



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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February 26, 2012

1st Sunday in Lent

Sermon Text: [Romans 8:31-39](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 22:1-18](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 3](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 8:31-39](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 1:12-15](#)

We Are More Than Conquerors!

Feelings doubt this truth in our struggles
In Christ this truth is certain

The congregation may remain seated. We're all familiar with the word *hyperactive*, right? Maybe that's why some of you just stood up; you're just hyperactive and can't sit still, right? Hyperactive, super active I suppose, very active; it comes from this Greek word *hypér*, which means *beyond* or *super, over and above*. Hyperactive is something we probably can relate to, but this morning our God talks to us about being hyper-something else that we probably can't relate to all that well.

You probably know someone that is hyperactive even if you yourself are no longer that way. But, do you understand that each and every one of us here this morning that believes that Jesus Christ is our Savior is hyper-victorious and we are hyper-conquerors? In what I just read to you where it says "we are more than conquerors," it uses that word *hypér*, hyper-conquerors, more than conquerors, beyond conquerors, super conquerors, very much conquerors. That's an interesting thought, isn't it?

You parents, as you struggled with getting your kids ready to come to church this morning, did you feel like more than a conqueror? Did you feel like beyond a conqueror? Or did you feel beaten down?

As we go through our life at times there are all kinds of things that make us feel like less than conquerors, right? All kinds of little struggles. All kinds of big struggles. But here is what our God wants us to know when it comes to the most important struggle we have, our struggle with Satan. We are more than conquerors. That truth is going to affect us as we face all these other struggles we face in our daily life. We are more than conquerors. I don't care if you don't feel like more than a conqueror. Your feelings are going to always be all over the place, right? When you have a head cold, you're emotions are going to be a little different than if you're feeling warm and well fed and healthy. That's just how our emotions are. So as we are going through a struggle, sometimes our emotions get the best of us and our feelings overtake this certainty that our God wants us to focus on. This certainty is that in Christ we are hyper-conquerors. What a glorious truth that is! That's what our God wants us to know today and that's what our God wants us to live every day.

If you look at the first question Paul asks; he asks a lot of questions in this section as he is talking to the Romans. There are a lot of rhetorical questions; a lot of them using *if*,

and they just as easily could have been translated *since*. We see that as we go through this. But he starts out by saying “What, then, shall we say in response to this?” As I read that to you, did you ask yourself, “Okay, what’s the *this* he’s talking about?” That would make sense, right? What is the *this* he is talking about? What should we say in response to what?

There is a pretty familiar section of Romans that is right before this. “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” ([Romans 8:28](#).) Do you remember that? That’s verse 28, just a few verses before this, right? Then, because we might go “Oh boy, I don’t know; I don’t always love God the way I should, so does that mean everything is going to work for my good? Things don’t seem to be working for my good, so maybe that means I don’t love God enough.” That’s how Satan is going to get into our head at times. He tells us something that makes us certain about the fact that we love God. He says, “Those he foreknew, he also predestined. Those he predestined, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified.” ([Romans 8:29-30](#).) In that series, do you notice who the subject is each and every time? When he says “all things work together for the good of those who love God” and we might doubt “Do I love God or not,” what does he point us to? He doesn’t say “Look at your own belly button.” He says, “he...,” “he...,” “he...,” “he...” This is what God has done for you before time began. He foreknew you. He knew you in the sense...remember what he said once to the false teachers? “Away from me. I never knew you.” ([Matthew 7:23](#).) Yes, he knew of them, but he didn’t know them as his own. But he knew us before time began as his own. We are his elect. Those he foreknew, he predestined. Those he predestined, he also justified. He brought us to faith. He gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit. He did the work. This is a certain, objective truth. And because he has declared us not guilty, which is what justified means, it’s a courtroom setting, he’s also glorified us. He has given us heaven.

Now, what shall we say in response to this? If you are worried that things aren’t always going to work out for your eternal good or you don’t see how God is doing it now, here is what he is saying. It’s all about God. Then he says there are all kinds of things that are still going to come that are going to make you doubt this, but he wants us to focus on objective truths.

Just for a moment, take a look at some of these things that make us wonder as we struggle. He talks about trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword. It says, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall any of those things?” He doesn’t say those things won’t come to us. He tells us those things will come but they won’t separate us from God. When we are facing trouble, when we are facing hardship, when we are facing attacks, we are going to face them, but he says they won’t separate us from God.

Satan wants to come to us and say to us, “If you truly are a Christian, you won’t face any of those things. If God loves you, he won’t let any of them into your life.” That’s a lie of Satan. You and I at times are going to give in to those lies, because as we are going through some of these things, they hurt. They are painful and they cause us

heartache and hardship and sleepless nights. They cause us at times to question God. “God, do you really love me? God, are you going to make everything work for my good?” We don’t feel a little bit like a conqueror as we are going through some of these things.

