

Sermon followed by Service

November 14, 2021

Romans 8:28-30

Imagine yourself up in heaven - you and your family and friends. You're sitting around a table, standing in the kitchen, out on the deck, around a campfire - with Jesus and the Father and Spirit. You're telling stories, stories about life here in this world. Not grumble, grouch stories. Not gossip stories. Not stories of sin. No, you're telling stories of grace and glory. Like that time your car wheel came off. You were in such a hurry that day, running late. At the grocery store, leaving the parking lot, about to turn into traffic - thick, busy traffic. And your tire falls off. Not as you're pulling out into that traffic; not where you'll be the next accident; but where you're safe in the parking lot. As you're telling the story, you look up with a smile and say to Jesus and the Father: "Good timing. Thank you." And Jesus says: "We thought so."

You're up in heaven with family and friends, with Jesus and the Father and Spirit. You tell about that year you were in and out of the hospital with cancer, those months in the hospice bed with a wound in your belly that just wouldn't heal. You look to Jesus and his Spirit, and what do you say? "Thank you. Thank you for that time with my family and friends. We had such good talks; thank you for the words we needed to say, the words we needed to hear from each other. Thank you." And Jesus and his Spirit smile back: "We knew it would be good for all of you."

You're up there in heaven; you remember some dark years, miserable years of being bullied and abused and not knowing what to do with it. A friend says: "You knew just what to say in my dark years. God used your dark years so you could help me and so many more in our dark years." With a smile you both turn to Jesus: "Thank you." And with a bigger smile, Jesus answers back: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

One more. You're up there in heaven; across the table you see someone, someone taken from you before you were ready for them to be gone. You know who I'm thinking of? You smile at each other, and you say to the Father: "After he died, after she died, I know I wasn't always easy to listen to, but thank you." And as the Father sees you together again, he smiles and says: "It wasn't easy for me either; but it's so good to have you all home." Stories of grace and glory.

Do you have similar stories of grace and glory - God working all things together for your good? What can help us to see and remember such stories from our lives?

I know some of you can see and tell stories of grace and glory like that right now. And some of us, for some of us, seeing and remembering the grace and glory isn't always easy. Sometimes we might feel so stuck in the dark, so surrounded by the dark, that we don't see the grace and glory God is working. For those dark times, the Holy Spirit shines some light - **"all things work together for good."**

I've had people ask me: "How do I know that promise is true for me? I'm not seeing it." And then they wonder aloud: "Maybe God doesn't see my love for him; maybe God does see my love for him. My love for God is such a mess, the things I've said and done. Paul says, '**all things work together for good for those who love God.**' With the way I love God, no wonder my life is such a mess."

How have you heard Satan try to steal or invalidate this promise?

What do you say to that? "It's good to be thinking about loving God instead of just getting from God, isn't it?" "It's good to recognize, confess, admit our wrong, our guilt, the messes we've made, instead of just blaming God for what's wrong in our lives. And it's good to join Paul: '**What a wretch I am! The good I want to do, I don't do; the evil I don't want to do, I keep on doing. What a wretch I am! Who will save me from this body of death?!**' And it's good to hear Paul: "**There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.**" Not because we love God, but because God loves you with Jesus. Before we loved him, while we were still fighting against him, God took our God-fighting, our God-hating guilt, and, yes, he took our mixed-up, messed-up love Jesus took it all to the cross, and there with perfect love, he paid the price - for you, for me, for the whole wide world out there. In Jesus, you are forgiven full and free. In Jesus, God isn't holding the failure of our love against us. Instead, in Jesus, he is holding you and covering you with his love. And what does God's love do in us? It works in us a growing love for God. A growing love for God that joins Paul this way: "**Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!**" It's good to be thinking about loving God instead of just getting from God, isn't it?

If the trouble in my life has me evaluating my love for God, what might that be a sign of?

I got a little off track, didn't I? We were talking stories of grace and glory. What does Paul say about grace and glory? **“You know that all things work together for good.”** “All things.” Not just things that look good, sound good, feel good; not just things that make us smile, but all things - including the worst and darkest this world can throw at you. **“All things work together for our good.”** Not by randomness, not by luck, not by chance, but how? - by the plan and purpose of our God.

