

**A Pentecost 11**  
27 July 2008  
Pastor Fred Hedt

**“Nothing Can Separate Us From God’s Love”**  
Romans 8.38 & 39

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Our text is from this morning’s second lesson. In Romans 8 St. Paul says: <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>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.

On Discovery Channel I recently watched a program on welding. That was not a late night antidote to insomnia – I was actually interested in the topic. That program introduced me to something I never heard of before – explosion welding. If you have two enormous sheets of metal you want to fuse into one, find a cave (don’t try this at home!), lay one sheet of metal on top of the other, cover it with a ridiculous amount of explosives, light the fuse, run and – BOOM – the force of explosion turns two pieces of metal into one. They can not be separated.

In our text St. Paul says there is nothing, NOTHING that can separate you from God’s love in Jesus Christ. NOTHING. Well, there’s maybe ONE exception – I’ll come back to that.

The power of God’s love in Christ is so great that there is nothing that can separate you from that love. Nothing in heaven or on earth. Nothing in the future. No power earthly or demonic. Nothing in all of creation that can separate us from God’s love in Christ.

Nothing. With the possible exception of one thing.

God’s love for us is so strong that God took on human flesh to come take *our* place on *our* cross to die *our* death for *our* sins.

God’s love for us is so strong that Jesus compared it to a father’s love for his prodigal child. No matter how far that child ran away, no matter what that child did, that was ***his*** child. ***Always. Forever.*** Nothing could change that. Jesus said that God’s love for us is just like that father’s love for his son.

God’s love for us is so strong that not even **death** can break that bond. Death cannot separate us from God’s love in Christ. So in Christ, I will survive death!

**Nothing** can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

St. Paul wrote these words to Roman Christians who were beginning to experience what in time would become horrendous persecutions. Soon Christians would be killed in arenas for the amusement of Romans. They faced the prospect of **dying** for their confession of Christ. Many feared that it would be more than they could bear. In severe pain, facing imminent death, what if they were in a moment of weakness to renounce Christ? Would all be lost?

Do not fear, St. Paul says, there is nothing in all of creation that can separate you from God's love in Christ. Not hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword. Even if we waiver in the face of death, God will not let go of us.

At times life throws at us more than we fear we can bear. We 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans do not face the prospect of religious persecution. But there are economic, health, and family concerns that can be quite stressful. How will I get thru this?

Often there are no easy answers. But there is the assurance that nothing we have to deal with can separate us from God's love in Christ.

Nothing. Well ... with the possible exception of *one* thing. The only thing that can separate me from God is ... ME. I could do to myself that which Satan and all of the forces of evil, that which any set of circumstances I might face, that which even death could not do: I could separate myself from the love that God bears for me.

And what would do that is not some terrible sin I might commit, something I might do, or say, or think. There is nothing I could do that God for the sake of Christ could not forgive. There is nothing I might say that would be so shocking that God would say "O my God (Me?)" and let go.

There is no place I could run that God could not find me. Not even in the deepest recesses of my mind. As my father's Parkinsons progresses he slips further into dementia. Those parts of his brain that manage rational thought and those parts of his brain that control impulses are slowly beginning to deteriorate. There are times he is liable to say anything. He may say something outrageous that upsets my mom, or me. But there is *nothing* he could say that would upset God. To whatever niche of the mind the person we knew and love has retreated, God is there with him. And nothing will separate my Father from the love that God bears for him in Christ.

Nothing. The only thing that might separate me from God's love is – indifference. To take God and the gifts of his grace for granted. To neglect worship and the means of grace. To have a "I can take it or leave it" attitude to church and Scripture and prayer.

Faith is a tiny spark, a little flame that needs to be nurtured and fed or it will be extinguished. We baptize a baby and God ignites the spark of faith in that tiny heart. If you never have family devotions, never sing the Christian cradle songs we all love, never say grace at the family table, never bring that child to Sunday School or worship – would you reasonably expect that faith to survive into adolescence or young adulthood? I wouldn't.

Jesus says that if our faith were the size of a tiny mustard seed we would be able to move mountains. I can't move mountains. It tells me how tiny my faith must be. Smaller than a mustard seed! It needs to be protected. It needs to be nurtured. It needs the soil of God's grace to grow. God will never let go of me. But if I neglect my faith, could it get smaller and smaller and smaller until I just slip thru the little spaces in God's hand? I think so. I could do to myself what all of the

forces of evil could not do!

It is sometimes supposed that the opposite of **love** is **hate**. It's not. The opposite of love is **indifference**.

There's not a person I know who **hates** the people of Darfur. It is the world's **indifference** that allows genocide to continue. There's not a person I know who **hates** hungry people. It is our **indifference** that allows them to go hungry

There is not one person here who **hates** Ascension School. But you know the school is in a precarious financial position. The ability of our parents to pay for private education has not kept pace with rising costs. There is no failure of **mission**. We have a great school that produces academically strong students who are Caring Servants of Christ. But to survive we need **more** students and **more** dollars for our scholarship program. No one here **hates** Ascension School. But if we are indifferent to its needs, we could find ourselves closing our School.

Not because anyone **hated** the School. Not because of some **conspiracy** to close the school. **Indifference!**

And indifference could be that **one thing** that separates me from God! Worship? – next week. Bible study? – mañana. Prayer? – later. Taking the riches of God's grace for granted could accomplish in my life that which all the forces of evil could not do. It could separate me from God's love in Christ.

O Lord, we know that your love for us is infinite and eternal, and that there is **nothing** in heaven or on earth that would ever cause You to let go of us. Kindle in us the fire of Your love. Help us to hold **dear** the treasures of Your grace won for us by the shed blood of your Son. Motivate us to come again and again to the waters of life lest our **indifference** cause us to fall away from you. Keep us safely in the palm of your hand. For Jesus sake. Amen.