

Romans 8:31-39

Why are you **here** today? What do you hope to take **home** with you from this worship service? I know a lot of people **struggle** with attending worship services. It's not that they aren't **worthwhile**, because they **are**. But rather, the problem is that they are usually **tired** - not just **physically** tired, but **spiritually** tired. You see, the constant **effort** of living the **Christian** life, and **fighting** the good fight of **faith** tends to wear them out. The barrage of **sin** and **temptation** which the devil, the world, and our flesh hurl at us is **never-ending**. It's even worse than that constantly dripping **faucet** in your bathroom at home. And yet, as **annoying** as that is, so often we don't actually **do** anything about it. We just continue to let it **drip**.

Well, this is actually the place where we can help to **fix** the drip. That's really important, because if we **don't** fix the drip, it can lead to very **serious** problems, including **depression**. Each year hundreds of **thousands** of people are treated for depression - and members of the WELS are not **immune**. Many see psychiatrists or psychologists on a regular basis. Many others are actually **hospitalized** for their condition. We are even told that depression has become one of the leading causes of **mental illness** in the United States. But depression is not something **new** or **unique** to our age of tension and pressure. Already back in the days of King David, the Psalmist Asaph told in Psalm 77 how **he** was so **depressed** that, "*his soul refused to be comforted.*" He couldn't **sleep**, and he didn't feel like **talking** to anybody - not even to the **LORD**.

As fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, we've felt that way too, haven't we? At times we have asked questions like, "**Why me**, Lord? **Why do I** have to **suffer** so much? **Why** must I go on **living** here on the earth, when I want so much to be with **You** in **heaven**?" The question of human **suffering** has been considered for centuries, and the more we think about our **suffering**, the more **depressed** we become! All of us, to one degree or another, have experienced that kind of depression, even young children. The question is not whether we will **get** depressed at times, but rather, how we will **handle** the depression when it **comes**. People have tried to provide **answers** in a host of different ways.

In the **ancient** world, most people felt that they were **powerless** against **fate**. So, some decided that the best way to deal with suffering was to **accept** it - to bite the bullet, and try to **ignore** the suffering. Others suggested that you could

compensate for suffering by drowning it in **wild** and **careless** living. Still others made up **false gods** in their own imaginations, and then tried to **appease** those gods in order to **remove** their suffering. **None** of those solutions **work**, because **all** of those solutions leave out **Christ**.

The Bible is very clear when it speaks about human suffering. It tells us that suffering is a sign of God's **love**, and that it is to be considered a **blessing** which leads the child of God to daily **repent** of his sins. It also tells us that suffering is a mark of a **follower** of the Lord Jesus - a mark which reminds us of the suffering which **Jesus** took upon **Himself**, in order to make us His own. And finally, it tells us that God **sustains** life until it has fulfilled the **purpose** for which He gave it. Then, and **only** then, He takes that life to be with Him in **heaven**.

It's important to remember that when we feel **depressed**, there are many things which can **help**. For example, it will help us to count our **blessings**, instead of our **hurts**. We can focus our attention on the **good** experiences we have had in the past, rather than on the **painful** ones. But the **best** thing which we can do, is to come to the foot of the **cross** of our **Savior**! There we will be reminded that in **life** and in **death**, in **time** and throughout **eternity**, "*We are more than **conquerors**, through Him who loved us.*"

Sometimes we feel very much **alone**. We feel as though no one **cares** about us. We feel **unloved**. But, we are **not** alone. Someone **does** care. And we have been **loved** beyond our **wildest** dreams. In this 8th chapter of the Book of Romans, the Apostle Paul declares, "*If **God** is for us, who can be **against** us?*" Just take a look at the **cross** of Christ. There on the cross God **showed** us beyond a **shadow** of a doubt, that He is **for** us - that He is on **our side**. Paul reminds us that God, "*Did not spare His own **Son**, but **gave Him up** for us all,*" so obviously, He **loves** us and **cares** about us. Jesus loved us enough to **die** for us, so that we could be **delivered** from our sins, and **justified** before God. And Jesus **continues** to show His great love and concern for us, by **interceding** for us before the heavenly Father's throne.

It should be very clear to us that Jesus **knows** our hurts. It should also be very clear to us that Jesus **does** something about them. Jesus **prays** for us, and offers us help and hope through His precious **Word** and **Sacrament**. Jesus invites us, "*Come to **Me** all you who are **weary** and **burdened**, and I will give you **rest**.*" That's what we **need** isn't it - rest for our **bodies**, and rest for our **souls**. The

message of the cross of Christ **gives** us that rest. It **picks up** our spirits, and **calms** our troubled hearts. Indeed, “*We are **more than conquerors through Him who loved us.***”

Unfortunately, many people in our world today don't know **Jesus**. Many people haven't heard the **Good News** that God is **for** them, and that they are more than **conquerors** through **Jesus**. It's up to **us** to let them **know** - to let them know that **Jesus** lived a **perfect life** for them - to let them know that **Jesus** offered that life as a **perfect sacrifice** for them - and to let them know that **Jesus rose** again to assure them that His work had been **completed**, and that it was **accepted** by our Father in heaven, as **payment-in-full** for the sins of the whole world.

As Christians, **all** of us do that in one way or another. We **ourselves** turn to God's Word and Sacrament for **strength** in our own times of trouble - and we also encourage **others** to do the same thing. We also need to continue to let the **children** who have been entrusted to our care **know** the wonderful things which **Jesus** has done for them. Continue to let them know that when we follow **Jesus** with our lives there are no **losers** - only **winners** - no matter how **difficult** or **complex** our lives may become. Continue to let them know that **nothing** can **separate** us from the love of God - not **troubles**, or **pains**, or **worries** - not even **death** itself. Through Jesus we will always **Get The Best Of Suffering**, for through Him we are more than **conquerors**. Through Jesus we have eternal **salvation**, now and always. Amen.