When we look out at the world, when we read our world's science books, it can be hard to see a grand plan and purpose. Instead, life can look and feel like a giant accident - sometimes an accident looking and feeling wonderful, more and more like an accident looking and feeling darker and darker with hurt and heartache. Paul reminds us that we aren't living an accident! From before all creation God has a plan and a purpose for you! From before all creation - that's Ephesians 1 - God knew you. He didn't just have knowledge of you; he knew you in his heart to be his. And so he chose you, he predestined you, that is, he marked you and put his fence around you to be his. Not because before all time God looked ahead into our lives, saw us come to faith, saw what we would do for him - and that's why he chose us. No, God did not choose us because he fore-saw some good in us. No, this is why God chose you. The Father looked at his Son Jesus and chose you to make you good like Jesus. Why? So that he could have a family to love.

What does Scripture teach us about how and why God chooses?

From before time and now in time, God has been working his story, nudging and shaping world history, nudging and shaping church history, nudging and shaping your history. Nudging and shaping history - working the good, the bad, and the ugly together - to put you in the right place at the right time so you could hear Jesus' call: “Come to me, listen to me, believe me, follow me.” In the same way, he's worked history - his story and your story - to connect you to his promise, the promise of the cross, the promise of Easter, the promise in God's courtroom: “I forgive you; you're right by me.”

What are some ways (family trees, world history, church history) that God worked his story into your story, or that God worked your story into his story?

Now the promise gets bigger and better. “Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” That last part - “those he justified, he also glorified” - that’s hard to see, isn’t it? I’ve looked in the mirror; I don’t look glorified. I don’t feel glorified. But Paul says - you and I - we are glorified. So how do we explain what Paul is saying. One way is this: Paul is talking about the future - “we will be glorified” - with a past tense verb - “we have been glorified” - to show our future glory is as good as done. Another way to look at it is this way: already God is calling you his children and his saints; already God is giving you his Spirit, his deposit and guarantee of heaven; already God is giving you his name and his glory. Another way to look at it is this: We go back to Romans 6, two chapters before our lesson. Paul is talking baptism. In your baptism, you are connected to Jesus, so closely connected to Jesus that his death counts as your death; in baptism, you are so closely connected to Jesus that his life means life for you; in baptism, you are so closely connected with Jesus, that when Jesus crossed the finish line into the glory of heaven - it is just as if you crossed the finish line - his victory is your victory, his glory is your glory.

Bottom line - our future is set, your future is set with Jesus. And now we get to see how God will work it so that all things work together for our good. We already know some of those stories of grace and glory. We don’t have to wait until heaven to tell those stories or celebrate those stories. Already today, we get to celebrate - those God fore-knew, he also called; those he has called, he also justified; those he has justified, he also glorified! We have it made - God is working all things together for our good! Amen.

How does Satan work to turn God’s wonderful teaching of foreknowledge, election, and predestination into a stew of doubt, confusion, and questions?

What is the simple answer for those doubts and questions?

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

A Family Connecting in Christ



Pastor Kevin Raddatz
Principal Jon Woldt
501 West Park Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048
847-362-4424
www.StJohnsLib.com

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Masked

With the renewed mask mandate across Illinois, we now offer masked worship - Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 9. If you have questions, please ask!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help, and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.
- Please join us after Sunday service for fellowship and Family Bible Hour.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- Children's worship bulletins and "church bags" (with paper, colors, and Bible story books) are available in the Narthex Gathering Area.
- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Large Print** Service Folders are available from an usher.
- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

November 13 & 14, 2021

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... it seems that so many of our plans are stymied, frustrated, put on hold, torn up.... It can be an incredibly disappointing, frustrating, stressful existence. It helps, though - doesn't it? - when we remember to make our plans with the mind-set that says: "God-willing. God-willing, we will do this or that."

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see God working his eternal plans for us - even in the midst of and through our broken plans. So what do we get to know? In all things, God is working for our good!

OPENING HYMN

"For All the Saints"

Hymn 551 v. 1-3

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
All who their faith before the world confessed,
Your name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;
You, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight
And in the darkness drear their one true light.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh, may your soldiers, faithful, true, and bold
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God and Savior, you have set the final day and hour when we shall be delivered from this world of sin and death. Keep us ever watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Romans 8:18-25, 28-30

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently....

