

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Fourth Sunday in Lent  
March 22, 2020  
Sermon by Pastor Justin Gran  
**Theme: God is on our side**

—Romans 8:1, 28-39

The official report is in. The numbers are staggering. It was originally thought to be harmless, but the death toll is much higher. Not one out of a hundred. Not three or four out of a hundred. It's one hundred percent. Every person diagnosed will sooner or later die from it. And if you're wondering whether or not you might avoid this pandemic, it's too late. You already have it.

The official report I'm talking about isn't from the CDC. It's from God's Word here in the book of Romans. The ailment I'm talking about isn't a little virus. It is sin which infects the whole body, mind, and soul. If there were ever a good reason to truly panic, it's this: read the report starting with Romans 1. There Paul talks about God's wrath being revealed against all the godless and wickedness of men. We're talking about people with blatant disregard for God's natural law and who openly do many immoral things. And if you think, "Well that's not me..." keep reading chapter 2. There Paul talks about people who outwardly do things that are required by the law, they are thought to be upstanding citizens, but they do the same things only in secret. For them there is also wrath. If you still think you've avoided the pandemic of sin keep reading. Paul talks about those who have God's revealed law. They've memorized the Ten Commandments and they go through the motions, but they still break the law. Finally if anyone's still missed the boat, flip to Romans 3. Verse 10 puts the nail in the coffin, **"There is no one righteous, not even one..."** and what's the consequence? Flip to Romans 5 and you have more statistics: **"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."**

The grave fact, was also a reality a month ago before our society launched into panic mode. Our society, and even our own sinful nature, were just as spiritually bankrupt before the stock market took a plunge. And yet were we as concerned then about our spiritual welfare as people are now so concerned about financial and bodily welfare? Maybe not. Any day of the week, and season of life, we can take an honest look at ourselves and that should be cause for great alarm. The odds of me one day dying and facing the Lord are looking pretty certain. It's going to happen. The only question is how is it going to go? We reviewed the reports in the earlier chapters of Romans. No one is righteous; not even one! But God in his mercy revealed a righteousness that is from God through faith. We get to Romans 8 and we get a whole new report, **"there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."** We were once God's enemies. Now in Christ, we are his children. For those who are in Christ, there is no condemnation. No wrath. There is peace with God and assurance of eternal life.

That wonderful truth about God's mercy was also a reality a month ago; or during any other time of peace and prosperity. And yet were we as eager for that comfort and reassurance in such times as we are in times of uncertainty? Maybe not. I ask these difficult questions to emphasize this point: The triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is not merely a contingency plan. He's not a safety net or a fallback. From start to finish, he's our only certain hope.

As you keep reading Romans 8, Paul acknowledges that there will be challenges, there will be suffering and there will be difficulties in the Christian's life, but he makes this promise, **"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."** Not just when you're in a pinch; not just with big things; not just with small things. At all time and in all things God works for your own good! At times in our life, we've bucked against God's authority. Other times, we've wondered, "Does God have something against me, is that why bad things are happening to me?" But here is your assurance: God is not working against you, he's working for you! Because you are connected to the Jesus, God is on your side!

Paul goes on to say, **"If God is for us, who can be against us?"** When he says "if" it's not a "maybe," It's not an "if you meet certain preconditions, then..." No it's certain. God IS for us. Literally, the phrase used here is "on our behalf." That simple phrase shows up three times in this section, translated "for us." Three times Paul uses the simple phrase to emphasize how God is for us, how God is on our side.

**"If God is for us, who can be against us?"** Because God is on our side, who or what could be against us? The devil and his lies war against our souls. The world is either overtly or covertly against our faith. But what chance does any of that stand against God? Really. Is the devil more powerful than God? No! Though the world seems to be spinning out of control, has God really lost control? No! The only one who has all power and authority, the one who alone is to be feared above all... He is on your side. Since he is on your side, who can be against you? No one.

Here's further assurance: **"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."** There it is again; that little phrase—"For us; on our behalf." He gave his Son for us. Jesus is on our side. There's no way you or I could live up to God's holy standards. But God spared no expense, not even his Son. Jesus came, and stepped into our place. He kept every last letter of God's law, for you. But there's more. Even with the perfect life that Jesus lived for us all, there's only one way to pay for sin. The wages of sin is death. The wrath of God against sin and sinner hung like an ax over our head. But God spared no expense, not even his Son. For you, as your substitute—Jesus died.

Since that's the case, **"Who will bring any charges against us?"** Charges will be made, but none of them will stick. Satan will keep on accusing God and accusing us, but his accusations are lies like everything else that comes from his mouth. His accusations don't stand a chance because the gavel has fallen in our favor. **"It is God who justifies."** He declares you as innocent as his Son Jesus. And since God justified you through Jesus Christ, **"who is he that condemns?"** God is the one that condemns, but if God has justified and pardoned you by the blood of his own Son, then there is now no condemnation. Tell that to your conscience when old sins come back and cause you to doubt God's forgiveness. Shove that in the devil's face next time he comes around and casts doubt on what Jesus has done on your behalf.

God is indeed is on your side and in all things is working for your good, even now. **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.** There it is again, that little phrase, **"For us."** Like a defense lawyer with an airtight case, Jesus goes before God. Whether it's a shred or an overwhelming pile of evidence brought against you, Jesus has you covered. If anyone were to step up to the stand to dredge up something you did or something you said, or something you didn't do, here comes Jesus. He steps in and says, "Objection, that sin was paid for by my death. You want proof, it's right there in the empty tomb." Jesus served on your behalf. He still does.

Paul asks a few more questions. **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?** All of those things might very real, but here's how he answers the question: **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.**

Any day of the week, and season of life, we can take a look at God's certain promises and that should be cause for great comfort. When you take a look at what's going on in the world it's a different story isn't it? Really it's always been the case, it's only magnified. Look what happens when there's a crisis. You see the evolution at its best (really at its worst). If that's all there is to count on, it's survival of the fittest. It's really every man for himself. What a sad and hopeless existence. But for you who are in Christ, it's not every man for himself. Rather God himself is for us. God is on our side. His grace and mercy are always in high demand but never in short supply. God is still for us, he is still on our side. And his church is still his church. It's not every man for himself. We are still united with Christians here and throughout our church body. It's happening even without our encouragement—members are reaching out to us pastors, asking "Who needs help? Who needs supplies?" God is still for us. He is still on our side. Through his Son he has met our greatest need. He still works for the good of those who love him. Through his church, through believers, he still works in tangible ways to show love and compassion.

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** Amen!