

## **And We Know that in All Things”**

Romans 8:18-28

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Those of you who know me, know that I try to start a sermon by sharing something funny. Sometimes I’ll share a funny story or something humorous in life and when I don’t have a personal example, well then I’ll try and tell a funny joke (which hasn’t always worked.)

But when it comes jokes, there are so many kinds of jokes, which one to tell? First, there are riddles, then there are puns, then you have your “knock-knock” jokes, and of course the jokes that begin by saying: “Three guys walk into a bar...”

Well, one of my favorite category of jokes are the ones that have “Good News and Bad News.” I think you heard me tell one a few Sundays ago about the two old friend who loved playing baseball.

One day two friends were wondering if they played baseball in heaven and so they agreed that whoever should pass away first would do their best to let the other friend know if there was baseball in heaven.

Well, after some time, one of the friends Bob passed away, and that night he showed up in Fred’s dream. *“Fred, Fred, it’s me Bob! Remember what we talked about - about whether there was baseball in heaven? Well, I have some good news and some bad news!”*

*“What’s the good news?”* asked Fred.

Bob replied, *“Well, the good news is that “YES, they do play baseball in heaven!”*

*“That’s great”* said Fred. *“So what’s the bad news?”*

Bob replied, *“Well, the bad news is that you’re pitching this Tuesday.”*

That’s a great example of a “Good News – Bad News” joke.

Here a few more examples.

*The Clerk of Session went up to the pastor one day and said to him: “I have some good news and some bad news. The “good news” is that the congregation voted to send you a “get well card.” The “bad news” is that the vote passed 51-50*

Here's another:

The Clerk of session reported to the pastor - *"The "good news" is that session has accepted your job description exactly the way you wrote it. The "bad news" is that they also formed a search committee to find someone capable of filling the position."*

Here's one you may have heard before.

*"I have some good news and some bad news" the doctor said to her patient.  
"Give me the good news first" the patient said.*

*"Well, your test results are back," the doctor said, "and you have only 3 more days to live." "That's the good news?" the patient exclaimed. "What's the bad news?"*

*"The bad news is I've been trying to reach you for the past two days."*

The thing about "good news / bad news" jokes - and what makes them so funny, is that the very same news can be seen as "good" or "bad" depending on the person or perspective.

What's "good news" for one person can be "bad news" for another.

For example, a **freak snow storm that drops 3 feet of snow overnight** might be considered "good news" for kids who get to stay home from school, but that can also be "bad news" for parents who now have to watch them!

Here's another example. **"USC won against UCLA in their last football game."** Is that "good news" or is that "bad news?" Well, that depends on what school you were rooting for, but most of us know that was "good news" right?

**How about the presidential election that took place back in Nov?**

Were the results "Good news" or "bad news?" (boy, I bet you have an opinion on that one!)

Well, here's one that I think we can all agree on. **How about the year 2020? Was it a "good year" or was it a "bad year?"**

“If the Year 2020 was a \_\_\_\_\_ “

Can I show you a few pictures that I received this past week? They’re called “memes” that poke fun at the Year 2020.

If 2020 was a slide...



IF 2020 WAS A SCENTED CANDLE...



If 2020 was a hula hoop



IF 2020 WERE A PIÑATA



The Year 2020 was a rough year - would you all agree? The year 2020 was also a tough year. It was a tough year for many families - students, teachers, parents. It was a tough year for many people - healthcare workers, restaurant owners and wait-staff. A lot of people would agree that the year 2020 was a “bad year” but did you know that some really good things happened too?

Let me share a few “good things” that have happened this past year.

For starters:

*While the pandemic caused us to keep our distances from others, we also found new ways to connect with family and friends on-line.*

Another good thing that happened this year -

*“We saw carbon dioxide emissions decline all over the world.”*

Another good thing that happened this year -

*“The entire continent of Africa is now polio free.”*

Another “good thing” that happened this year -

*“Many people became more sensitized to social issues.”*

Last week, the New York Times asked young people the following question:

***“When you look back at the year 2020, what are the good things that happened as well?”***

One person responded this way:

*“Naming one good thing that happened in 2020 is easy. The Los Angeles Dodgers won the world series.”* (obviously a California reader.)

They could have also mentioned that the L.A. Lakers also won the championship.

