

**“What Then Shall We Say About These
Things”
“Future Glory”
Romans 8:18-39**

EASTER 5

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Rickards

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On this Fifth Sunday of Easter,

and the occasion of the baptism of
our latest grandchild, Beau Matthew,
we come to the fourth of five sermons
based on Paul’s Letter to the Romans
and the rhetorical question he raises
in our text for today: “What then are
we to say about these things?”

For me, the eight chapter of Romans is
the heart of Paul’s appeal to the
Jewish and Gentile Christians who
make up the urban house churches
located in the midst of Rome’s capital city.

Paul writes his most theologically erudite
and pastorally applicable set of teachings
about faith in Jesus Christ for several
reasons: to introduce himself to this
reputedly faithful and obedient group of
churches, to gain monetary and spiritual
support for his missionary journey to Spain,
and to solidify their unity through a
greater understanding of the gospel.

Throughout this month of May,
I have had the privilege of leading a
bible study on the second part of
the Book of Romans, so I thought
I might offer an accompanying sermon series
since I have had the opportunity to
both study and teach it in greater depth.

I do know enough not to offer a message
covering every theme and verse of
this lengthy and complex reading
we have just heard Charlie read for us.

I could not do justice to this great text
in a 12 to 15 minute message.

In fact, I have a pastoral colleague and
friend who took more than three years
of Sundays to preach through Paul's
longest and greatest letter, sometimes,
a few verses and even words at a time.

So, on this happy occasion of an infant
baptism, how should a pastor and grandfather
of the newly baptized go about the task
of preaching on a text we Lutherans
traditionally hear at funerals?

We pastors frequently read verses
31 through 39 at funerals because of
the great comfort Paul's words bring
to those who are suffering and grieving
the loss of a loved one.

The question, "What then are we to say
about these things?" speaks to the
confusing and conflicting thoughts and
feelings going on inside the hearts
and minds of loved ones at a funeral

service who have been staring at
a body-filled casket or an ash-laden urn
while trying to sing upbeat hymns,
listen to messages of hope and pray
for consolation.

The book of Romans is a great source of
comfort at funerals because it is centered
entirely on the gospel of Christ Jesus.
It tells the sacred story or journey of
Christ-baptized, crucified and resurrected.
For grievers, gathered at a funeral around
a Lutheran liturgy, the life and death
of their loved one can be seen
through the eyes of faith as being
spiritually shaped after the pattern
of Jesus' own life and death.

The Letter to the Romans tells about
Jesus' cruciform life and this is
the story the Christian funeral speaks
about the baptized one who has died.

Last week, our reading from Romans 6,
in dramatic fashion, enabled us to realize
that we have been baptized into Jesus'
death as well as into his life after death-
in other words, his future glory.
Only because Jesus has traveled the path
of faith and obedience toward God,
we, too are able to follow it ourselves
because like Jesus, and Beau this morning,
we have been baptized into a new and
living way that he has opened for us.

Here, my friends in Christ is the
conviction of faith that comforts us at
a funeral- because of our baptism into
Christ, we will never be separated-
in this life and the one to come-
“from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v.38)

So one important thing we can take away
from this great chapter in Romans is
that it gives us baptized Christians
great comfort, especially in our times of
overbearing suffering and overwhelming loss.

However, this same text also holds out to
baptized believers something that is
greatly needed in times of fear and anxiety
when all life seems to go wrong-
and that, of course, is courage.

One of my favorite scriptural verses
comes from today’s text.

In verse 28, Paul makes this courageous claim:
“We know that all things work together
for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.”

Two important words stand out in this verse
for me- “good” and “love”

Our confidence in our future hope and glory
lies in God’s fatherly work for our “good”
and in the “love” God holds for each of us.

What can we confidently expect to see
God doing “in all things”?

Paul tells us that God is working for our
good like any loving and caring parent does.

Paul does not mean that when we have
troubles, they will always work out
in the ways we might wish
Rather, he means that everything that happens
is working out for our future glory and salvation
In fact, Christ has already accomplished everything
for us-isn't that the meaning of the gospel?
In other words, everything is working together
so we will be "conformed to the likeness of God's Son" (v. 28)
That is an astounding and courageous statement.

Paul closes this marvelous reading with another
question of note: "Who shall separate us from
the love of Christ?" (v.35)

As Paul's first readers, and we ourselves today
look around, we see too many things-
obstacles and opposition alike that could
detach us from God's love.

No, says, Paul, even in the worst of circumstances,
"we are more than conquerors, through him
who loved us" (v. 37).

Why? Because God loves us, unconditionally.

So, my beloved people of God,
in a secular world and pop culture
that looks and longs for the triumph of love,
we have the opportunity to share the gospel,
the story of the ultimate victory of good and love
in the person of Jesus the Christ-
a love that begins with our spiritual
birth and the death of our sinful self in baptism
and springs eternal in the resurrection
from the dead.

As Beau, begins his spiritual journey through

baptism, may we who continue to walk as yet
by faith do so with the comfort and courage of
Paul's witness to us:

"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 death,
nor anything else in all creation will be able to
separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord"

Amen