

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Pentecost 10 – August 14th and 17th, 2014

Romans 8:28-30

“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. 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. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Dear children of God who know Christ's love. Amen

From the time we are little boys and girls we become familiar with the words of John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** In catechism class we learn how on the cross all sins of all people of all time have been paid by the suffering and death of Jesus - for God so loved the world. We often discuss telling others about Jesus as we talk about Jesus Great Commission **“to go and make disciples of all nations.”** We are all about sharing our faith with the people of Watertown - for God so loved the world. As a church body we send missionaries to places like Malawi, Brazil, Taiwan, India, Sweden, and other places all over the globe – for God so loved the world. God's love for the world is what drives our mission and our ministry. But sometimes I wonder if we get so focused on God's global love for the world that we almost forget that God so loved you and me.

Today, just for a few moments I don't want you to think about anyone but yourself. For the next 15 minutes don't worry about training your children in the way they should go or honoring your father and your mother that it may go well with you. As strange as it might sound, I don't want you to be thinking about loving your neighbor as yourself or going to make disciples of all nations right now. For right now all I want you to think about is that God so loved you. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans is going to help you focus on the God who so loved you. Paul is writing to a people like us who needed to be reminded that God so loved them. They were people who struggled with sin and whose lives were filled with suffering. Paul has been writing to these struggling and suffering people about frustration, groaning, and weakness. And then in verse 28 we read, **“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.”** It is the thoughts of this verse that will guide us this morning as we remember:

Sermon Theme: God Works Everything For Our Good!

- 1. According to his plan**
- 2. According to his grace**

I imagine there were some struggling and suffering people who read these words and thought, “Yeah right, what good is God working in my frustrations, groaning, and weakness?” I imagine there are some struggling and suffering people who hear these words today and think the same thing.

A young mother is crying in the bathroom. She is hiding from her children. She doesn't want to worry them. She has been going through the bills. She is trying to decide whether to pay for heat or food. She knows that soon creditors will be calling but she has nothing to give them. She is thinking, “What good is God working in this?”

A woman sits in the doctor's office waiting for her test results. She thinks to herself that she is much too young to be there. The conversation she is about to have with her doctor is one that only old people are supposed to have. She is a strong woman and has overcome a lot of adversity in her life. But how can she fight a disease she cannot even see? She is thinking, “What good is God working in this?”

An older man sits alone in his house. Recently his wife passed away. His children have all moved away and are busy with their lives. Most weeks they are too busy to even call. What few friends he has left are struggling with health issues of their own. The man longs for the days when his house was filled with the

sounds of children playing. Now the silence is deafening. He is thinking, “What good is God working in this?”

You struggle and suffer. Your life is filled with similar frustrations, groaning, and weakness. You hear the words, **“in all things God works for the good of those who love him”** and you can’t help but think, “What good is God working in this?”

I believe the apostle Paul knew the struggling and suffering saints in Rome were questioning their good working God. I think that is why in verses 29 and 30 Paul reminds them that God works good for them past, present, and future. Paul wrote, **“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. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”**

From eternity past God has worked good for you. Paul reminds the struggling and suffering saint that God foreknew them. Before the creation of the world God had intimate knowledge of you. He knew who your parents would be and where you would be born. He knew what talents and abilities you would have and he knew what talents and abilities you would not have. God has known you for thousands of years. God knows you better than you know yourself. And God knows the plans he has for you. **“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)**

Paul reminds the struggling and suffering saint of God’s plans for them by reminding them that God predestined them. God’s ancient plan has always been to make you one of his children. God’s plan has always been to change you from a dead, hostile, object of wrath into a living, holy, object of love. God decided beforehand, he determined ahead of time that you would be saved. From eternity past God has worked good for you.

It is during moments of weakness that God comes and reassures us, **“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** I suppose you might be wondering, how can I have that confident faith to trust that no matter what is happening in my life it is all for my good? The answer is found in the following verses. **“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. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”** Here God is reminding us that he has always had a plan for our lives. A plan that took into consideration every situation, every mistake, every mishap that might ever occur. It was a plan God put into place before you were born.

