

Pastor Jon's Sermon from July 30, 2023 based on Romans 8:26-39.

“Nothing”

So what did you learn in church today? Nothing. That nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

A person was walking out of church last night and said, “Thanks for nothing pastor?” She got me. It made me think for a minute.

Because on this Healing Sunday our Romans 8 lesson talks about the invincible love of God... especially in times of hardship and despair, I would like to share a poem by Helen Steiner Rice called “God's Love” that uses ocean imagery to describe the expanse of God's love.

God's Love is like an island in life's ocean vast and wide – a peaceful, quiet shelter from the restless, rising tide...

God's love is like an anchor when the angry billows roll – a mooring in the storm of life, a stronghold for the soul...

God's love is like a fortress and we seek protection there when the waves of tribulation seem to drown us in despair...

God's love is like a harbor where our souls can find sweet rest from the struggle and the tension of life's fast and futile quest...

God's love is like a beacon burning bright with faith and prayer and through the changing scenes of life we can find a haven there!

I love this poem because even when we are overwhelmed by the storms of life, the waves of despair, and the struggle and tension of life's fast and futile quest, God's love is still there. God is deeply present with us not just in the good times, but also in our times of loss as well. This love is found in the Easter story when Christ died and rose again. Because of the cross and resurrection, there is nothing physical, spiritual, or cosmic that can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus.

Wow, what a promise. Romans 8 is pure Gospel, pure good news to us believers. It is one of my favorite texts to read to people in the hospital, or in their homes, or at funerals. I covers it all. I will read it

at Thomas Weinke's funeral at 3:00PM today. It speaks of God's Amazing Grace and love for us.

Romans 8:26-27 talks about prayer. How many of you can relate to the Apostle Paul when he says, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought"? We all struggle with prayer don't we. Rather than giving up on prayer, consider one of the most gracious texts about prayer in the Bible. It says the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. It intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

Everyone just take a few deep breaths, think of something on your mind that is weighing you down, and sigh. That is a prayer. Our sighs oftentimes are accompanied by our thoughts. I heard a young man sigh deeply as we sat and planned out his grandpa's funeral. He didn't say many words, but in his sigh, he said it all. He missed his grandpa. The Holy Spirit, takes our human thoughts and prayers and intercedes according to the will of God. This takes the pressure off us to be perfect in our prayers, but to just have a talk with God, or even a deep sigh.

This reminds me of a time when I visited a lady in a nursing home in my first call as a pastor in North Dakota. She was concerned that God wasn't hearing her prayers because she always fell asleep and never said "In Jesus name" at the end. I read this passage from Romans to her, and assured her, the Holy Spirit, interceded for her.

The next section says that "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to God's purpose". Even though God doesn't will bad things to happen to us, because God is love, God can work some good out of our struggles and challenges in our lives. Take my dad's cancer for example. Cancer sucks. I wish I still had my dad. But I feel called to do something good out of it, so I choose to give blood every chance I get. I sat with my dad at the cancer center in Weston Wisconsin and watched him get blood transfusions. Somebody donated that blood.

Finally, in Romans 8:31-39, Paul asks Christians in Rome going through a tough time for sharing their faith, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will Hardship, distress, persecution, famine,

nakedness, or peril or sword? No. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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.”

Nothing the world does to you, nothing you do or don't do, nothing our politicians do or don't do can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. What does that mean to you? How does this promise call us to live differently in a world filled with hardships and trouble?

No matter what happens, Jesus is with us. The cross tells us so. It tells us that no matter what happens in our lives or in our world, God, who did not withhold God's own Son, will never give up on us or abandon us. So what did you learn today? Nothing. Amen