

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH, JULY 26, 2020

This scripture tells us loud and clear, nothing or no one- seen or unseen- can drive a wedge between us and God's love!

“neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Those words are clear. They are powerful. They are descriptive. They are pointed and they are direct. They are the words God Himself has chosen to describe His love for us His children.

Far too many times, however, we forget that. We wonder where He is. We question His goodness. We doubt His love. We let the issues and challenges we face in life come between us and Him. We allow them to form a barrier between us. We get sick and we can't believe God would allow such a thing to happen- not to us. Not if He loved us. We get mistreated. We get taken advantage of. We get caught in the middle of life's situations and it all combines to steal the focus from our walk with Him.

And so we start to doubt His goodness and love. We turn away from the one who is the very source of our life and the constant supplier of our every need.

A lot of people feel like nothing hard or strenuous or bad or difficult should ever happen to them. That somehow it's not fair that they should get hurt or sick or laid off. They have an entitlement mentality! A sense of entitlement sets in when a person believes they have a right to something. The world owes them a living. Other people should have difficulties. Not them.

Robert George, who is an editorial page writer at the New York Post, called my generation, the baby boomers, "The Worst Generation." He wrote: **“The Baby Boomers are the most self-centered, self-seeking, self-interested, self-absorbed, self-indulgent, self-aggrandizing generation in American history.”** He could be right.

A woman by the name of C. Leslie Charles sums up what is becoming an ever more prevailing attitude in America. She says the thinking is this:

- a) I am entitled to what I want when I want it.
- b) My time is important, and I should not have to be inconvenienced by others.
- c) I have the right to be impatient or rude when other people are behaving stupidly.
- d) I am entitled to special privileges because I am who I am.
- e) I'm a taxpayer; I own part of this road and I have the right to drive as fast as I want.
- f) I not only have the right to pursue happiness, I deserve to be happy and I will do whatever it takes to achieve it.
- g) I'm entitled to cheat a little bit in order to get ahead. If I do not take advantage someone else will, and then they'll be a step ahead of me.
- h) I work extra hard but don't get paid for it so I'm justified in helping myself to a few "souvenirs" from my office to offset what I am rightly owed.
- i) I'm too busy to mince around with false politeness and should be able to tell people exactly what I think without having to worry about their feelings.
- j) I must be more in the know than everyone else so I can stay one up on them; otherwise they may take advantage of me.

- k) **I deserve the newest, the biggest, the best, and the most. It's my right.**
- l) **I'm going to die one day so I may as well get as much as I can right now.**
- m) **So what if I'm rude-I never have to see this person again, so what difference does it make?**
- n) **My opinions and views are more valid than anyone else's.**
- o) **My emergencies take precedence over anyone else's emergency.**
- p) **The world is unfair, and opportunities are limited, so I may as well get all I can while I can, regardless of who or what stands in my way.**

That sense of entitlement can transfer to our understanding of the Christian faith. There's a branch of Christianity that promises a direct path to the good life. It's called the prosperity gospel. Its bold central claim is that God will give you your heart's desires: money in the bank, a healthy body, a thriving family, and boundless happiness. It is the belief that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for His people. It views the Bible as a contract between God and us. If we have faith in God, he will deliver security and prosperity.

It proposes that it is God's will for His people to be abundantly blessed here on this earth. It promises that the atonement of Jesus covers illness and poverty. This leads to believing that true Christians should never be sick, or struggle financially. The prosperity gospel promises that faith is a tool to force God to grant blessings. If you have enough faith, God is bound to act on your behalf. Or if you can claim it before it happens, God is bound to give it to you. This leads to a wrong view of prayer and a misunderstanding of biblical faith.

This teaching is a great danger to those who believe it. What happens is people place their hope in what God gives over and above God himself. This leads to people coming to God for what He can give them.

The problem is God never promises a life of riches, comfort, and abundant prosperity, so when a person experiences suffering, they feel as though God has lied to them.

Scripture says that there are very godly "saved" people who get sick and live by humble means. Our freedom from sickness and death is in the New Heaven and New Earth. Scripture says that we should pray for God's will to be done, and faith is reliance on what God has said, that we cannot see.

Do difficult times signify a lack of God's presence? Do they show a lack of love? Or is that simply the way it is in this fallen world? Is that not what it means to live in a fallen world where everything is subject to decay and brokenness?

Yes, sometimes, bad things will happen. We will get beaten down by Satan. Beaten down by a certain situation, or a group of people, or an illness. Some of our problems we have even brought upon ourselves.

Other things happen we have no control over. Whatever may be the case, life events always try to weasel there way in-between our relationship with the Lord if we let it.

So, I ask you: Who are you and to whom do you belong? I think far too many of us at times of need forget who we are and to whom we belong. Many will say they're a child of God, yet they refuse to walk by faith in the difficult times. Yes, God does want us to have an entitlement mindset. Just not the mindset of this world. He wants us to have His mindset of faith in Him and in His promises. I'll tell you somethings you are entitled to know:

- * **All things that are over your head are under His feet!**
- * **You can do all things through Christ who gives strengthens you!**

- * All things work together for those who love the Lord!
- * With Man nothing is possible, but with God All Things are Possible!

All to Jesus I surrender,
all to Him I freely give,
I will ever love and trust Him,
in His presence daily live!

I surrender All,
I surrender All
All to thee my Blessed Savior,
I Surrender All!

When the pitfalls of life come, they must be surrendered to Jesus! All means all, even the bits and pieces we think we can solve or take care of need to be surrendered! Those bits and pieces accumulate to become distractions and steal our focus.

With God on our side like He is, how can we lose? If God did not hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending His own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things.”**

Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture. All those things Jesus overcame and His love for us conquered them all without question! If Jesus is your Savior this morning, then He is also your conquering hero!

Jesus cannot forgive us anymore than we have been forgiven. Completely means just that. God is not interested in your past. He only sees His Sons price of our forgiveness and perfection when you or whoever tries to bring up something from the past.

Jesus Blood covered it all! Jesus sacrifice took care of the past once and for all. God only looks at your future, your past to Him is no more. It's tossed in the sea of forgetfulness!

As I said in yesterday's devotion: It is like God takes your sins and puts them in the deepest part of the ocean—and then he puts up a “no fishing” sign. God won't pull up your sins again, and he doesn't want you to, either. He wants you to be free.

If God did not hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending His own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? The answer is abundantly clear, there is nothing God is not willing to do or any place God is not willing to go to help one of His children! Gods willing to do His part, He already has, but we must be willing to put on, what He has given us every day and walk in it.

God is ready! Are you ready for what God's love is ready to do for you? God wants us to start walking in His Blessings and abiding in the vine, receiving everything that He has for us! All the blessings we enjoy freely today, were all made possible by Jesus finished work on the cross. The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us.