



“Who Shall Separate us from the Love of Christ?”

Theme: Why?

Sermon Scripture: Romans 8:28, 35, 37-39

Family Activity for the Week: Celebrate that God brings good out of bad! Encourage each family member to begin each day saying these words to God: “Yes!” and “Thank you!” Let your family know that by saying “Yes” to God, we are saying “Yes” to the gift of a new day, the opportunity to serve others, the privilege to grow in faith, and a willingness for our hearts and minds to be shaped by the Holy Spirit. When we say, “Thank you!” we are giving praise and glory to God and celebrating all of God’s many blessings! Begin each precious day as a family with “Yes!” and “Thank you!” and celebrate each day as a gift from God.

Monday, May 11 – Read Isaiah 58:2-8, Isaiah 61:1-3. Isaiah stated a principle implicit in all of Scripture. God usually works through people to bring good from evil during our earthly lives. Isaiah 58 called God’s people to value practical steps to feed and free suffering, exploited people more than empty religious ceremonies. Chapter 61 (Jesus’ mission statement—cf. Luke 4:16-21) said as we join in God’s mission to make our broken world new, God forms us into people who can be called, “Oaks of Righteousness.”

- ▲ In Isaiah 61:3, the prophet promised that God would give those who have been poor, captives and mourners, “a crown in place of ashes, oil of joy in place of mourning, a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.” Jesus, in the gospel of Luke, claimed that passage as defining his mission. What do those words suggest, then, about our calling as Jesus’ followers?
- ▲ God, who called us to join in the divine mission, has defined the “big picture” shape of our mission. But there is a place in God’s big mission for your individual gifts, strengths and dreams. In what ways have you been able to incorporate your gifts and passions in what you do to help carry out God’s mission in the world?

Prayer: Lord, use me in your mission to invite the world to Your Kingdom. Thank you for your guidance through the Holy Spirit in my life. Transform me to be more like Your Son. Amen.

Tuesday, May 12 – Read Hebrews 11:33-12:2. Hebrews listed many examples of faith, some with beautiful outcomes and some who met terrible earthly fates. Author Frederick Buechner wrote that God’s grace means, “Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don’t be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us.” God was with all the faithful. Their ultimate reward was in “a better country ... a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:16).

- ▲ At times, said Hebrews 11:39-40, we don’t see God’s promises realized in this life at all, but wait for eternity. That can be very hard. When have you had to wait longer than you wished for a divine promise to come true? Are there promises you are still waiting for? What helps you to hold onto faith and trust as you wait?

(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for May 9-10, 2020 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

- ▲ Hebrews called us, as we live our lives, to “fix our eyes on Jesus, faith’s pioneer and perfecter.” What ways have you found of “fixing your eyes on Jesus” during your regular, everyday life? What is one practice you could adopt that you believe would help you to “fix your eyes on Jesus” every day, in every situation?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, when everything goes well, it’s easy for me to forget that I need you with me. When things go badly, it’s easy for me to think you’ve abandoned me. Thank you for being with me in both the light and dark days of my life. Amen.*

Wednesday, May 13 – Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, who lived in a skeptical Greek society, that we can face even death with total confidence. For Paul, death did not end our service to God. As C.S. Lewis says so poetically, death moves us on to the next chapter of, “the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.” Like him, we can live our day-to-day lives in the light of Jesus’ resurrection.

- ▲ When Paul said, “flesh and blood,” he didn’t mean simply, “physical existence,” but the brokenness that haunts our lives (cf., e.g., Romans 8:7-8). Paul said Jesus’ resurrection means we can trust in God’s eternity, all the brokenness and hurt will be gone. There are many details we don’t know about how eternity will work. What is one promised change you deeply look forward to in God’s world made new?
- ▲ At the end of this passage, Paul urged his readers to be “firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord.” Those words were for all Christians, not just people called into vocational ministry. In what areas of life are you answering that call? What value is there in trusting that whatever work you do for God and others “isn’t going to be for nothing,” even in the face of death?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, make and keep me firm and unshakable. Walk with me every day of this life, and then go with me on into the next chapters of the great adventure you have in store. Amen.*

Thursday, May 14 – Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1. The apostle Paul knew firsthand about “the worst” in our world. Yet he believed, as a pastor in Frederick Buechner’s novel *The Final Beast* said, that, “the worst isn’t the last thing about the world. It’s the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best You are terribly loved and forgiven. Yes. You are healed. All is well.” In Christ, we look beyond the worst to the, “eternal stockpile of glory,” Jesus promised.

- ▲ Would you consider the apostle Paul a success or a failure? What standards do you use to define whether you are a “success” or not? In what way(s) does this passage confirm your measures of what constitutes “winning” in life? Does it challenge you to rethink your standards of measurement and your goals in any way?
- ▲ In Romans 8:24, Paul wrote, “We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn’t hope. Who hopes for what they already see?” In today’s verses, he talked about our focus on the things we can’t see, yet which are more enduring than what we can see. What hopes do you hold that remain out of sight right now? What steps do you take to anchor your hope in God’s goodness, and to live with patience and trust?

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, so much of what you said and did seemed odd and out of step to many people. But you weren’t shortsighted. You looked beyond the obvious and visible. Give me your eyes to see, however dimly, the glory of eternity. Amen.*

Friday, May 15 – Read Romans 8:28, 35-39. The apostle Paul did not believe God caused evil things, but he knew they happen. “Trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword”—he’d faced all these and more (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-27). Yet his list was not a complaint. He wrote it to say, “In all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us” (verse 37). No matter what life throws at us, we can march with Paul and a long line of believers in God’s eternal victory parade.

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- ▲ Paul asked a compelling question: “Who will separate us from Christ’s love?” His wording assumed that the answer was, “Nobody and nothing!” What situations are most likely to leave you feeling separated from God’s love? What spiritual “anchors” keep you connected to God’s love, hope and peace, even when times get difficult?
- ▲ Today’s scripture did not say, as people sometimes think, that “all things” are good—they’re not. It says God, who is always good, can take even painful and difficult things and bend them to serve a good purpose, if we are willing to put them in God’s hands. Can you look back and see times when God has brought good out of hard things you have faced? What are you facing right now that is painful, frustrating or scary?

Prayer: *All-powerful God, whatever comes my way, hold me close in the shelter of your love. Thank you that, through you, I can win a sweeping victory in “all these things.” Amen.*

Saturday, May 16 – Read Revelation 3:20-22, 21:1-5. Jesus said that, for God’s people, the end of the world is a time of redemption, not fear (cf. Luke 21:25-28). Revelation ended on the same note, with glowing, symbol-filled images of the glory that awaits God’s people after this world ends. The most glorious reward of all, John’s extraordinary vision said, is that God will be with us, and we with God, throughout eternity.

- ▲ The apostle Paul said Christians can live very differently from those, “who don’t have any hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). At a time when Rome hated (and sometimes killed) Christians, John pictured a splendid future for God’s people, using symbols from Genesis 2’s description of the garden of Paradise. The exiled seer invited everyone to choose a life like his. Every Easter, we invite you to remember these words about life after death, “I not only believe it; I’m counting on it. And you can count on it, too.” Have you said yes to that invitation? Can you live every day in triumphant hope?

Prayer: *Jesus, you said in John 14 that you were going to prepare a place for us, that your Father’s house has lots of room. I want to be there when you make all things new. Thank you for promising me that I can be one of your redeemed, living with you eternally. Amen.*