

A Certain Knowledge Romans 8:28-30
12th Sunday After Pentecost Pastor Jon Bergemann 8/22/04

May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you. Amen. The word of God for our consideration this morning is taken from Romans 8 (read text). In the name of our certain Savior, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

He lies strapped to a table with a sharp blade on a pendulum swinging ever closer to his chest . . . yet manages to cut the rope with a gizmo and get away. He's thrown into a pool of hungry sharks, yet manages to escape unscathed. He faces henchman, assassins, thugs, and other dangerous villains . . . and yet no matter what the odds, always comes out on top.

Who am I talking about? Bond, James Bond. The fictional British spy, created by the author Ian Fleming, has been captivating and dazzling audiences for years with his death defying escapes. And why is he so popular?

I think that one of the main thrills for anyone who has seen a James Bond film is simply discovering how he's going to beat the odds. The audience knows that in the end he will win. After all, if he didn't, there wouldn't be any more James Bond movies to make. But though the outcome really is already known, it can be very entertaining to see how all the dangers and pitfalls the special agent encounters eventually work out for his good.

It's an appeal that is present with any famous heroes. It's the thrill of seeing Indiana Jones save the day, or John Wayne beat the bad guys against insurmountable odds. Or seeing a great magician escape a perilous situation. In the end, you know that they will all make it out OK. The outcome is known. But to watch things unfold to make it happen this way is the entertaining part.

Entertainment like that can be fun to watch. It's fun to escape into the world of a movie hero or magician, because you know that in the end they will be OK. It's fun to experience a sense of certainty in the face of seemingly uncertain situations. And why? I think a major reason is because such a sense of certainty might not always seem so evident in our own lives.

As you watch the events of your own life unfold, do you have a strong sense of certainty that everything is working out for your good? That everything will be OK? Or does it ever seem at times that things happen without any good coming out at all?

An investment goes bad. Funds are depleted. The future looks uncertain. Can I be certain that it will work out for my good?

A marriage falters and fails. Hearts and homes are broken in two. Can I be certain that it will work out for my good?

A national disaster occurs. From flooding, to droughts, to terrorism, to wildfires to hurricanes. Can I be certain that it will work out for my good?

A job is lost. Financial security disappears. Feelings of worthlessness appear. Can I be certain that it will work out for my good?

Health is lost. Disease or sickness sets in. Pain and agony accompany it. Can I be certain that it will work out for my good?

A loved one is lost. Loneliness and heartache prevail. Can I be certain that it will work out for my good?

At so many points in our lives, we may feel that we are facing insurmountable odds and obstacles. Things look bleak. Things look uncertain. And unlike watching a plot unfold in a favorite action movie, we might not feel certain that good is going to come out of the situation.

But to worried hearts burdened with uncertainty, God gives a certain message this morning. In fact, he tells us that the outcome of all our experiences is far more certain than any movie plot or action hero. He tells us in verse 28, **“AND WE KNOW that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”**

Yes, my friends, we can know for a fact that everything in our lives will work out for our good. Even when things look bleak. Even when things look hopeless. We can know that it will

all work out for good. And why can we have such a certain knowledge? Why can we know this for sure?

Because God knew us.

As our text says, **“those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son.”** You see, before this world was even created, God knew you. Before this world was even created, He knew how many hairs would grow on and fall off your head. Before this world was even created, He knew how many times you’d skin your knees. He knew how many times you’d cry, you’d laugh. He knew what happened to you yesterday, and today, and what will happen to you every other day of your life. Before this world was even created, He knew you better than you know yourself.

And then he made a decision about you. He decided that you were going to live with him forever in heaven. So he decided that he would do whatever it took to bring you there.

Of course, as time went on, sin seemed to mess up that plan. Sin entered the world through the first man, Adam, and came to every man and woman since. Including you and me. And God hates sin and the ways it shows up in our lives. He hates every time we have failed to trust him with all our heart. Every time we have doubted his promises or have been uncertain that he would make all things work out for our good.

But God made up his mind. He decided to carry out his plan that he made from eternity to take you to heaven. So what did he do? 2,000 years ago he sent his son Jesus to live a perfect life for you and me. In fact, it was a life full of certain trust and confidence in God even in the worst of circumstances, even when he was dying on a cross to pay for our sin and doubt.

And then his Son Jesus defied the odds like no hero ever has. After dying on the cross to pay for our sins, he rose from the dead. He proved that our sin was paid for. He proved that we stand before God as innocent.

And if that wasn’t enough, God did even more. During our lifetime, through the Holy Spirit, he called us to faith in him. He declared us not guilty in his sight. And he promised us that we look glorious in his sight now and forever. Or as he tells us in our text, **“those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”**

Wow! Look at everything God has done for you in the past, present, and future! He knew you in eternity! He died for your sins! He called you to faith! He’s going to take you to heaven! And those are certain promises!

And yet . . . we still sometimes feel uncertain, don’t we? We still hurt. We still worry. We still experience pain. And we still have a hard time seeing how everything in life is working out for our good.

And I’ll agree with you. It’s true that we might not be able to understand and see how everything in our lives is working out for our good right now. And to be honest with you, we might not be able to understand how it all works out until we get to heaven. In fact, we might not feel like things have worked out for our good until we get to heaven. That’s because we are limited in our knowledge. We can’t see everything. We can’t always understand how all the events in our life work together. We’re weak humans with limited perspective.

But God isn’t. He’s bigger than we are. He can see, even from eternity, how everything in our lives will work together. And he promises that all things will work out for our good, whether we see it all right now or not.

To illustrate: remember those ingredients I showed in the children’s sermon? (some beaten eggs, flour, sugar, chocolate, all mixed together in an unappealing sight) No one wanted to eat them. They looked pretty terrible. But you know what they worked out to be? This: A cake. The stuff that looked terrible at one time actually worked out to be something great.

It’s the same with our lives. We might not understand or feel that it’s all working out for our good right now. We might feel that we’re staring at some random eggs or events that just don’t seem to result in anything good. But even if our understanding of how the events in

our lives fit together is limited, it doesn't change what we can know for certain. Look again at the facts.

You can know, without a doubt, that God has known you from eternity. You can know, without a doubt, that he sent his son to die for your sins. You can know, without a doubt, that he has called you to faith. You can know, without a doubt, that you look great in his sight. And you can know, without a doubt, that when you leave this earth, you will enter an eternity that far exceeds all your expectations! You can know that after the brief struggles of this life come to an end, you will live forever in the peace and paradise of heaven. You will live forever in glory!

And because of that, you can know without a doubt, that he will work out everything, even the things that look like garbage, for your eternal good! For your eternal glory! He's done too much for you already not to! All things WILL work out for your good! As Jesus said in our gospel today, **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”**

You know how your story ends. James Bond has nothing on you. Amen.