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.

HYMN

"For All the Saints"
Hymn 551 v. 4-6

Oh, blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle; they in glory shine,
Yet all are one within your grand design.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph-song,
And hearts are brave again and arms are strong.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon, to faithful warriors comes their rest.
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

A SAINTS TRIUMPHANT CONFESSION OF FAITH:

A READING OF PROMISES FULFILLED

M: I am resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

C: **And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** (*John 11:25-26*)
James Schneider November 15, 2020

M: Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

C: **We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** (*1 Thess.4:13-14*)
Kate Linnemann February 7, 2021

M: My flesh and my heart may fail,

C: **but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.** (*Psalms 73:26*)
Donald Krumrey February 20, 2021

M: Be faithful, even to the point of death.

C: **And I will give you the crown of life.** (*Revelation 2:10*)

William Altenbern October 8, 2021

M: Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."

C: **"Yes," says the Spirit, "They will rest from their labor."** (*Revelations 13:14*)

Hal Young November 6, 2021

M: Thanks be to God.

C: **He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

HYMN

"Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See"

Hymn 219

Lord, when your glory I shall see
And taste your kingdom's pleasure,
Your blood my royal robe shall be,
My joy beyond all measure!
When I appear before your throne,
Your righteousness shall be my crown;
With these I need not hide me.
And there, in garments richly wrought,
As your own bride I shall be brought
To stand in joy beside you.

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 13:24-27

"But in those days, following that distress,

 "the sun will be darkened,
 and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
 and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

“At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

“For All the Saints”

Hymn 551 v. 7-8

But then there breaks a yet more glorious day:
The saints triumphant rise in bright array;
The King of glory passes on his way.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds to ocean's farthest coast
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

SERMON

Romans 8

HYMN

"I'm But a Stranger Here"

Hymn 417

I'm but a stranger here; Heav'n is my home.
Earth is a desert drear; Heav'n is my home.
Danger and sorrow stand Round me on ev'ry hand.
Heav'n is my fatherland; Heav'n is my home.

What though the tempest rage, Heav'n is my home.
Short is my pilgrimage; Heav'n is my home.
And time's wild, wintry blast Soon shall be overpast;
I shall reach home at last; Heav'n is my home.

There at my Savior's side -- Heav'n is my home.--
I shall be glorified; Heav'n is my home.
There are the good and blest, Those I love most and best,
And there, I, too, shall rest; Heav'n is my home.

Therefore I murmur not; Heav'n is my home.
Whate'er my earthly lot, Heav'n is my home.
And I shall surely stand There at my Lord's right hand.
Heav'n is my Fatherland; Heav'n is my home.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"Jerusalem the Golden"

Hymn 728



1 Je - ru - sa - lem the gold - en, With
2 Oh, sweet and bless - ed coun - try, The
3 The Christ is ev - er with them; The



milk and hon - ey blest— The sight of it re -
home of God's e - lect! Oh, sweet and bless - ed
day - light is se - rene. The pas - tures of the



fresh - es The wea - ry and op - pressed: I
coun - try That ea - ger hearts ex - pect, Where
bless - ed Are ev - er rich and green. There



know not, oh, I know not What joys a - wait us
they who with their lead - er Have con - quered in the
is the throne of Da - vid; And there from care re -



there, What ra - dian-cy of glo - ry, What
fight For - ev - er and for - ev - er Are
leased, The shout of them that tri - umph, The

bliss be - yond com - pare: To sing the hymn un -
 clad in robes of white. Je - sus in mer - cy
 song of them that feast. To God en - throned in

end - ing With all the mar - tyr throng, A -
 bring us To that dear land of rest Where
 glo - ry The Church's voic - es blend, The

midst the halls of Zi - on Re - sound - ing full with song.
 sings the host of heav - en Your glo - rious name to bless.
 Lamb for - ev - er bless - ed, The Light that knows no end.

This twelfth century hymn, first conceived by Bernard of Cluny, depicts an idyllic, heavenly scene. The hymn is gloriously set to the English folk tune THAXTED.

Text: Bernard of Cluny, 12th century
 Tune: THAXTED (76 76 76 D) Gustav Holst, 1874–1934, alt.

OFFERING

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