



## ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON  
7-27-14

Wouldn't you like to believe in these words from Romans? Such life and promises are found in this short bit of scripture. In these words nearly every anxiety that can accost us as human beings is answered with the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of God in Christ Jesus. So, like I asked – wouldn't you like to believe in these words from Romans?

Let's start with this long last sentence. Often we hear this line read at Episcopal funerals and we probably find some reassurance and comfort the think that our loved ones and friends are still surrounded by the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. BUT – what about reading these last two sentences for us RIGHT NOW! Right now we are conquerors through him who loves us – and nothing, NOTHING can separate us from that love. That means right now, right now nothing in this world can defeat or do us in.

Or think about the wonder of prayer. We may feel weak – we may feel inadequate – we may not know what to say. But here our sighs are heard. The indwelling Holy Spirit speaks for us – and searches our hearts – and together the Holy Spirit and God surround us with God's will. How marvelous – how profound – how reassuring.

What about when we feel overwhelmed or uncertain about the circumstances in our lives? Here we are promised that all thing – ALL THINGS work together for good for those who love God. Fill ourselves with, trust in that love and we will find good. To trust, to wait, to turn to God for answers – we will find good. We will find good.

Or we fear that God will fail us – the pressures, demands of the world – our everyday decisions and conflicts in this present world will overwhelm us and we will be condemned? NO – impossible. The promise is that God is for us – God is for us. God provided Jesus to welcome us into a large family – a family filled with glory and justification that gives us all we need – all we will ever need forever. In hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword – in any and all hardships that we may ever experience – we remain surrounded by an undying love and in that love we are conquerors!

Oh how much is there for those who believe. How much is given to those who have faith in this God. If we who say we are Christians – if we say we have faith, if we say we believe in God's words - we then we should be people of deepest JOY and TRUST. Deepest joy and trust.

And if we are not?

You know, Christian writers through the ages have challenged us to consider the conviction of our beliefs- the foundation from which we are living.

Scottish writer George Macdonald wrote in 1876: “Wherein consists the essential inherent worthiness of a life as life? The only perfect idea of life is God, the only one. That a person should complete themselves by taking into then that origin, and with their whole being commit themselves to will the will of God in themselves – that is the highest possible condition of a human being. Then they have completed the cycle. This is the essence of life – the rounding recreating, unifying of a person.” To will to do the will of God.

Some 75 years later British professor, theologian, and writer C.S. Lewis wrote in his testimonial book “Mere Christianity”: “We are faced then with a frightening alternative. Either Jesus was and is just what he said or else he was insane or something worse. You must make your choice. Let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. However strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.”

So then – here we have Jesus saying, “Will you give everything, everything that you have for the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven?” As you search, will you recognize that pearl of great value and sell all that you have – let go of all else that you think is valuable or important – will you let go of all – to live in this Kingdom of Heaven?

This kingdom of right now – this kingdom of faith – this kingdom of believing that God is the answer to everything – that faith in God expands you. That your faith can grow into a magnificent foundation and shelter that is shared with others.

I had a crisis of faith – a long moment of accounting when I was in my late 30’s. I had a time to decide where I would truly place my trust. And boy was I filled with doubts and fear. I reacted to the whole idea of God – the whole presence of God as a challenge. For years I kept telling God – “prove it to me.” Prove that you endure in every situation. Prove that things will work together for good. Prove that if I trust in you – it will be worth it.

Am I fully over that challenge to God? Probably not – but I continue to be surprised – delightfully surprised. And I continue to grow in faith and trust because I have not found anyplace I would rather go – anything or anyone else in whom I’d rather trust.

Bit by bit my fears diminish. Bit by bit my love and trust continue to grow until I can read or hear these words in Romans and delight in them. They take my breath away.

The sighs of my heart are prayer and are heard by God- no matter how weak I feel. And all – everything is working for good when I remain focused on love and on God. And God will be for me – forever- whenever I turn to God. God will be for me. So then, nothing can conquer me – nothing can defeat me- for nothing, nothing in all creation can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

My life is part of the kingdom of heaven.

To me – that is the place of deepest joy and trust – deepest joy and trust.

Thanks be to God.