

Message: Week 2 of “Adjusting My Crown Series”, presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 07-17-2016 at Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.

Even when we realize that God pursues us in love and even when we remember that we are adopted as God's sons and daughters, we can, at times, question our sacred worth based on choices we've made or circumstances in our lives. The apostle Paul reassures us that no matter what, nothing can remove our sacred worth.

Romans 8:28-38

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored.

We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't 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?

And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? 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. 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:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.

We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

God's eternal and holy word. Amen.

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The story of Peter:

He was ruddy and impetuous. He often lacked forethought and acted before thinking. At one point, Jesus got really frustrated with him and called him Satan. He failed to see the big picture that Jesus spent three years training him on. Simon, or Peter the rock, as Jesus called him, is someone I identify with deeply.

Last week we introduced the Adjusting Your Crown series. My goal was to send you out believing in your divine sacredness, and the divine sacredness of others.

We were created by God and adopted as his own children. We are sons and daughters of the King of glory! This makes us royalty. God has big plans for us!

However, when we fail God, others, ourselves... where does that leave us?

Peter didn't like the direction Jesus ministry was headed. The more Jesus talked about sacrificing himself for humankind, the more Peter wrestled with the idea. He wanted to keep his friend and teacher safe. He didn't get the kind of love that Jesus was about to unveil. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter pulled out his sword and responded with violence. Jesus said, "Seriously Peter! Have you learned nothing over the past couple of years? C'mon!"

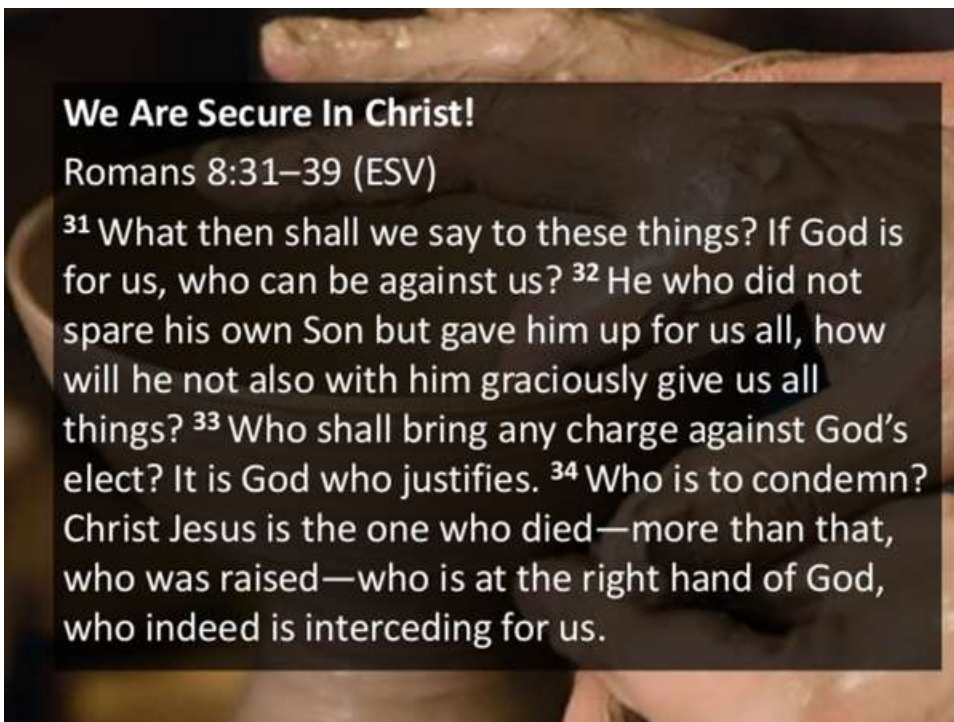
Jesus had told him that Peter would deny him. When push came to shove. He did. Peter blew it.

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What about me? I've failed.

Peter could have easily let the shame of his mistakes spiral him into falling away from his beliefs and become bitter. But Jesus, after he was resurrected, showed him grace. In fact, he told Peter directly to take what he had been taught and share it with the world. Jesus had faith in Peter. Jesus has faith in me. Jesus has faith in you.



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It's time to adjust your crown.

The answers are so plain and so wonderful, Paul, in his letter to the romans, reminds us that even when we get it wrong, there is grace. There is grace for those who deeply desire to follow Jesus.

Verse 31: No one can be successfully against us – not anyone on earth, not Satan, not even our own finger pointing, condemning mind.

