

Deacon Randy Perkins
1 Kings 3:5, 7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
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“We know that all things work for good for those who love God.” Those were St. Paul’s words to the Romans in our second reading today: “We know that all things work for good for those who love God.”

If someone had told me that in December of 2012, I would have told them they didn’t know what they were talking about.

Because December of 2012 was a bad time for me. That’s when I hit the proverbial “rock bottom.” I’d dug myself into an alcohol problem that had helped tear apart just about everything good in my life. It had taken a heavy toll on my marriage, my family, my career, my friendships. Asking what good could come out of that mess wasn’t the question in my mind. Instead, it was, “Why me? Why is this happening to me? What did I do to deserve this?” Any suggestion that good could come from it was not just unbelievable, it was offensive.

Yet Paul writes so convincingly. “We *know* that all things work together for good for those who love God.” And Paul was no stranger to personal struggles. In the chapter right before today’s reading, he wrote this: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” And in his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul again acknowledged his personal demons: “I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me, but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you.’” Paul never identified his personal demons, but I can sure relate to what he wrote! How could he find good in the bad things that caused him so much pain?

Paul also knew firsthand about injustice. He spent a lot of his later life in prison specifically because he did what God told him—he took the Gospel message

to the world. He was rejected, beaten, stoned, and he fully expected to end up a martyr.

How could good come from such evil, unjust circumstances? How could he write so boldly that “We know that all things work for good for those who love God”? The answer lies in the last five words of that sentence, “for those who love God.” And Paul loved God! He loved God enough to trust God’s promise to remain with him through every trial he had to face. He loved God enough to surrender his own limited perspective to God’s all-knowing love. He trusted God enough to KNOW that whatever evil he experienced ultimately would work for good. So, even at his lowest, Paul never lost hope.

So many of us find ourselves in circumstances where we can’t see how anything good can come out of it. For some like me, they’re the result of some personal demon, an addiction that seems invincible.

For others, it’s a life-changing diagnosis—cancer, Alzheimer’s, dementia, severe mental illness, or any other evil disease.

So many find themselves in a difficult and draining caregiving situation that leaves them drained of joy and on the verge of despair.

While others find themselves isolated and alone, with no one to care for and no one to care for them.

And so many in our own community are grieving the loss of someone they love or a relationship they thought would last forever.

If you find yourself in the throes of any of those or some other bad situation, please don’t misinterpret Paul’s words. He isn’t minimizing the pain or justifying the injustice. There is evil in the world. Injustice is alive and well. Bad things happen. Paul isn’t suggesting that those things are good or that God brings about those bad situations. Instead, he assures us that God can *bring good out of* all the evil and pain in the world *if* we cling to God.

God doesn’t cause our pain, but God can heal it.

God doesn't cause evil, but God can redeem it.

Think about what God did with Jesus' cross. Nothing good happened on Good Friday. The crucifixion was an evil act. And no one could have imagined that any good could ever come from that evil. But God took the *worst* act of human injustice and transformed it into the *greatest* act of divine love. And if God can bring life from a crucifixion, then God can bring hope out of our suffering as well.

2012 was bad for me. Alcoholism is an evil disease. There's nothing good about the pain I caused the people I love or the mess I created. But like that person in today's gospel, when I'd dug myself as far as I could and hit rock bottom, I discovered the treasure of all treasures! That's where I encountered God! When I was at my worst, that's when God was at God's best. When I finally surrendered to God's love, God began transforming my life—transforming my failures into formation, transforming my pain into purpose, transforming my hopelessness into helpfulness.

Almost fourteen years into sobriety, while there is nothing good about the evil of alcoholism, allowing God to guide me through it has resulted in the most lifegiving and existential changes in my life. It allowed me to rebuild and strengthen relationships and find new meaning in life. Without having gone through that fire there would have been no Deacon Randy. I know that God can work all things for good.

But it didn't happen overnight. It's been a long fourteen-year process. And the process continues, and the scars remain. But, now I can see the good!

For many, though, the pain is more fresh, the circumstances more immediate. Almost two years ago, in one of my first homilies, I shared the story of a Trinity junior named Aiden Church. Aiden is the only child to his parents, Wil and Ann. Aiden had been battling aggressive cancer since before high school, and he was always in and out of school going anywhere he could to try the newest experimental treatments.

Right before Christmas in 2023, Aiden's dad suffered a sudden heart attack at home and died, leaving just Aiden and his mom. On June 30, 2025, Aiden died, leaving his mom as the only surviving family member. There's nothing good about what that family has endured. Cancer is evil. Losing someone so suddenly and unexpectedly is about as bad as bad can get.

Last month, on the one-year anniversary of Aiden's death, his mom wrote a reflection for her friends. With her permission, I'd like to share an excerpt:

“I do not understand why Aiden wasn't given the miracle I was praying for, especially since so many people joined me in that prayer for years. We received such an immense outpouring of support and had village upon village of people praying for us from near and far It makes me question if prayer matters My instinct is to still pray, and I know the energy of prayer is a way to hold and support other people. . . I believe the spirit worked through [all of] you to take care of us during this most challenging part of our lives together. I believe your prayers still sustain me and have helped me not go crazy. Maybe you, as a collective, were the [miracle].”

In the aftermath of all that death, a sign of new life!

Out of all that devastation, maybe a miracle!

Out of all that loss, maybe a gift!

Perhaps, today you're stuck. Stuck in a place where it appears that no good can ever come, asking why? Why me? Why them?

Perhaps you're waiting for answers that haven't come.

Paul's words today remind us that God has not abandoned you. God is working. God is going about the business of creation even where we can only see destruction.

So let us leave here today holding tightly to St. Paul's promise—not as a slogan, but as a defiant act of faith.

Instead of asking God, “Why me or why them?” let's ask God, “Help me to find a way to bring good out of this,” trusting that God can redeem every tear, every failure, every disappointment, and every cross; and knowing that God is always at work to bring good out of the bad in the world.