look for the living amongst the dead? He is not here. He is risen. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

The old is gone, the new is here. And all of this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, not counting people's sins against them. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. And I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with a power through his spirit, in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all of the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know that this love that surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us, to him be the glory and the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly await for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, look, God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who is seated on the throne said, I am making everything new. So what then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us who can be against us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, for your sake, we face death all day long. We are

considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No.

In all of these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He who testifies to these things say, yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.

Amen.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God will endure forever.

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