Verse 32: God will supply everything we need, even when all seems lost. God came in the form of a human being to rescue us and bring us home.

Verse 33: No one can make a charge stick against us in the court of heaven, no matter who accuses us.

Verse 34: No one can condemn us.

Verse 35: No one and no thing can separate us from the love of Christ.



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Paul spells out the kinds of things that cannot separate us from the love of Christ, and they are the sort of things that happen all around us as we think about the recent killings, the issues with race... as we think about natural disaster, as we think about mental illness or even circumstances: “shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” The reason Paul chose to mention so many terrible things is to make sure we knew he was not saying: Well, there are some things so horrible that they really could separate us from the love of Christ. No. Nothing can separate us from Christ’s love. Notice three things from verse 35:

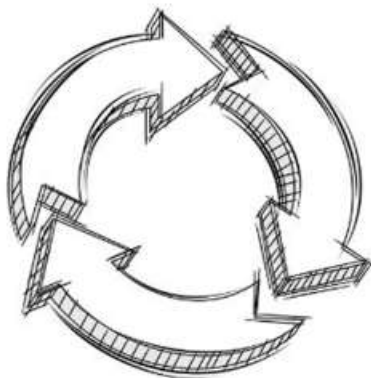
Christ is loving us now.

This is a right this moment thing. Christ is alive and is still loving us now. He is at the right hand of God and is therefore interceding for us, which means he is seeing to it that his finished work of redemption does in fact save us hour by hour and bring us safe to eternal joy. His love is not a memory. It is a moment-by-moment action by the omnipotent, living son of God, to bring us to everlasting joy.

This omnipotent, effective, protecting love does not spare us from calamities in this life. We live in a broken world. But it does bring us safe to everlasting joy with God.

We can think of all kinds of separation from God... death, wrong doing, our own failures... but when it comes down to it... God’s love trumps everything.

So the sum of the matter is this: Jesus Christ is mightily loving his people with omnipotent, moment-by-moment love that does not always rescue us from calamity but preserves us for everlasting joy in his presence even through suffering and death.



Cycle of Grace

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God comes to us in love

We respond to God’s love with gratitude

We live in a broken world and fall into sin -

We admit our sin and God meets us with grace

We enjoy the restorative power of Christ’s love for us when God comes to us in love



Years ago on a bright summer day, Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, and his stomach dropped when he saw the flashing lights behind him. Pulling over, the policeman approached AND charged him with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt, but the officer said, “You’ll still need to appear in court.” The judge asked, “Guilty, or not guilty?” When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, “That’ll be ten dollars -- a dollar for every mile you went over the limit.”

Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. “You have violated the law,” he said. “The fine must be paid--but I am going to pay it for you.” He took a ten-dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner! “That,” said Billy Graham, “is how God treats repentant sinners!”

Billy Graham had failed. The judge showed him grace.

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I fail. I try not to.

But there are days when I am least likely to win Pastor of the year award, daughter, friend... parent...

But I know one thing about God's grace... that God is good all the time. Now, that doesn't mean we should take advantage of his grace. But we should respond to God with gratitude and humility. And with a spirit ready to do better.



We can look at it this way... our children... or those in our lives who are like our children, occupy a place in our hearts that cannot be overtaken by anything. And that is only human love. Imagine what God's omnipotent love is like!

We as parents do our best. I do my best to instill in my daughter that she is worthy of respect and love and my discipline. She is worthy of my investment of time and energy – even when I can't keep up with her. I hope she keeps that childlike wonder, the ability to laugh and not be burdened by the world's pain. I want her to listen to what I tell her so that she won't have to learn lessons the hard way. Sound familiar? That's how God thinks of us.

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When I look at her, I see potential and promise and joy and love. And the notion that God loves us even deeper than that is almost incomprehensible. But it's true. God says, "You are my beloved child. You are worth everything to me. You are a royal priesthood. My grace is sufficient for you."

So as we move through this series, Adjusting Your Crown, I want you to remember that you are God's beloved child. God loves you despite your screw ups. And God can take those experiences and use them for good in this world to help others.

Many still wonder what they can do to win favor with God or how they can get to heaven. Guess what... it's not a secret. And so many approach this from the wrong angle. We've been talking about your sacred worth... and next week we'll talk about how exactly that works - that your royal inheritance is afforded not because of what you do or who you are, but because of who God is. Invite someone!