The four verbs in that last verse can be thought of as links in the chain of eternal salvation. The first link is that God predestined or chose you. That means your choosing had nothing to do with who you are or what you did but it was purely by his grace. That truth brings us to the next link in the chain, **“those he predestined, he also called.”** How did he call us? When we were dead in sin he sent the Holy Spirit to call us to faith through water and the Word. He washed us of our sins and adopted us into his family of believers.

The third link in the chain, **“those he called he also justified.”** This link is really the one that holds the whole chain together. We now stand before our God justified, that is, declared not guilty because of what Christ has done for us. Jesus came to take our place under God’s holy law for us. He was perfect for every time we have sinned. Jesus was abandoned, beaten and suffered a horrible death on the cross to pay our sins in full. And through Jesus’ suffering, death resurrection we are assured of forgiveness and our own resurrection.

But his plan didn’t end there. We are told, **“Those he justified he glorified.”** We often think of glory as a future event. But here and elsewhere in the Bible it talks about glory and eternal life as something we have now. Jesus himself says, **“Whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life.”** How can this be? As we look at our lives now, they don’t seem too glorious. Yet, in God’s mind, who is not bound by time, our glorious end in the mansions of heaven is an accomplished fact. That is God’s goal for us. It is not to make our lives healthier and happier here and now, his goal is to bring us to heaven which Christ has accomplished for us through his life death and resurrection.

So what does this all mean for our lives here and now? It means we need to view everything that happens to us through the eyes of faith that God’s desire is to save us and bring us to be with him forever. It is a plan he put into motion from eternity. It is a plan he accomplished through the working of his Son. It

means no matter what we go through in this life, it will all work out for our eternal good because God has been and always will be at work for us using all things, the good, the bad, even evil, pain, sorrow and sin to serve his purpose and carry out his plan to save us and bring us home to heaven.

God accomplishes his ancient plans for you by working present good for you. Paul reminds the struggling and suffering saint that God has called them. Through the means of grace, through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, God calls you. It is not a mistake or a coincidence that you are here this morning. God knew the day that the waters of baptism would wash away your sin. He knew the person he would send to share with you the words of everlasting life. It is not an accident that you are here today. I could say something about God's goodness for every person that is here today. God sent the person and arranged the event and set up the circumstances so that you would be called **"out of darkness into his wonderful light."**

Paul reminds the struggling and suffering saint what God's calling means by reminding them that God justified them. The sin you inherited from Adam and Eve and the sins that you commit day after day made you anything but right before God. But you have been put back into a right relationship with God. Every sin that Jesus resisted and every temptation that he overcame were resisted and overcome with you in mind. Every lash of the whip endured, every piercing of the nails that he suffered, and every drop of blood that was spilled was endured, suffered, and spilled for you. God has called you by the means of grace and justified you through his son. At present God is working good for you.

God has worked good for you in the past, he is working good for you at present, and to the everlasting future God works good for you. Paul reminds the struggling and suffering saint that God glorified them. On the last day you will be raised from the dead to live forever. In heaven God will transform your lowly body to be like his glorious body. You will be filled with joy in his presence and receive eternal pleasures from his right hand. He will wipe every tear from your eyes never again will you experience frustrations, groaning, and weakness those things will have passed away. To your everlasting future God works good for you.

God works all things for your good. Those are not just mere words to make you feel a little better when things go wrong in your life, they are words you can trust without a doubt. You can be confident that no matter what you face in life, no matter how hard things get, no matter how many tears you shed, it will all work out for your good. God says so! He has planned it all out for you! And even though you may not always see or understand it, it will all work out for your good because your God was, is and always will be working for you carrying out his eternal plan to save you!

I know when you are struggling and suffering you can't always see what good God is working in your frustrations, groaning and weakness. But never doubt that God works good for you. From eternity past, to the present, to the everlasting future- God works good for you who love him who have been called according to his purpose. For God so loved you.

Now that you have been reminded that God so loved you, you can once again concern yourself with the training of your children in the way they should go and the honoring of your father and mother that it may go well with you. Now you can think about loving your neighbor as yourself and making disciples of all nations. It says in 1 John 4:19, **"We love because he first loved us."** Having been reminded that God so loved you, you are better able to share the message of, For God so loved the world. Amen