

God For Us

King of Glory Lutheran Church
Year A: 8th Sunday after Pentecost
Romans 8:26-39

God is yet “for us” even now in the midst of this pandemic. We are given prayers, salvation, hope, and glory through Jesus Christ. There is nothing - not even this pandemic that can separate us from God’s love. We might feel otherwise, but God is for us!

Romans 8:26-39

²⁶The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor 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’s grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit! Amen.

Instead of preaching another weekend on parables, I decided we needed to hear some of the most comforting words from the Apostle Paul written in the book of Romans.

This weekend we as God's people get to celebrate both of our Holy Sacraments during worship: Holy Communion and Holy Baptism. Sacraments are an outward visible sign of God's inward grace for us. As we eat the bread and drink the wine, we hear the words, "For you!" Christ's body and blood given and shed, FOR YOU! Likewise as we participate in Loan's baptism, we hear that she is baptized into Christ, she is given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, she is marked with Christ's cross. All of those are God initiated and are, "For you!"

Over and over again God comes to us, grants us new life and forgiveness, and God says to us, "This is all for you!"

Paul is quick to remind us that God is yet for us! If God is for us, who can be against us?

Yet right now, the pandemic might make us feel just the opposite. St Paul puts forth a statement in this passage that nothing can separate us from God. I'm guessing that many of us do feel separated from God. Right now we might think or feel, where is God in all of this? It seems God isn't for us but against us!

We are a people weary. Weary of shootings, of masks, of new ways of doing and moving. Tired of being cut off and saying hello from 6 feet away.

We are a people lonely. Lonely for authentic connection. Lonely for family and friends. Lonely and longing for what used to be knowing that what used to be ... might never be again.

We are a people wondering and worried. Wondering when does it end? When will there be a vaccine? Who will I know that will die of covid?

The virus is now reaching people who live where there are no Personal Protective Equipment. Left defenseless, without ventilators and first rate hospitals, the virus will ravage God's people all over the world.

The sin and death of creation holds us in bondage.

But there it is! Right on the page! Verse 31! If God is for us, who is against us? This God gave up, handed over, sent God's only Son to the cross to die for us in Love. There is no greater sacrifice!

Hmm. Most of us, haven't come to the point of offering up a child to death for the sake of the greater good. If you've lost a child through military service or to injustice and prejudice of another kind, you certainly know a bit of what God experienced in losing Jesus.

Because God did that, God also, Paul writes, will give us anything else!

Paul ought to know. He sat in prisons. Jailed by his captors, he knew enough suffering to make him be weary, lonely and worried! At least we can leave the house if we want to. Paul was subject to the chains that bound him. Paul listed it all right there for us – his life textbook of suffering: hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword.

Yet through all of that, Paul has the audacity to say,

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

More than conquerors! God is not against us. God is for us and God is still at work! Through our suffering, through our peril and weariness, loneliness and worry, God can transform that into new life.

When I was a pastor in South Dakota, there was a saying, "Just pull up your bootstraps." Like, "get over it. No sense wasting time drowning in your sorrows. The cows got to fed and the hay mowed. Now git!"

Did any of you grow up in a place like that or a family like that?

Paul encourages us that God – within our suffering – God is still for us. God is at work transforming our suffering, because we know that all things work together for good for those who love God. God takes the loss, the fear, the worry, the loneliness and re-creates it into yet undiscovered strength. Or a community that pulls together in ways it never has. Or a church that finds out who it can be outside its own doors! God sits with the weary medical worker when they believe they cannot work another day. Then God gets them out of their car. God opens eyes to see racial injustice in ways we haven't seen before. God is still for us!

Is it hard to see? Certainly can be. But listen to this! When we get so overwhelmed, we don't know what to pray for or how to pray...God through the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf! Prays for us! Prays for the challenge we can't even begin to get our heads around.

When we say, "Lord in your mercy," God says, "Oh don't I know! Don't you think I don't know! You think I don't know what is going on with you all? I got this! I been groaning with you since the beginning of time. Just keep breathing. Keep breathing."

So we keep breathing, we keep praying, we keep walking, because it's really not about us is it? Truth be told, its only God that is keeping us breathing, praying and walking anyway!

When you eat this bread and drink from this cup this day, taste and see the Lord is For You, for us! When you see the water dripping from Loan's face, remember without a doubt, God is For you! For us!

God is for us! There is nothing and Paul means nothing in all of God's created world that could ever keep God from loving us.

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor 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.

People of God hear what I say! God loves us. Neither weariness, loneliness, worry, nor coronavirus or Covid 19, nor unemployment and lack of money, nor racism, nor white privilege, nor fear inducing media, nor fake news, nor politicians, nor random shootings, nor N95 masks, nor the death of your loved one or even...yourself. Nothing will ever stop God from loving you. God is FOR you – now and until eternity.

Amen