

Epistle: Listen for words of faith in Paul's letter to the Romans. Romans 8:26-39

The Spirit, too, comes to help us in our weakness. For we don't know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit expresses our plea with groanings too deep for words. And God, who knows everything in our hearts, knows perfectly well what the Spirit is saying, because her intercessions for God's holy people are made according to the mind of God.

We know that God makes everything work together for the good of those who love God and have been called according to God's purpose. They are the ones God chose long ago, predestined to share the image of the Beloved, in order that Christ might be the firstborn of many. Those God predestined have likewise been called; those God called have also been justified; and those God justified have, in turn, been glorified.

What should be our response? Simply this: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Since the God of Love did not spare the Beloved, but gave Christ up for the sake of us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that God will freely give us everything. Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? Since God is the One who justifies, who has the power to condemn? Only Christ Jesus, who died—or rather, was raised—and sits at the right hand of God, and who now intercedes for us!

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Trouble? Calamity? Persecution? Hunger? Nakedness? Danger? Violence? As scripture says, "For your sake, we're being killed all day long; we're looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered."

Yet in all this we are more than conquerors because of God who has loved us. For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither heights nor depths—nor anything else in all creation—will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

For the insights in early Christian writings.

We give thanks.

Gospel: Listen for words of faith in the Gospel according to Matthew. Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Jesus presented another parable to the crowds: "The kingdom of heaven is like the mustard seed which a farmer sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all—it becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come to perch in its branches."

Jesus offered them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a baker took and mixed in with three measures of flour until it was leavened all through."

"The kingdom of heaven is like a buried treasure found in a field. The ones who discovered it hid it again, and, rejoicing at the discovery, went and sold all their possessions and bought that field.

"Or again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant's search for fine pearls. When one pearl of great value was found, the merchant went back and sold everything else and bought it.

"Or again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collected all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishers hauled it ashore. Then, sitting down, they collected the good ones in a basket and threw away those that were of no use. This is how it will be at the end of time. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the just and throw the wicked into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?”

“Yes,” they answered.

To this Jesus replied, “Every religious scholar who has become a student of the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who can bring from the storeroom both the new and the old.

For the Word that was in the beginning,
for the Word that invites and inspires,
for the Word embodied in us.

We give thanks.