Our God tells us to trust him and not doubt. Our doubts are not God pleasing, but we are all going to have them at times. What is important for us is what we do when we doubt. That’s what God is trying to drive home to us when he tells us over and over to keep looking at him and at Christ and not at these things.

Look at the other things he talks about that might come that might be difficult in our lives, things that will seek to separate us from the love of God in Christ. He talks about death. That’s the first one he mentions. Think of how hard that is in our lives as we lose a loved one, especially if we lose a loved one in ways that we don’t expect and in ways that we are not prepared for. Those are times when we are filled with questions of “Why God? Why would you do that?” Here our God is telling us that death isn’t going to separate us from him.

Sometimes it’s life that seeks to separate us from God. We go through day-to-day life. We have our struggles. We have our worries. We let other things crowd God out of the picture a little bit. Just day-to-day living at times seeks to drive a wedge between us and God because sometimes it’s just so frustrating. When we think we are doing the right thing, we are trying to do what’s right, and then we end up suffering for it. We say “That isn’t right God. That isn’t fair God. You shouldn’t let that happen God.” But our God has told us that is going to happen. He told us persecution is going to come. He listed it in the first paragraph here.

He tells us, “If you are going to follow after me, you must take up your cross and follow me.” ([Matthew 16:24](#).) Our cross is the things that we suffer because we are seeking to serve our God. We live in a world where Satan still is powerful and seeking to destroy us. In that world, he is going to use anything he can think of to try to separate us from the love of God. Whether it’s death, whether it’s life, whether it’s dementia, height or depth, whether it’s time, present or future, he’s going to try to use everything and anything to cast these doubts into our hearts and use these struggles to make us feel like we are not a conqueror. As we go through them, we certainly will feel less than a conqueror. But the objective truth that we always have to focus on God lays out for us crystal clear here. The reason we can be certain none of these things will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus is, since God is for us, who can be against us? It’s not a matter of is he or isn’t he. It’s a matter of since he is for us. Who can be against us?

Then he takes this argument from the greater to the lesser. “He who did not spare his own Son.” He who willingly came to this earth and lived in our place and died in our place is not going to abandon us now. I don’t care what it feels like in my life or in your life. It’s an objective truth that the God who loved us that much is never going to turn his back on us. That’s the point that he is making.

Then he drives home that same point by going back to the idea of being justified that he had talked about in the previous paragraph, before what I read to you. Those God predestined, he also justified. He takes us back into a courtroom setting again, doesn't he? "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?" You are God's chosen. Who is going to bring a charge against you? It's God who justifies, God who declares us not guilty. Who is it that condemns? God is the one who sits in judgment, right? We say in the Creed Jesus is the one who is going to come to judge the living and the dead. Satan tells him he should condemn us, but the one who condemns us is Christ.

Now look at what he says. "Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life..." What is the one who condemns us doing? He is at the right hand of God and he is interceding for us. Because he has given us the gift of the Spirit to believe that he is our Savior, as we go through these struggles, we can picture in our mind this glorious truth...we are in God's courtroom. God is sitting on the judgment seat and is going to judge us. Jesus is the judge. But this is telling us who our defense attorney is. Who is the one pleading our case? Who is the one interceding for us? It's Jesus.

The verdict is certain, isn't it? If the one who is pleading our case is the one who decides our case, when Satan brings his accusations of "He did this. He did that. He doubted your love. He said you're not a fair God, you're not a loving God. He said all these things in the midst of his woes and his uncertainty in life." When Satan brings those accusations against you in God's courtroom, God simply says "He is in Christ. He believes that Christ is his Savior. He is forgiven. He is holy. He is mine. Case dismissed."

That's a certain truth. I don't care what your emotions are like, but when you are facing those doubts and those certainties, take yourself back into that courtroom. Look at that bench. Look at your defense attorney. Look at the love he has for you and the willingness that he had to die for you. He is the one who is pleading your case. Since that is the case, there is no trouble, there is no hardship, there's no persecution, there's no famine, there's no nakedness, there's no danger, there's no sword that can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

God has always said, even in the Old Testament, that we are like sheep to be slaughtered, that we are going to face difficulty in this world, but he has told us that we are never going to face it alone. As we face it, when we face it with Christ at our side, we are hyper-victorious. We are more than conquerors. So during your Lenten struggle, as you look at yourself and as you are honest and see your own sins, and as you push aside the excuses, the rationalizations, the comparisons and all the other things that Satan wants you to do, as you push them all aside and simply say "God, have mercy on me, a sinner," be certain that in Christ he has.