

Sermon
July 26, 2020

Romans 8:26-39

Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Anyone know what it's like to be separated from people and activities that you love? We are living smack dab in the middle of a time that has the world separated in so many ways.

We are separated from friends and family that we were accustom to interacting and sharing precious life moments with all triggered by a spontaneous, "Hey, you wanna get together and see a movie, get some coffee together, go to lunch, go to a Rockies game or see a concert?" Not right now. We are separated from all this and more.

Sigh...

And then there's the separation we are experiencing revolving around racism. Deep and systemic separations continue to scar and divide us. And, on top of that there is such heated debate in our political lives, our separations become even more profound and we are left peering across a chasm of separation at each other or gazing in complete opposite directions with not even a recognition of the "other".

Sigh...

We are living in a time where we are separated from our siblings in Christ. It isn't safe for us to gather together in the same room and worship like we love to do. We are separated from the worship spaces we love and cherish. The familiar and loved cross, Baptismal font and alter. Places where we would gather together with others that we love and care deeply about. We would gather and sing the hymns that we grew up with and drew us closer to God. Singing together, both in tune and out, was an experience of togetherness that cannot be substituted with anything else. We are separated from the loving and caring times of sitting at a table together in the fellowship hall, sharing some food and cherished fellowship. We are separated from the beautiful exchanges of welcome, care, humor, and love, as we gather together in the narthex and move into the sanctuary.

We are separated from that space at the front of the sanctuary where we would move together, kneel or stand, next to one another, consciously and unconsciously recalling the different relationships we had with those we could see with us, at the table. We are separated from the smiles we would share as we walked up to and back from, the table.

Watching children enthusiastically skip to Growing with Jesus time, is a memory right now. Seeing the faces of confirmation students as they faithfully share a snapshot of their journey of faith all while we sit together in the fellowship hall, again, a memory. Watching and hearing

bells being rung while lips count out the beat of the song and our ears are filled with melodic blessing...memory.

Don't get me started. All this that we are separated from right now leaves me with the only thing I can honestly do...sigh.

And today, we are reminded, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." Does this matter to us, today, in our exhausting experiences of separation? I'm just going to say right now, "It matters!"

Nothing can separate us from the love of God: nothing from this long list of separations we've discussed already, nothing from the list of things that have entered your thoughts while reading this, nothing from the list that invades your thoughts at night that keep you from rest. NOTHING can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Yes this matters.

God joins us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God crosses everything that has separated us from God and one another and reconciles all of creation with God's self. Through Jesus Christ, Paul reminds us, "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Through Christ, we are freed from all that separates us from God and one another. We are freed to love beyond our separations. Not only that, we are more than conquerors of these separations and if more than conquerors, we can confidently and boldly love beyond our physical separations, relational separations and systemic separations.

Yes, today, there are physical separations that are in place in regards to gathering in shared spaces, but the reason we separate right now, is because of the love given to us to love others. This same love has conquered these separations and calls us to continue to love one another, especially the most vulnerable.

Siblings in Christ, we are created in the image of God, in loving relationship with God and one another. As siblings in Christ, loving God and loved by God, we know that God is for us. And if God is for us, what could possibly threaten to separate us from this love that we share? NOTHING!

God has entered into our separations and made us conquerors of these separations for the sake of God's purpose. And God's purpose for us is to live as God has created us to live, in loving relationship with one another for the sake of God's kingdom. This matters today and everyday.

Because of this love, we can look into all that separates us and proclaim at the top of our beings, "we will love beyond these separations because we are more than conquerors in God's love."

Thanks be to God.