An international reader from Asia wrote the following:

*“The pandemic clipped my dad’s wings. For the first time in my life, my father couldn’t travel internationally for work. Pre-pandemic, he would be away from 1 or 2 weeks each month, but the threat of the virus halted international travel, keeping him home. During this strange year, he finally had time to teach me how to ride a bike. He finished reading “The Chronicles of Narnia” to my sister and me. He joined the pandemic obsession of sourdough bread making, which led us to eating a lot of bread. Every weekend he spends time instructing us on the finer points of the Greek language. Instead of asking him math questions by text or calling him on the phone*

*while he was in some neighboring country, he's now beside me with a whiteboard and marker every evening. Though the pandemic took away too many family members from too many people around the world, it oddly gave me more of my dad."*

That response was written by Oliva Wasmund a 7<sup>th</sup> grader who attends a foreign school in S. Korea.

Here's one more. (When asked the following question "When you look back at the year 2020, what are the good things that happened as well?")

Jeff Horton from Houston, TX wrote:

*Despite everything, we did not give up. We found new levels of courage, humility, resilience and resolve. And renewed our understanding of compassion. But that's not all. Newborns arrived. Students graduated. Marriages, birthdays and anniversaries were celebrated. Agreements were signed. Careers started. Discoveries were made, solutions were found. People found love, shoulders were leaned on, aid was rendered, lives were saved. Faith was found, Memorials were held, kind words were spoken. we began to heal. We did not give up!*

*We have weathered every crisis; independence, civil war, foreign wars, surprise attacks, economic setbacks, assassinations, civil and cultural change. We've endured by realizing the capacity to do what must be done. I remain optimistic and retain my belief in a better America tomorrow."*

With just a few more days left in 2020, the history books will close this chapter. And while it may have been a "bad year" some also found "good" in it too.

Romans 8:18-28
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*"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons and daughters of God to be revealed.*

*For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the*

*firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we out to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*  
***"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."***

These are the words that I want to share with you on the last Sunday of the year 2020.

*"And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him."*

Can you say Amen? (and I don't mean it lightly) but when you hear this verse and when you hear this promise - can you say "amen?"

*"And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him."*

My mind wants to say "amen." My mouth wants to say "amen." My spirit wants to say amen, that God can take "all things" like the year 2020 and work it into something good.

Amen?

Listen to how The MSG translation renders vs: 28

*"That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good."*

Every detail, every trial, every victory and defeat, even present sufferings, as Paul says in vs 18.

Do you believe this verse? Amen.

## The Sacrificial Bunt

Can I share a baseball analogy? (I think Jean Tomlinson would approve.)

In the game of baseball, there is something called the “Sacrificial Bunt” (or “Sacrifice hit”) It’s when a baseball player is up at bat, and instead of taking a swing and swinging for the bleachers or trying to hit a home run, the hitter will stick out the bat and barely hit the ball, called a “bunt.”

This almost always results in the player being thrown out, but as a result, runners who are already on base will advance to the next base - getting them closer to home and scoring a run. For example, a runner on 1<sup>st</sup> base would advance to 2<sup>nd</sup> base and a runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base would advance to 3<sup>rd</sup> base. That’s of course - if the bunt goes the right way.

Now again, it’s called a “sacrifice” bunt because the hitter who does this is almost always thrown out at 1<sup>st</sup> base.

Meet Eddie Collins.



Eddie Collins played baseball for the Philadelphia Athletics and the Chicago White Sox from 1906-1930.

Eddie's Collin's baseball career was rather impressive. He owns 5 world series championship rings, he also holds several league records which is rather impressive, but the one I'd like to point out is that Eddie Collins - to this day, holds the American League record for the most "sacrificial bunts" which is a whopping 512. (Wanna know how many times he hit a home run? Only a dismal 47.)

But 512 sacrificial bunts - isn't that amazing! That's how many times he was thrown out at 1<sup>st</sup> base, more than anyone else in the American baseball league, and it was because of his sacrifice - runners on his team were able to advance, which ultimately, led his franchise to 5 world championships.

Now, being thrown out 512 times is nothing to be proud of. In fact, if I told you only that much, you would say, that was bad news, but Eddie Collin's "bad news" was "good news" for the rest of his team.

I think if the year 2020 had a face, it would be the face of Eddie Collins. His "bad news" turned out to be "good new" for someone else on the team.

*"And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him."*

Doesn't that verse remind you Joseph in the Old Testament? Remember when he said to his brothers: *"You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."*

Doesn't that verse also remind you of Jesus? The bad news is that Jesus died for on Calvary, but the good news is that His sacrificial death led to forgiveness and allowed for all of us to be able to go home.

I pray that as you go into the last week of the year, maybe a sense of humor will help you get through it, maybe spiritual insight will help you see what you've missed, and for all that was good and for all that was bad, I pray that you will give them to the Lord, for He is faithful and can take all our experiences and use the for His glory.