

“IF GOD IS FOR US”
JULY 26, 2020 SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
(abbreviated COVID 19 service/50% seating capacity)
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

HYMN #510 AH (8 OVH) “How Great Thou Art” (congregation remains seated for all singing)

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy Hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

CHORUS

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

And when I think of God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art

PRAYER

CHILDREN’S SERMON: Romans 8:31 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

EPISTLE LESSON: *Romans 8:28-39*

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? 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, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? 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. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

*"For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered 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 convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 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.

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

SERMON TITLE: "IF GOD IS FOR US" Romans 8:27-39

PERSPECTIVE: One of the things that I miss about not flying an airplane any more is perspective. When you get off of the ground, things that seemed so large are now tiny. From 2,000 feet our house is just a little speck. From 30,000 feet Chicago is about the size of a quarter...can you imagine how small the things of this earth seem from God's throne in heaven? The other thing I miss about flying is that amazing moment when you take off on a dark and dreary day and penetrate through the clouds and then all of a sudden break out into the glorious sunshine and blue skies that were there all the time. Most of you have flown in an airplane and have experienced that moment. I think of death that way...leaving a painful old body and the soul leaving the world of worry and breaking forth into the glorious, eternal light of God forever.

IF: Romans 8 is all about perspective for the child of God. *Romans 8:1 addresses the audience as "those who are in Christ Jesus."* *"There is therefore now no condemnation for THOSE who are IN CHRIST JESUS...*that is the redeemed, the saved, the born again, true believers...people who have been touched by the saving grace of God and the forgiveness of the blood of Christ on Calvary's cross. Today we look at three basic truths that really make our lives pleasant if we lay hold of them. We use *Romans 8:31 as our theme: "If God be for us."* Let's talk about it.

I. ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

REALITY: There are many things that happen to us in life, some pleasant and some painful. People help and hurt us. Sickness and health come our way. Work can be rewarding and difficult. We have pleasant weather and destructive storms. We have joy and sorrow. Babies are born, loved ones die. For the child of God there is a Divine hand leading and guiding and mixing all of this together in such a way that it eventually turns out for good...somehow.

RECIPE: I heard a man put it this way once: Do you like flour? Do you like raw eggs? Do you like vegetable oil? Do you like salt or baking soda? Do you like unsweetened chocolate? Do you like raw sugar? But if you put them all together and mix them up in various amounts what do you get? Cake, chocolate chip cookies, brownies, fudge and much more. That is the way life is. Some things are sweet, some things are bitter, some things make you gag, but put together in the right way they are delightful.

RESET: Last Thursday I was supposed to speak at the Marie Sandvik Center but the director missed my communication to her and scheduled someone else. It turns out that a youth group from a church did the program and that was the perfect date for them. Dave Osthus and I went down there with food and clothing later in the afternoon and the timing was just perfect to run into Dave's brother and son working outside their house...a meeting we have been wanting to arrange for years. We have been praying for him with his cancer battle. And it happened in a natural way that opened doors for the future. God's timing is perfect, even when it doesn't seem so. Someone once said, "Jesus was never in a hurry but always was on time."

Life is so much easier to enjoy if we have the confidence in the sovereignty and goodness of God...that EVERYTHING IS WORKING FOR GOOD for His children.

II. GOD IS MAKING US HOLY

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

PREDESTINED: Too often we stop reading at the end of verse 28 and skip down to the end of the chapter. But 29 and 30 are amazing verses. They talk about predestination. Notice what the goal of predestination is here: "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." It is talking about the full restoration of the image of God in us that was lost in the fall...true righteousness, holiness and a mind filled with true knowledge. If we look at Jesus we see what it looks like in a human being. He spoke truth, he cared for the lost, he confronted evil and hypocrisy, he humbled himself to death on the cross...he loved, he healed, he forgave...even those who were crucifying Him. He rose from the dead, never to die again in a new and glorified body that could eat a fish and then walk through a wall, fish and all. Everyone that Jesus has touched from then until now has been transformed: A song puts it this way: "Something beautiful, something good, all my confusion, He understood. All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife, but He made something beautiful, out of my life."

ARTIST: God is an artist and he is working out a plan to make us beautiful and Christ like, one issue at a time. I wish some of you could have seen our rural property when we bought it. The barn was falling to pieces, the weeds were six feet tall, the landscape was devastated from decades of use as a cattle lot. I remember many years ago when it was a farm with a house but it was bulldozed, house, orchard and all and made into an industrial farm site and then abandoned when the farmer was killed in an accident. But for 26 years we have picked up old machinery parts, pulled weeds, planted countless trees, repaired the barn one board at a time...taking 25 years to slowly jack it up back straight and tall again. We have been artists, slowly creating a work of art in the image we have in our minds.

PROCESS: God is doing this in our broken and weedy life. This process is called sanctification...it goes until we die. Sometimes I believe the greatest leap into Christ likeness comes the last months of our life when we let go of the things of this earth and only focus on what is important. I have mentioned that the most beautiful, tender, romantic moments of my parents' marriage I observed was when my mom was very weak and bed ridden the last few weeks of her life and my dad put everything in his life aside to just hold her hand and care for her with a tenderness I never saw before. GOD IS MAKING US HOLY.

III. NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM HIS LOVE

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 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.

SECURITY: A large business in our culture is security...locks, cameras, alarms, fences, guns, body guards, armor...the list never ends all the ways that we have to pay large amounts of money to protect ourselves and our possessions. Even if no one ever steals our possessions, old age and death will eventually take everything away from us. To the atheist or the unbeliever, this is a most difficult reality. But to the child of God it is not a problem because we know that fullness of life really “begins” for us after we die and go to heaven.

1 Peter 1:3&4 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,”

BEDTIME: There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. When my son was a little boy, I would tuck him into bed and say to him that there was nothing he could ever do that would stop me from loving him and that he was always welcome at home. How much more does God in heaven keep His promise to love us to the end. We cannot fathom God’s love for His children, faulty as we are. His love for us began before time and creation in eternity past. *Jeremiah 31:3 “I have loved you with an EVERLASTING love.”*

QUESTION: These three points give us that airplane-like perspective to help us live with vitality and security...we see the big picture and don’t sweat the small stuff. If you see the value of ALL THINGS WORKING OUT WELL, A TRANSFORMED LIFE, AND SECURITY IN CHRIST’S LOVE FOREVER it leads us to the all-important question: Am I in Christ Jesus? Do you know that you know that you know Christ is in you and you are in Christ? That is the most important issue you will face in all eternity. The blood of the innocent Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary fully paid for all your sins but have you claimed that gift by repenting of your sin and putting your faith in the finished work of Christ. Would you like to receive Him today? Don’t put it off if the Spirit is calling your name. Today is the day of salvation, not tomorrow. Won’t you pray with me?

Dear God in Heaven. You are holy and I am sinful. I repent of my sins. I am truly sorry for them. But I believe Jesus died for me on the cross and I now invite Him into my heart to be my Savior and Lord...to wash away my sin and to adopt me as a child of God. Thank you that all things will now work for good, you will change my life and that nothing will every separate me from your love. In Jesus’ Name. Amen

PRAISE SONG: Hannah Carrizales

PRAYER & LORD’S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

DOXOLOGY: **Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson