

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church  
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz  
Pentecost 10 July 20, 2008 **Romans 8:28-30**



**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. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.**

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I was eating my breakfast waffle, my small glass of orange juice with plenty of pulp and my cup of Highlander Grogg coffee – watching the early morning news. They told the story of a little boy just 3 ½ years old. A little boy with soft white hair and bright blue eyes – down by Chicago/Oswego – was home with his whole family – when about 8:30 at night little Ryan wandered off. As soon as his family realized he was missing – they went outside and called out his name – shouted out his name as loud as they could! But he didn't answer. They went next door – as fast as they could – but he wasn't by the neighbors. People ran next to the nearby Church – and got all the people there to join the search. All through the night – people prayed and people looked. It was while I was eating my breakfast – with the news helicopter hovering over head – little Ryan was found. It was while I was eating my breakfast – that word reached Ryan's mom that he was safe. Ryan's mom can running out the back door – and came running across the lawn. Can you imagine the tears of joy that ran down her cheeks – the ache in her chest – and how hard she must have squeezed her little son – safe and alive! Her son was lost and now is found. What a pale *pale* picture of how Jesus found us lost and dead in sin and made us alive! Because Jesus took all our sins away – we have this powerful Gospel promise:

**Everything Works For Good!**

- 1. We were call**
- 2. We were justified**
- 3. We will be glorified**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – part of Paul's letter to the believers in Rome. Again – from Memorial Day – through the Sunday after Labor Day – we are working through the letter to the Romans. How powerful – the law and Gospel of the letter to the Romans. Romans chapter seven ends with the words, **"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!"** Chapter 8 begins with the powerful Gospel truth, **"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."** Think about that! **Therefore, there is now no condemnation...** Sinful people – so quick to condemn – so quick to find fault – so quick to criticize. Sinful people – sawdust inspectors. "Pardon me. Excuse me. That little flaw – that little piece of dust in your eye must be painfully irritating! Let me get my tweezers and fix that for you. Oh, never mind that barn board plank in my own eye. Let me fix what's wrong with you!" How wrong is that? Because Jesus' innocent life and tortured death washed away all my sins –

by grace alone – it is God’s own truth – **therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!**”

It is because Jesus loves us – and has forgiven all our sins **we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.** What a powerful and profound promise is that? To know that Jesus is making everything – absolutely everything work out for our ultimate eternal good – there will be not just a contentment – but a *joy* in our heart and life. I don’t always read the obituaries in the *Watertown Daily Times* – but I did the other day. There was a Schultz who the paper said – “has gone home to where he wanted to be, in Jesus’ arms.” This grandpa was a herdsman farmer. He must have had sheep and goats. His nickname was “Happy”! How wonderful is that? Happy! Happy loved his dog named Snoopy. Happy and his family were grateful to his cardiologist Thomas J. Lewandowski. He was grateful to his nurses who took care of him. Happy was grateful for the hospital where he was and the doctors and nurses and technicians and therapists who took care of him there. Could our nickname be happy? Or are we more like grumpy or crabby or irritable or frustrated? We have reason to be more than happy deep inside – because all our sins are forgiven. We have reason to be happy deep inside. **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. 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 shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!**

**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.** God’s purpose is that we be saved – that we come home to heaven. That means everything works for ultimate spiritual good. It was about 20 years ago – that my friend Bill – with this really neat moustache – waxed and curled up at the ends – drove a semi for Piggly Wiggly – delivering groceries. One day he was unloading a pallet of groceries – on this platform connected to the back of his truck – when one of the rivets popped and all those groceries smashed his leg – literally splitting open his thigh so you could see his femoral artery. Bill – twisted the handle on the lift truck and pulled his leg free. Bill was in the hospital for quite a while – while his leg healed. What Bill did – was tell every surgeon – every doctor – every nurse – every therapist – every person who came in to mop his room or deliver his get well cards – that Jesus had spared his life. And when he got home to heaven – his leg wouldn’t even have a scar from the stitches. Bill would tell you that that terrible painful accident in the end worked out for good – because Jesus loved him so much! **In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

**For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Predestination!** That’s a word that strikes fear in the hearts of many people. It’s supposed to be quite the opposite! It’s supposed to be for our comfort – to know that before God made the world – he picked and chose you and me to be his people! Before creation your Heavenly Father knew your first name – your middle name and your last name. Some people are kind of funny about their middle name. In the obituaries in the paper they only list your middle initial. I have done more than one funeral

