

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

First German Evangelical Lutheran Church

No Need to Worry

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ 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.

I don't know if any of us could honestly say that we never worry. No matter what your life situation is, there seems there is always something to worry about. Children in school worry about upcoming tests or the big basketball game. Teenagers worry about being accepted or fitting in. Young adults worry about what kind of job they will get or whom they will marry. Adults worry about their children and what the future holds for them. Senior citizens worry about how they will get by in their retirement or about their failing health. I guess in a sense you could say that there are many thing for us to worry about. But as we look at God's Word to us this morning and we put things into the proper perspective, we can be certain that there is really no need to worry with God on our side.

It's important for us to know why it is that we don't have to worry. It is certainly not because nothing bad is ever going to happen to us. I wish I could stand up here and tell you: "Don't worry. Everything is going to be just fine. From this day forward, you will never have another problem in your life." But that would not be the truth. The fact is: problems will come. Difficult times are on their way. This is exactly how the Bible speaks of the life of a believer. The psalm writer David recognized this when he wrote in Psalm 34: "*A righteous man will have many troubles.*" Jesus himself said, "*No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you as well.*" In other words, we shouldn't be surprised when trouble and persecution comes into our

life—look at how they treated our Savior. We shouldn't expect anything different.

Paul's words, which he wrote to those Roman Christians, were preparing them for some difficult times ahead. Just a few years before Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, a man named Nero assumed leadership of the land, after his mother assassinated the reigning Emperor Claudius for him. Within ten years, those Roman Christians would be facing some of the most horrible persecution any government has unleashed on Christianity. You've probably heard the stories of Christians being fed to the lions or lit on fire and used as torches for Nero's dinner parties. There were some difficult days that awaited those Roman Christians. When Paul writes about "*trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword*" in our text, he is not using exaggerations. This was reality for those early Christians.

It's reality for us today, as well. How many people gathered here today would confess that they have had no troubles up to this point in their life? I'm pretty sure there wouldn't be any. It's interesting that the Greek word Paul used, which is translated, "troubles," literally speaks of a pressing together or applying of pressure. That's often how we can feel when trouble comes into our life—like we are being pressed on from all sides. It's called stress. It's a fact of life. It's especially true in the life of a believer. We know from God's Word and from experience that the believer's life has troubles. The first set of troubles are those we experience for the sake of Christ's name. That means saying unpopular things at times, not going along with the crowd, at times even alienating close friends or family because God's truth is more important to you. The right thing to do is not always the easy thing to do.

But we also face troubles that are not for the sake of Christ's name. There are some troubles that come simply as a result of living in a sinful world. We may face the stress of a faltering relationship with a spouse or family member. We may face the stress of a sudden illness or declining health. We may face the hardship of losing someone we love. There is no way I could list all of the other troubles that can bring stress into your life. And what is the temptation? The temptation is to worry about what is going to happen next. The temptation is to take your eyes off of your Savior and turn them towards yourself. You might think: why is this happening to me? Or how will I possibly make it through this time? When such troubles come along, we are tempted to try to bear up under the burden all on our own. The problem is: although you may be

able to get through difficult times in this way, you end up weakening your faith in the process.

There is a better way of doing things. There is a better way to face the difficulties and stresses that life brings your way. What we need to do is look at things from the proper perspective. We need to look at things the same way the apostle Paul sees things in our reading, when he writes, *“In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”* That is quite a statement. We are more than conquerors. When difficulties come our way, sometimes we are happy to merely think of ourselves as survivors. But here the apostle Paul calls us conquerors. And even beyond that, he writes that we are more than conquerors. Isn't that what you want for yourself? Don't you want to go through life not only facing your problems but actually conquering them? It is possible. How? *“Through him who loved us!”*

The only way you can be a conqueror in your life is by aligning yourself with the greatest Conqueror this world has ever seen—Jesus Christ. Think of what Jesus conquered when he came to this earth. He conquered the world's greatest problems—the problem of sin, the problem of death and the problem of the devil. Think of how Jesus conquered those problems. He did it by fighting off every temptation the devil threw his way. He did it by never giving in to sin and weakness, but always following his Father's will. He did it by suffering the horrible punishment for sin on the cross and then rising victorious on Easter Sunday. Jesus' life was a life of victory and triumph.

By faith in Jesus, your life is life of victory as well. Jesus conquered sin and the devil for you. When the devil comes to accuse you and tries to burden you with guilt and shame, you can stand in the victory that Jesus won and know that you have been forgiven. Even when you stare death in the face, you don't need to worry because you know that Jesus' victory means you have eternal life. With Christ at your side, there is no difficulty, no stress, no trouble that you cannot conquer.

This truth changes the way you look at life. You can have the same conviction that the apostle Paul displays in the final verses of our reading: *“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.”* Notice the words he uses: I am convinced. Not I hope,

I think, maybe, perhaps... But I am convinced! That is the conviction of faith. It is not something that comes to us naturally. By nature, we want to worry. We want to doubt. But Christ comes to us in his Word and Sacrament, takes away our worries and replaces them with confidence in God's love.

I was able to witness this kind of confidence earlier this week. I was speaking with one of our members, who is facing a very uncertain future. Her days on this earth could be coming to a close very soon. As we talked about this, she said to me, "*I know that I might only have a short time left on this earth. But I am not afraid.*" Those are words of faith. The world would say she has every reason to be worried about her future. But she thinks differently. She knows the love of her Savior Jesus. She knows that he is not going to leave her now. And she knows that with him she can conquer even death.

What is it that you came in here worrying about this morning? We all have our problems. We all have our stress in life. But God wants you to know by his Word this morning that whatever difficulty you are facing, it will not overtake you. With Christ, you can and will conquer. There is nothing that can separate you from his love. There is no need to worry. **Amen.**

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