

Date: June 14, 2026

Texts: Psalm 116. 1-2, 12-19 / Romans 8. 28-39

Title: "All Things... (Do They Really?)"

Intro -

cf. - David Banga, commenting on these verses, notes that -

“the ‘good’ Paul is referring to is life that overcomes death, and wholeness that overcomes evil...”

that - “this is a mystery we should not [because we cannot...]

try and figure out (i.e. - it’s a mystery...)

(note - maybe so, but -

not very satisfying...)

maybe so, but -

does not begin to address the question many of us have...

does not help us out when we are stumped -

do they... really...?

do all things...

... work together for the good?

(and - if so - exactly how...?). - inquiring minds want to know...

cf. - a somewhat misunderstood passage

i.e. - all things work together for good...

... for those who love God. But all things are not good... -

so - you must not love God (or - maybe not enough...)

(thank you...)

a somewhat mis-used / mis-appropriated passage

i.e. - you just got diagnosed with terminal cancer...

don’t worry - “all things...”

(and other ill-considered attempts at biblical comfort...)

a mysterious passage - in that we want it to be true, but...

we just don’t see how

I) All Things...?

let's start with what it actually says -

some people read it... approach it...

with the idea that it promises "all good things..."

... to those who love God

(which it does not - promise...)

(and - which we know - from our lived experiences - is *not* the case
in that *not* all things in our lives are "good")

cf. - doesn't stop us from quoting this in response to troubling situations...

doesn't stop us from wishing for it, as some sort of promised

"good luck" poured out on the fortunate few...

(who have the t-shirts and coffee mugs to back up
their hopes and dreams...)

but that's not really what Paul is saying, and -

that's not what we should be hearing, or -

expecting (cf. - re: 2 clarifications here...) -

i.e. - "All things work together for good ..." doesn't mean only good things
will ever happen to you. Rather, we need to read on...

where we find that this is promised to all -

"... who are called according to God's purpose."

1) God has a purpose for the world, a purpose much bigger than
any individual person.

We are all part of that divine purpose *together*, not separately.

It surrounds us. It's the universe we inhabit,

the air we breathe and the life we live.

and in this purpose...

... the very disparate parts of our lives... the very diverse experiences
we have... pains we suffer... joys we embrace...

2) in this - they work together...

... for good

... for God's purpose, which is good...

cf. - the British preacher Leslie Weatherhead, used to encourage his listeners to think of God's purpose like a great river, rushing to the sea. Within that river, as with all rivers at spring flood, are scattered bits of debris.

Logs and branches float and spin upon the surface. Rocks and pebbles are borne along beneath, scouring the stream bed, bumping up against each other, and sometimes causing damage.

Does God, who made the river and charts its course, manipulate every bit of flotsam and jetsam? And do the random collisions of those pieces of debris make the least difference to the river's larger purpose?

Of course they don't. Within the great plan, things happen that we can only explain as accidents. They cause us no end of consternation, and make us wonder why God delivers such afflictions upon us.

But, in the larger view, they're part of a greater movement for good. and...

in the larger view -

they are a part of the totality of our lives, which -

because we live these lives in the love of God -

are good...

working together for good...

II) What Response?

after raising this challenging issue of how we are to see the struggles in

our lives that are - in and of themselves - manifestly "not good"

(but - which "flow in the river of God's purposes"

- a part of our lives which is - good...)

Paul asks (vs. 31) - what shall we say in response to this...?

how can we take that first step to embracing the good of

God's larger purpose...

while getting buffeted about by logs and branches...?

well...

we have God on our side

“If God is for us...”

(who can be against us...?)

relate per Max Lucado in “In the Grip of Grace”

takes this apart one word at a time

(a helpful little exercise that means we don’t skim over
what he sees as “what we really want to know...”

begins here with this question -

if God is for us, who can be against us...?

(no matter the flotsam and jetsam in the waters that
carry us along...)

Lucado notes that question is not simply “who can be against us?”

we can answer that one all too easily:

there’s - disease... inflation... the republicans... the democrats...

corruption... exhaustion... the list goes on -

with no shortage of enemies we could add

but that’s not what Paul asks here

the question is:

If God is for us... (who can be against us...?)

we can shorten this down to the simple statement...

the strengthening affirmation that -

“God... Is... For... Us...”

listen to that repeated - four times - with a changing emphasis...

God... is for us

God is... for us

God is for... us

God is for us...

and - because this is such an incredible thing to be able to say

(but - which we don’t seem to really hold onto...)

Lucado invites us to break it down into those four
granular parts

1. *God... is for you:*

(per Lucado) - your parents may have forgotten you... your teachers
may have neglected you... [your cat may ignore you]...

but within your reach...

... is the maker of of the oceans - God

(not bad...)

2. *God is for you:*

not "may be..."

not "has been..."

not "was..."

- God is for you

today... right here... right now...

no need to wait in line or come back tomorrow

his commitment to you won't increase if you are better, or -
decrease if you are worse

- He *is* for you

3. *God is for you*

cf. - take a look at the sidelines - that's God cheering you on...

look past the finishing line - that's God waiting to wrap you up
in a celebratory hug...

glance up to the bleachers - that's God shouting your name

too tired to continue?

he'll carry you

too worn out to fight?

he'll pick you up

- God *is for you*

4. *God is for you*

if God had a calendar - your birthday would be circled...

if he drove a car, your name would be on his bumper sticker...

if he had a tattoo (wait - he does, per Isaiah 49 - "I have written
your name on my hand...)

to be clear...

God is for you.

knowing that, who or what could be against you...?

what chance would they have...?

can death harm you now?

can disease rob your life?

can your purpose be taken or your value diminished?

No.

though hell itself ... may set itself... against you -

no one can defeat you

you are protected...

God is with you...

you are more than conquerors.

how can you know you are a conqueror...?

cf. - per Paul - vss. 38 - 39

"I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,

neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,

will be able to separate us from the love of God

that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

you are loved by God...

with an unconquerable love...

to go back to Weather head and the river metaphor -

Bad things happen in this world, things that cause pain and heartache.

But here is the good news: pain and heartache are not the last word.

The great river of God's purpose flows onward to the sea. Like it or not, we are carried along with it. At times, our progress is slow and languid —

a peaceful paddle on a meandering stream.

Other times, it has all the excitement and terror of a whitewater rafting expedition. Either way, the river carries us -

We can't predict its route, nor can we declare what obstacles we will encounter along the way.

The only certainty is that the Lord *will* bring us to our destination. And then, when we do finally emerge from the waters — wet or dry, exhausted or exhilarated, bedraggled, bewildered or bemused — we have a promise.

The promise is that someone will be waiting for us on the shore.

a promise we find in Rev. 21 -

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

They will be his peoples ...

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”

It's not that experiences such as mourning, crying and pain have no reality or true existence.

- The tears are all too real. But —

the tears are not forever.