

“9-1-1 for Christ-followers” A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
July 30, 2017 Eighty Sunday after Pentecost
Romans 8:26-39

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Even though I read the simplified version of this scripture, I'm sure you recognize many of the verses from this scripture. I'll read a few in the version of the Bible that's in front of you in the pew:

- Verse 28: **We know that all things work together for good for those who love God.**
- Verse 31: **If God is for us, who is against us?**
- Verses 35 & 37: **Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**
- And my favorite and the words on our bulletin cover, verses 38 & 39: **For I am convinced that 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.**

When do you remember hearing these verses from Romans read most frequently? (Wait for answers.) Yes, you most likely heard them at a funeral or these verses were read to you or you read them at a time of trial or trouble in your life. These verses from Romans 8 provide assurance to you and me that God's love for us exceeds anything we can ask or imagine.

What do you do when you have an emergency in your home? (Wait for answers.) You probably call 911. When someone has fallen or has a medical emergency, we have a service called 911. When you dial that number someone answers, listens as you describe your problem or issue and then dispatches help to your home.

Why do I mention 911? Because I'd like for you to think about these verses from Romans 8 as a Christ-follower's 911. When things get rough in your life, read these verses. They can provide assurance that God is there for you in the challenging times as well as the good times. (Workingpreacher.com, Israel Kamundzandu, commentary on Romans, July 30, 2017)

Just like our community's 911 service, God is there listening as you describe your problem or issue and then dispatches help. There's one big difference though. Our community's 911 service only dispatches help when there's a physical issue – as I mentioned, like someone has fallen and can't get up or there's a medical emergency, like a heart attack. But God is there for these issues and a whole lot more. God is

there to listen when you have a family or relationship crisis you can't sort out or when you're facing financial difficulties or you're suffering a loss or you just don't know where to turn. God is there to listen and help..

But what if you can't even describe your problem? There are times we just can't even figure out how to pray to God about the issue. At those times, unlike our community 911 service, God has got you covered. When we don't know what to say, as I read today: **When we don't know how to pray, the Spirit fills in those prayer gaps in our hearts with sighs too deep for words. God is always looking in our hearts and knows the Spirit is in us working and praying on our behalf.**

The Holy Spirit is praying for you those things you can't even express. I find this assurance about the Holy Spirit praying for us to be quite comforting. God loves us so much that God understands our needs even when we don't.

God is right there with us in thick and thin, caring for us and loving us. Now, how do you know that this is true? Is the Bible just filling us with false hope? What did our verse for today say about that? **If God gave his very own Son for us, don't we already have everything we need? No one can hurt us. God is the one who makes us right. No one can condemn us. Christ Jesus himself sits at God's side and represents us and brings us into God's family.**

If God did not withhold his own Son, but allowed him to die for all of us, will God not give us everything we need? Earlier in Romans, chapter 5, verses 7 & 8, Paul, the author of Romans, writes: **Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.**

God has proved his love for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ sits at God's side and represents us. What more can we want?

Absolutely nothing! As I read today, **Because he loves us, we always win. I am absolutely sure that death itself can't tear us from God. And neither can angels, or kings, or anything on earth now or in the future, or anything in all of God's universe. Nothing can separate us from God's love that we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

These verses from Romans comfort us in times of trouble and in times of good – and assure us of God's great love for each of us. We can think of these verses as an emergency 911 number for us to use to contact God in times of trouble or concern. We may not know how to express our troubles or issues in our prayers, but the Holy Spirit will do that for us. God has given us a lifeline even when we don't know what to ask for. God has proved his love for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God's love is indeed wondrous and I am so thankful that God is there for all of us no matter what happens to us. That wondrous love reminds me of the hymn, 'What

Wondrous Love is This.' Let's close by singing two verses from that hymn. Let us thank and praise God in song for the wonderful gift of Jesus Christ. (Hymn #85, The Presbyterian Hymnal)

1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the heavy cross for my soul!

2 To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am,
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing;
While millions join the theme, I will sing!