

The First Sunday in Lent
February 22, 2015
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Romans 8:31-39

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

God asked him to do what? I don't know about you, but for me the command God gives to Abraham is a tough pill to swallow. It goes against every fiber of my being! Have you too ever questioned how God could tell Abraham to take his boy, his only son, and offer him as a sacrifice on the mountain? Why would God ever think such a thing was a good idea let alone ask Abraham to carry this out? Kill the son he loves. That seems like crazy talk. Why God? Don't you almost breathe a breath of fresh air when just as Abraham raises his knife to slay his son God suddenly stops him and Isaac is unharmed? Don't you think this command God gave to test Abraham has left many people over the years asking questions about what kind of God we have that would even ask such a thing?

I'll tell you, or better yet I'll let the apostle Paul tell you, what kind of God we have! We have a God who did more than ask someone to sacrifice his only son, we have a God who actually did it – He “*gave him up for us all.*” As we make the forty day journey through Lent this is where it leads us – to a cross where God killed His only Son. This time God did not stop the nails from being hammered into both hands and feet. No call from heaven suddenly saved the Son God loved from being slayed. No, God “*did not spare his own Son.*” So what kind of God is this? This is a God who does not withhold from us His own Son, so “*how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*”

There is no greater evidence of God's love for you than God allowing Jesus to suffer as your substitute, to hang on a cross with your sins, to die in your place to save you. This is how much God loved the world – that He gave His Son! Now there is an awesome and comforting truth I want to you to know and never forget when it comes our God: **God is on our Side!**

Now who can be against us? Who can be against us when God is on our side? Who can be against us since God is for us? The obvious answer is no one. But that does not mean they won't try. I can immediately think of someone who is against us. The same someone in our Gospel lesson who went out into the wilderness to Jesus and tempted Him for forty days. The devil is against us and he actually has a pretty good case against us. For how many times have we fallen for his temptations? Imagine if you came to church this morning and the devil

had written a record of all your sins this last week and placed them in every member's mailbox. Does that make you a bit uneasy that your accuser could know all that you have done wrong in thought, word, and deed?

You don't have to be because you have a God who did not spare His own Son for you! We have a God who is on our side! ***"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."*** Since God is on our side no one, not even the devil himself, can bring a single charge against us. Jesus will be our Judge! Jesus will be our defense! Jesus is in control! Jesus who died for us and rose again pleads our case before God. Now God is on our side. That means no one can bring any charges against us, not even the devil. In Christ we are righteous. In Christ we are forgiven. God is on our side!

It is a good thing that He is! Especially when we consider the world in which we live. Paul talks about it this way as he quotes from the Psalms: ***As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."*** Notice that the apostle Paul does not tell us things won't happen to us. He doesn't say that God will spare us from ***"trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword."*** Instead, he tells us: ***"we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."*** How have you been reminded of this recently? Have you been persecuted because of your faith? I don't know if I would want to be young again and face what many of our young high school and college students are facing. Their faith and the truths of the Bible they have come to know and believe are being constantly challenged. The world around us continues to threaten us. When one problem is solved another quickly pops up. When one trouble passes another always seems to be right around the corner. Yes, we face pain and sorrow and hardship and death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

This is what makes the truth before us once again so awesome and so comforting. God is on our side – even when it appears everything is crumbling all around us. Paul doesn't promise you bad things won't happen. But he does promise God is for you. After all, this is the same God who did not spare His own Son for you! So, ***"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"*** The obvious answer is no one or nothing is able to separate us from the love of Christ. God is on our side.

I don't know if you caught this commercial. There is a cute commercial about a kid who wants to play football and the bigger kids tell him to come back when he has a team. So this kid goes out and gets a kid lifting weights and another kid wrestling a bear and another kid carrying people out of a burning building, and he builds his team. Then this kid walks confidently back to the field with all these kids ready to face all challengers. Like I said I found it to be a pretty cute commercial. Yet, there is also a truth there that, if you are on the right team, you have all the confidence in the world to take on all challengers. If you are on the right team you know in the end you will enjoy victory.

How much more is this true for us? God is on our side. So, only with Him, are we ready to face all challenges. Only, with Him, are we sure that we will in the end enjoy victory. This is why we are able to say with Paul: ***"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love***

of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God did what? He gave up His own Son so that nothing will ever, ever be able to separate you from His love! That is the kind of God we have! Follow Jesus this Lent all the way to His cross and empty tomb and what you will see is there is absolutely no doubt about it – God is on our side! Amen.