**Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Sermon**

**Text:** Romans 8:28-30

**Theme:** God works it for good?

 Our friends in Africa had a dairy farm on the edge of town. One Summer they had visitors from England. The family who came to visit included their nephew Oliver. He was about 5 years old. I remember him well. He was a very talkative little chap. He had a very unique way of beginning every sentence. He would start by saying; “Do you Know?” Then he would add his comment or point. It was as if he had some grand knowledge and he wanted to make sure you knew it too. “Do you know, that the milk we have in our tea comes from the cows?” or “Do you know, that there are Elephants here in Africa?” It was very cute and he always brought a smile to your face when he talked to you about what was important to him.

 I can’t help but think of Oliver today when I read the text we have from St. Paul. **“Do you know? that all things work together for the good!”** Grand knowledge indeed that Paul want to share with us today.

 It’s very interesting to see how Paul begins this section here. He doesn’t say, “Do you know? It would be nice if God works for good,” or “We sure hope that God works for good” or “Usually God works for good.” Rather he says, “We know!”. He is very explicit! **28We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.**

 Every time that Paul uses this phrase **we know**, in Romans he uses it to introduce something that is a given. It is a well-known fact. In this world there are givens. We see them as facts, that we know for sure. For example:

* Things change!
* Pain is a part of life!
* Life isn’t always fair!
* Things don’t always go to plan!
* Two things are certain, death and taxes!

 So Paul says, “We know!” **It’s a given. It’s a fact. It’s just something we Christians know.** How do we know for certain! God has shown us.  There’s another interesting aspect to this phrase. **28We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.** The word for know in the original language here is a word that is used for knowledge that comes from experience. In other words, **it’s a knowing that sometimes you have to learn.** And where do you think we learn it? Right here in God’s word. He show us.

 His Word will gladly acknowledge this as true. And as we look at the the pages of Scripture we see numerous illustrations of it. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and more. Perhaps the greatest example is **Joseph.** Sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. Falsely accused of trying to seduce his master's wife and languishing for years in an Egyptian prison. Through God’s plan he was raised to be the second in command in Egypt and save his family from starvation because of a famine. And when the day came when he could reveal himself to his brothers he said these very words. , **"...you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good"** (Genesis 20:20).

 The word **all.** God doesn’t **work a few things or some things for our good.** God works **all things for our good.** Again, it’s a given. **It’s a fact**. Note for whom things work out for good: “**for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**” You and me! Those who he has called.

 Now, we need to look at another phrase in this sentence. **According to his purpose. Do you know?** God’s love is beyond our human understanding. Why is this so important. Because we know the real truth. It is a given. We do not deserve it. In fact, we deserve the exact opposite. Things should not work out for the good. Why? Because we deserve everything that is coming at us. We deserve even more. Death and hell! Yes! We deserve it because of our sin! God will not condemn you. Even if other people are against us, even if the devil whispers this in our ear. Even if this sinful world and all its evil comes against us. **God is never against us. He is for us!** The proof of this is in the cross. Look at it. See the stains, the blood, yes God did that much for us–the biggest job of all, saving us from our sins. God’s word tells us…that’s a given!

 Paul shows us why we can know this is a given. He does so in the next two verses. Verse 29 says, **29because those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers.**

 To foreknow simply means to know beforehand. God knew you. Think about that for a moment. With all the billions and billions of people that live in the world now, and all the billions and billions of people that have lived before us, God still knew you beforehand. His knowledge is so great that he even knew you before creation. He knew who you would be and what you would do. He knew that you would be his dear child. That is why he will keep his promise. Some say Paul is telling us that “everything will turn out okay in this life” But in reality, he is saying that everything will work out for our ultimate good. These words have our eternal, not temporal good in mind to bring us to himself. To work it out for the good. Your good. My good. That is to be forever with him…the ultimate good!

 As soon as some people hear that word "predestination," they think immediately that God said something like, "OK, you people over here will go to heaven, and you over there will go to hell." But predestination is never applied to unbelievers or hell in Scripture. It simply means that in eternity past God knew that He would use every circumstance in our lives to accomplish one great purpose: **to bring us to believe in Jesus as our Savior!**

Paul says this. **And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. And those he justified, he also glorified.**

 To predestine is a word we do not use often in regular spoken English. Here in the bible it is used to say this; “To determine in advance by divine will.”

 I hear Oliver’s cute little voice again. **Do you know?** This teaching is meant to be a great comfort. We might think of a cattle rancher that sets a fence around his cattle. He sets them apart. He makes them distinct. He protects them as his own. That’s what God has done. Long before we were born, long before creation, God saw us, chose us and set a fence around us. He knew in advance we would be called, justified and sanctified! This is truly an amazing thing. Consider this—if God knew you beforehand and knew who you would be and what you would do, that means he also knew ahead of time the wrongs you would do. Long before we were even born, he knew that we would be born in sin. He knew every sin we would commit. Even before we did it, our selfishness, our failure to obey, our desire to go against his will for us. Yes every sin! He knew just how much I deserve the fiery blasts of hell. How much you deserve it also!

 Yet, he still set his fence around us. He called us with the Gospel. Our faith connects us to what Jesus has done. Jesus was never greedy or arrogant or self-serving. Jesus never pushed his father to the side. He never said bad words or had bad thoughts. He was perfect in everything he did. He was perfect in his life and in his love—so perfect that he wanted to give that life for you and me. By shedding his blood and dying on the cross, he removed all our guilt and carried all our wrongs, forgiving everything we have ever done. Now, through faith in him, we have been changed; **to be conformed to the image of his Son.**

 **Do you know? This is a given!** This is God’s love. He will work all things for the good. For us to be with him in eternity! Hold on to that when all your circumstances look grim and bleak. God has not given up on you or abandoned you. No, indeed! In fact, Jesus, your ascended Lord, right now is interceding for you, praying for you, making sure that you will not fail or fall.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. **15**For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are,* *yet* without sin. **16**Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16

**Amen**