

SERMON – 26/7/26

Romans 8:28-39

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8:35)

As we begin this morning I would like you to take a moment to bring to mind something that is giving you particular cause for concern just now. It might be in regard to yourself or a member of your family or a friend – perhaps health concerns or relationships with others. It might concern something that is in the news at the moment – challenges that are being faced in our community or in the nation or in the wider world. I hope you don't lie awake at night worrying about things, and I hope you don't find yourself distracted from the ordinary business of living by thoughts that consume your waking hours, but if you do, that's the kind of thing I want you to name before God this morning. Even the act of naming it might be difficult for you, because we often try and kid ourselves that if we don't mention the hard things we face they might just go away of their own accord. You might even be surprised at what comes to mind because sometimes we worry about things unconsciously and don't even realise we have something on our mind. But be brave and come with me on this. Go on, admit it to yourself. There are things that are happening to you or around you that preoccupy you, trouble you, even frighten you.

Last week we read the immediately previous verses from Romans 8 and Emma encouraged us to think about our physical bodies and this physical world – fearfully and wonderfully made by God – and to recognise that though we as human beings and the whole planet often find ourselves groaning, we do so not only because things can be tough but because we are giving birth to the future that God has in store for us. Things are not yet the way God intends them to be. We are all a work in progress. But we are waiting with hope.

As we have read on in Romans 8 this morning we have discovered more about what that hope looks like and that's what I would like to explore a little with you today. In the apostle Paul's exposition of the Gospel message in his letter to the early Christian community in Rome, this chapter takes us to the very

climax of the proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ. The letter starts with a grim assessment of what has gone wrong with the world and why, and the dreadful conclusion that if we are left to our own devices we are in deep trouble. Then the apostle begins to shine a light from a variety of different angles on the significance of the coming into the world of God's Son and the consequences of that for all who will receive Him, culminating in this great chapter which could easily occupy us for a very long time if we decided to pause and explore each verse in turn. When Emma and I have been talking about the passages we have read last week and this we have both come up with multiple messages that could be preached from them, but as Emma did last week so I will do this week and hold up just one theme for our consideration this morning, the hope that we have in Christ for whose ultimate fulfilment we are waiting in faith.

In this morning's passage the apostle Paul gives us a number of reasons for hope in the face of what we each may be dealing with.

The first thing actually re-echoes something that we were thinking about last week. Remember that word 'groaning'? Emma spoke last week about two kinds of groaning – on the one hand the kind of groaning that accompanies something that is coming to an end: an illness that may be leading to death, or the heartache that accompanies the breakdown of a relationship; and on the other hand the kind of groaning in childbirth that leads to the start of a new life. Well Paul uses that word again in this morning's passage and in yet another context. He uses it to describe what sometimes happens when we want to pray but just can't find the words or don't even know what to ask God for even if we could find the words. Paul teaches us that in those times, the Holy Spirit is actually helping us in our weakness and when we don't know what to pray, the Spirit takes over with groans that words can't express, interceding directly with our heavenly Father. Later in the passage He also speaks about Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, personally interceding for us. Isn't that the most amazing thing! We are facing things that are just too big for us to cope with but we have the assurance that there is a whole

conversation going on within the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You're having a tough time of it; you don't know what to do; when you try to pray, all that comes out is groaning. Well not only does God know all about it already, but the Lord Jesus is bending His Father's ear about it and the Holy Spirit is making sense of your wordless groaning by interceding on your behalf.

Whatever that thing is that is occupying your thoughts constantly at the moment and robbing you of peace day and night, God is already holding it and dealing with it.

Following on from that, in one of the best loved verses of this chapter, the apostle teaches that "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him." In other words, when the tough things that sometimes come your way seem random and senseless, it's worth looking for God's purpose through it all in the sure knowledge that the Lord won't test you beyond your ability to endure and that He is right there with you in the difficulties you are having to contend with.

But finally, and this is where we come to the pinnacle of the Good News that Paul proclaims not just in this chapter and not just in this letter but in all of his writings, the apostle asks a series of rhetorical questions and then declares his faith. Again I want you to hear these questions and that declaration of faith in the context of whatever is giving you most trouble in life at the moment and to ask these same questions of yourself as I encourage you to put your trust in the same Lord that was the subject of Paul's faith.

If God is for us, says the apostle, who can be against us? Let me assure you today that God is unquestionably for you, He's on your side. So if God is for you, who can be against you? The answer is no-one.

It is God who justifies, Paul declares. Who then is the one who condemns? If you are in Christ, then sin has lost its dominion over you and you stand forgiven before God's throne of grace.

As we sang just before, 'When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within, Upward I look and see him there,

Who made an end of all my sin. Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free, For God the just is satisfied To look
on him and pardon me .' If Christ is your Saviour, who is the one
who condemns? The answer is no-one.

Or once again, and finally, the apostle Paul asks a question of us:
Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? That's when he
offers us a wonderful catalogue of hope. Shall trouble separate
us from the love of Christ? No. Shall hardship separate us from
the love of Christ? No. Shall persecution, or famine, or
nakedness, or danger, or sword? No. Shall whatever is keeping
you awake at night just now separate you from the love of Christ?
The answer is No. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Do you hear the music swelling? This is the punchline of the
whole New Testament. We are more than conquerors through
Him who loved us. No wonder Paul can make such a confident
declaration. "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither
angels nor demons, neither present nor future nor any powers,
neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation – that's
pretty comprehensive, and it includes anything that you may
have named this morning before God as being an obstacle to your
faith – there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to
separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus."
(Rom.8:38,39)

My dear friends, this is the Good News of Christ, the Gospel of
our salvation. We are inseparable from the love of God in Christ
Jesus. No matter what is going on in your life right now that is
making things difficult and that may be making you wonder
where God is, this is the truth – God is right now enfolding you in
His love and care and whatever it may be that is causing you
trouble doesn't have a hope of getting between you and Christ
Jesus.

Just speak that truth into the darkness if something is keeping
you awake. Take your stand on it when you are being side-
tracked by anxiety in the middle of the day.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing. Amen.