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Life is Hard....But God is Good
Romans 8:28-39

⁸ We know that all things work together for good^[u] for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.^[u] ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.^[w] ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted 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, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Life is Hard.

That might be an understatement—right?

Our world is a mess right now, life IS so hard.

We are seeing people dying of COVID, and more people we know have it.

We see people out of work, stuck at home, or isolated and all alone.

We also see the impact of centuries of racism and oppression,

and right here in Tulsa they are looking for mass graves from the 1921 race massacre!

The world IS a mess.

Life is hard.

And here in Romans, Paul asks the question:

What ARE we to say about these things, if God is for us, who is against us?

Who and what will separate us?

Are you **joking**?

We are in the midst of a global pandemic of coronavirus!

What are you saying?

We ARE literally **separated** from one another—

and we're doing that for a reason!

This is how we are trying to save lives, right?

Life is Hard right now!

And we all know the impact of a verse like Romans 8:35:

Paul says: Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Wow---Isn't this a list of ***our deepest fears?***

And aren't so many of them being realized right now?

Aren't we in **hardship and distress** in more ways than one?

Aren't we **persecuted** when we stand up for what is right, and those who are oppressed?

Aren't many in danger of **hunger or nakedness** because of job loss, or the poor economy?

Aren't we in all kinds of **peril**, and we don't' even have to think about a **sword**, when there's COVID-19 that so easily takes human life!

Life IS hard.***So is Romans 8:28 a joke?***

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose?

Well, We know that all things are **NOT necessarily good**.

There's plenty of evil and sin in this world!

This is a broken place, and we see the extent of pain and suffering.

But what if Paul knows that Life is Hard,

but that God can work in all of that hardship?

What if that's what Romans 8:28 really means?

That all things work together for good, against all odds.....

If you read the New Testament, you can't miss Paul's suffering.

He was beaten, imprisoned, shipwrecked, shunned, run out of town, persecuted beyond imagination...

and he had a disability that he begged God to take from him.

So Paul knows that Life is Hard.

But Paul also knows that **God is Good**.

Life is hard--- but God is good.

I wonder, have you ever looked at a **large TAPESTRY or a MURAL?**

When you stand really close you see the individual **threads**, or the **brushstrokes**,

And you can't tell what the larger picture is, right?

But if you **step back**, you can see the **whole picture**—the beauty and it's impact.

All those little threads, all those little brushstrokes,

they are **pieces of the whole picture**.

Without them, there is no larger picture, no art, no beauty.

What if THAT'S the message of Romans 8:28, and weaving, painting our lives for good?

It's kind of like something I read this week,

in my devotional Streams in the Desert on July 23rd.

*It said that each of us has **many black dots or spots** in our life,
and we can't understand why they are there, or why God permitted them.....*

but when we allow God to draw some lines, and add some rests, making those notes,
we see a '**glorious harmony**'.

In other words, the black spots become the music of our lives!

Life IS Hard---but God is good.

The hardship of life is **not the WHOLE** story---
and it's certainly **not the END** of our story!

Life is Hard—but we are more than conquerors over all that hardship,

THROUGH him who loved us.

We can literally overcome anything---with God's help.

Just as Paul says in **Philippians 4:13**—I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
Isn't that the truth?

And HOW does God help us?

By giving His own life for us, in Jesus Christ.

Talk about goodness---**God is the** author of all that is good,
and God desires good for each and every one of us.

Life is Hard right now---

We are **separated** in many ways.

We are worshiping online, instead of being in church together.

We are reaching out via phone or online instead of shaking hands and giving hugs.

We are **worried** about this virus, about our world and our country,

And many of us are **grieving**—

We are grieving the loss of everything that used to be normal,

As we try to figure out a NEW normal.

And ***Life hasn't stopped*** for this coronavirus—we still have our everyday struggles,

But that's NOT the Whole Story---the whole story is good. Very good.

I love to watch the CBS evening news on Fridays, because of Steve Hartman's segment 'On the Road', where he meets a different person each week who is doing good in this world—against all the odds.

It's a bright spot in the news.

A week ago he met ***Steve Derrick, who paints portraits*** of doctors and nurses, right after their 12 hour shift—all to beautifully depict their heroism.

He accepts no payment, he says what it brings to his heart is enough.

Despite the pandemic, hundreds of people have taken their oath of allegiance to become ***citizens*** of the United States---in drive-thru ceremonies! Isn't that great?

Steve Hartman discovered a couple—***Terri and Bryan Herrington***, who are both heroes. Bryan's organs were donated after a fatal work accident 16 years ago, and the man who received his kidney, Jeff Granger, befriended Terri and her kids. Years later that kidney started failing, so guess what saved Jeff's life this time?

Terri. Without hesitation, she continued the gift of her late husband, and donated one of her kidneys to Jeff, so that he could live.

There is good in the world!

We just need eyes to find it, and hearts to receive it.

God does amazing things no matter what's happening around us.

And God can bring good even out of the worst life brings.

www.cbsnews.com/evening-news/on-the-road

Life is Hard—but that's not the whole story—because we believe that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Life is Hard—But God is Good,

And that is our ***Good News*** of the Gospel today!

For this amazing grace, all God's people say, Amen.