

Message for Sunday, July 26, 2026

Scripture: Romans 8: 26-39

"Life Is Pain, Princess"

Announcements

Giving Options; this week we wrap up meals on wheels. For August, our special offering will be the Arc: Book Club will meet on Tuesday, August 4, at 9:30AM: Save the date for the church planning retreat, Saturday, September 12: Men's Coffee will resume on Tuesday, August 4 at 7:30AM.

Fellowship of Love

Music for Your Heart

Call to Worship

L: Give thanks to God, for God is good.

P: God's goodness and mercy are sure.

L: Sing to the Spirit, for the Spirit is here.

P: The Spirit knows the ache for connection deep within us.

L: Praise Christ Jesus, who loves us

P: with a love that is boundless and true.

L: Give thanks to God, and sing God's praise,

P: as we worship together this day.

Unison Prayer

Loving God, thank you for calling us to worship today.

Thank you for sending your Spirit to speak to and for our spirits, strengthening our weary souls and empowering us to live and serve.

Send your Spirit into our worship today, that we may fully sense your presence and embrace your mysterious wisdom.

In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Song

Scripture: Romans 8:26-39 NRSVue

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²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words.

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²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

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²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

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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 within a large family.

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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.

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³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

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³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else?

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³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

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³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

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³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

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³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

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³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us.

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³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

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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.

L: The word of God, for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Meditation: “Life is Pain, Princess”

I have preached on this passage more times than I care to admit. This passage is a staple for memorial services and gravesides. This is for good reason, the whole point of the passage happens in verse 38 and 39, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, 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.” It is not often that I directly give you the point of the whole sermon at the beginning but that is it. There is literally, not metaphorically, but literally nothing that can separate you from God’s love. That is the point of the sermon, period.

If you want to doze now or head home you won’t miss the point. I want to walk you through how Paul gets to this point, and the issues that happen before the point, and what this means for us today.

For the past two weeks with Romans, we have learned that Paul is a highly educated individual who is working towards building a base of operations in the city of Rome to be able to work missionally further west towards Spain. Paul is laying out his reasoning for his faith, how at least part of his faith works, and building up the church in Rome for what they have in common. This passage comes after reinforcing that we are not enslaved to the ways of the world, instead we are in debt to God to live into the future in hope. So how do we get from hope to saying that there are painful things that happen.

Paul is not obtuse; he understands that life contains suffering. I hate to break it to you, if you haven’t experienced any loss- you will. If you haven’t had bad times in your life, - you will. To quote a great movie, The Princess Bride, “Life is pain, Princess.” The problem of pain, not just physical pain but heart-wrenching loss and emotional suffering, is something that everyone must wrestle with. In this passage Paul starts out

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by reminding us that no matter what is going on, when you pray, you aren't praying alone. The spirit of God is praying with you.

This concept that a part of God is praying to God on your behalf has to stay a mystery. There is no way to explain what Paul means here in proper theological language that doesn't get confusing fast. Instead, I think we all understand what Paul is talking about. A time when we pray and all we can do is cry, nothing is articulate, but we know that God heard. Paul reminds us that we are not alone in our suffering and this gives rise to perhaps a verse that has done more damage than help, verse 28, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Verse 28 has been used to reinforce the idea that suffering is good and somehow Godly. It has been used as an escape hatch for people who don't know what to say when bad things happen in a person's life. I have even seen it used as an excuse, “well that person wasn't a believer that's why those bad things are happening to them.”

The problem with verse 28 is that in the interpretation of the Greek we get issues and none of them make the text easier to understand. My suggestion with this verse is this. If it gives you comfort great, but keep it to yourself. Sharing it with others becomes patronizing at best to down right harmful at worst.

With all of this going on how are we to understand verses 38 and 39? In the context of a memorial service, we are often talking about death as the thing that is overcome by God, and it's true, but I want to save the funeral sermon for a funeral. My question is what does this mean for daily life? The little sufferings we go through, hurt feelings, getting older, needing medical treatments. What I thought of was a love story.

I've already referenced this love story once but in terms of modern fairy tales you can't do much better than this one “The Princess Bride”. In it, Westly is in love with Princess Buttercup, and he ends up rescuing her from a forced marriage and a plot to kill her...spoiler warning I guess. To shorten the story more Westly being in love with the Princess pursues her, however the Princess is also an active participant in this. She loves him so much that she believes that he is going to come for her. This I think is a good example of the love of God we are talking about here. It is a love that pursues us even when things are bad. But it's not just a love that pursues, it's a love like Princess Buttercup that hopes for the one doing the pursuing.

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This isn't the only point of this passage though. You see Paul is telling us what we already know. Bad things happen. There is pain. There is suffering. And everyone will go through it. Yet the love of God overcomes all of that, it overcomes every obstacle that is put in the way of Gods love. Perhaps even especially theology and well-meaning religious people.

I already told you the point of the sermon. God loves you so much that nothing can separate you. Live into the hope that it gives us. Ultimately, love wins over everything. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer/The Lord's Prayer, Song, Benediction, Song, Goodbye