where we asked the family what is the saint's middle name and they will say, "I don't know!" There have been people that say, "I don't want you to say their middle name when you read the Christian Obituary at the funeral – because they didn't like their middle name. They never ever used it. My middle name is Edward. My son Matthew's middle name is Edward. My grandson Samuel's middle name is Edward. My Dad's middle name is Edward. My sainted grandfather's first name was Edward. My grandfather Edward came from a big family. He had lots of brothers and sisters. My *great* grandpa Charles and his wife Louisa Bertha had lots of children. They had Martha, August, Bertha, Emma. There was a baby still born. Then they had Edward, Minna Louise, Theodore, Laura, Heinrich, Hulda, Rudolph, Bernhard, Raymond, Elvin and another stillborn. My great grandma had 15 babies! My Heavenly Father knew that. Jesus died for every one of them! Jesus picked them – chose them to be his people. Through Holy Baptism he washed away their sins, planted saving faith in their hearts – adopted them into his family of believers. And one very wondrous day – when I come home to heaven – I will meet my great great great grandfather Christian Schultz and my Great Great Great Grandfather on my Grandmother's side – Daniel Riech. How wonderful will that be – at the forever wedding feast! And my Heavenly Father planned that before he created this planet!

**For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.** Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers. Jesus is the firstfruits of those who sleep! When we lived in Dundee – we had a strawberry patch – little vines all tangled together. Every spring the strawberry patch would turn green and grow – its little runners everywhere. You had to pick up the ends – and set them in the patch – not into the lawn. There would be all these delicate little blossoms. Then all the little blossoms would turn into little light white/green berries. Very gradually these little berries would grow bigger and redder and juicier. And at last the day would come when you would find – hiding shyly demurely beneath a leaf – that very first undeniably ripe red strawberry! What would you do? You would call to everyone in the garden – in the yard – in the house by a window! You would ceremoniously pick that berry – hold it up for all to see – wipe any soil off of it. And then with everyone watching you would pop that little berry into your mouth. It was sweet beyond words! It was the sure and certain promise that very soon there would be lots and lots and lots of red ripe sweet strawberries – for short cake – for on ice cream – for on top of pound cake – for in a strawberry malt. You knew this for a fact – because of that first fruit – the very first one! Jesus is the first fruit of those who were ever put into a grave. Jesus died. He was buried. He rose from the dead. And because Jesus lives – we too will with him forever in Heaven!

**And those he predestined, he also called.** People are called to faith through the means of grace. That is the Gospel in Scripture and baptism. Jesus uses us – to call people to faith. When we are blessed with a newborn baby – Jesus has entrusted us with the most precious thing in the whole wide world – besides our immortal soul – the soul of our newborn baby! That's why it's so important for us to bring our little baby to be baptized. Little babies are born with a deep need for baptism. Little babies are born with the sin they inherited from their parents – which we inherited from Adam and Eve. If we have relatives – neighbors – friends – people we barely know – who tell us – we have a baby! Ask them – is your baby baptized? Ask them this literally eternal life or death question. Jesus can use you – to call people to faith! If people are all grown up – and are your friend – we need to take opportunities. We need to make opportunities to call them – to invite them to hear the Gospel. We can't just sit there. They

say it happens all the time. Remember that man named Angel Torres. He's 78 years old. He stopped to buy some milk. He's on his way home. He's crossing the street when a tan Toyota and a dark Honda came racing down the road. The Honda crashes into Angel and tosses him like a rag doll. He's lying in the street – bleeding – paralyzed from the neck down. Who helps him? Nobody! Who runs out into the street to try and stop traffic – so he doesn't get run over again? Nobody! People drive by – but don't stop. People on the sidewalk walk over – a little closer – and look – but don't do anything to help! A lady named Esmin was in this hospital – a hospital for people who are broken in their heart – their mind – their emotions. And she falls to the floor in the waiting room – and people – including hospital security guards – walk around her – while she literally dies – literally passes away – and nobody – again absolutely nobody does anything to help her. You can't stand to watch the video for a whole hour – and watch her helplessly die – while nobody lifts a finger to help her. You can't! What if Jesus had ignored us? What if Jesus had just left us alone – to die in our sins? But he didn't! **Those he (Jesus) predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified – declared not guilty; those he justified, he also glorified.**

It was three days after Christmas – that a man named Jean-Dominique Bauby woke up after a 20 day coma – to realize he had suffered a massive stroke. He was in a condition called Locked-In Syndrome. Jean had control of nothing – except the ability to blink his left eyelid! That was it! He couldn't talk. He couldn't swallow. He couldn't move his hands. He couldn't walk. He couldn't take care of himself. He couldn't roll over. He couldn't do *anything* – except blink his left eye. What did he do? He wrote a book! He wrote a book about his experiences being a prisoner in his own body. It took him about 200,000 blinks to write his story. Each word took about 2 minutes to write. Mr. Bauby was determined to express what was in his heart and mind. And no amount of physical difficulty would stop him. Ten days after he finished his book Mr. Bauby died from pneumonia. Do we go through life – feeling sorry for our self? Do we go through life – thinking about all the things we can't do – all the things we don't have – all the things we aren't? God has given us so much. And God has given us the priceless gift of time – our time of grace. Our time – to give glory to Jesus – by telling anyone and everyone that Jesus is their Savior, too! Let us tell them now – *before it's too late!* Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

*Rev. Anthony E. Schultz*