**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.

**“What Shall We Say?”**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Questions bombard our lives. Some deal with daily life. What time should you get up? Do you want to super-size that? Did anyone take out the trash? Other questions seek answers for life. What do you want to be when you grow up? How long will you go to school? When am I going to meet the right person to marry? Finally, there are deeper questions that fall upon life. Who do you fear, love, and trust above all things? Why are decisions over life and death so hard? Where can I go when suffering seems to be the only answer?

Questions have been around since the Fall into sin and they will remain until the Last Day. The blessing we have is the joy that St. Paul points out in the text today. It is the Gospel, the good news not of another question, but God’s answer given to us in the gift of His Son. Hermann Sasse, a German Lutheran pastor gave the warning, “We all stand in great danger of having the fearful seriousness of our time, the concerns in the church and in the parsonage, even the concerns about the church which are commanded to us, not to allow the great joy to arise, or kill it” (A Little Book On Joy 4). In other words, the Law replaces the Gospel, works snuff out faith, or clouds of life block out what God shines as light for sinners. Let the questions come as they may nothing separates us from Jesus Christ.

What shall we say to these things? This is the question arising repeatedly in a fallen world. “These things” means anything that makes us seek an answer for suffering and the not so pretty things we face. Some try to use science to speak, but apart from what God says it is an ever-changing answer with no comfort. Others attempt to use supportive words like “all thing work together for good,” but that can downplay the pain or make the circumstances seem okay. Those Christians in Iraq suffering great hardship are dealing with nothing less than pure evil and hatred. There is no positive spin to put on it, no explanation when facing sin, death, and the Devil.

The only answer is as St. Paul said, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” God does not cause evil. This comes from the devil and those in a sinful world. Yet, God does know how to deal with the darkness. He works in it for our good despite the circumstances. This is the hope hidden in Good Friday that knows what has arisen on Easter. In Christ, God says to all these things, “It is finished.” Rather than an explanation, a better Savior has dealt with all suffering and sadness for our good. As the early Church Father Jerome states, “Let calamity strike, let every kind of disaster fall, as long as after the catastrophe Christ comes” (ACC).

Who shall we see be against us? This question does not always have an easy answer. Enemies lurk throughout the world and in our lives. Most can list all kinds of dangers. Watch the news and you have plenty to talk about over coffee. The Devil is also just waiting to devour you like a lion with all His lies. We even discover at the heart of it all our conscience becomes an enemy accusing us daily. However, whatever we see in fear can miss the greater glory revealed for all to see by faith. It stands on those words, “God is for us.” This is not some generic god made up in our image to be a false comfort. St. Paul answers the question of what we see against us with a more faithful question to see God. “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?”

God has gone to the farthest extremes. The Father more than sent His Son, but gave him up. The Greek notes it more graphically that He has “handed Him over.” This is how God is for us. He gave Jesus to sinners. “Christ is the greatest gift of grace” (Bul’s notes). He alone gave up all He had in glory from heaven to purchase you the hidden treasure who hears Him on earth. He alone is the pearl of great price revealing His kingdom glorified by the cross. God graciously giving us all things, must begin not with the least in life, but the greatest gift for life. To see Christ by faith is to know God is for us. St. John proclaims, “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4). All enemies fall before Jesus who endured suffering and death to save sinners. Baptism in His Name means no longer being slaves, but sons of another kingdom.

How shall we stay connected? Our hands, works, or efforts will only create more questions. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword are a list of intense forms of separation in this world. Worse than pride seeing no need for God is despair that denies His presence when we are in need. Our Lutheran Fathers declare, “…the highest form of divine service is sincerely to seek and call upon this same Jesus Christ in every time of need” (Tappert 47:3.) What remains for us is the great love God gladly gives. His service, His Divine Service, greets us by Word and Sacrament to what He has promised. Rather than a motivational speech, Christ speaks to forgive sinners by His Word. Instead of coping with sin, death, and the Devil, Christ conquers them with the life of His true body and blood shed for you.

Lovelessness leads to separation and we see much of this today. It splinters family, church, and state for ways that are not God’s ways. Only Christ holds out a connection bound by God to the cross that cannot be broken. Only He calls those drawing away to repent and believe in what He gives by the Gospel. Only His love is pure and undefiled to let us love others as He has loved. All other things are questionable, but God will not be quiet for your sake. He paid the greatest price to give an answer that what will never change. To reject this kind of connection only comes by our own hand that has no need of such love. Let the questions come as they may nothing separates us from Jesus Christ. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.