

2015\_07\_07 Victory Service for Louise Coutre  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

### **God's Best for Louise and for You**

Romans 8:28–30

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Grace to you from God our Father, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all tribulation, so that, some day, we might comfort others with that same comfort which comforts us, and peace to you in His Son Jesus Christ, who wipes away every tear from our eyes as He shepherds us to eternal rest and who will, on the last day, raise and glorify all who believe in Him. Amen.

Dear Don, Chris, and Cynthia, family and friends of Louise,

If there was a hall of fame for Sunday School teachers, I think Louise would be inducted. Her constant creativity in crafts, questions, and concepts were unforgettable; I know with my kids, when they came home from Sunday School they remembered the story. She always had a definite purpose in mind when teaching. And that was to give the kids the very best God had to offer.

While I was looking through our Sunday School files, I found this card she had written out; giving step by step instructions as to how to approach the lesson. I'd like to share it with you:

1. Opening prayer - include Jesus' death. Missing students - thanks for church and Bible
2. Have a Bible - spelling - all true stories. Bible - "Best book in the world" Church - "best place."
3. Story - Jesus - spelling - Books on the Bible story. Identify figures on cover picture.
4. Tell the story.
5. Remember the story - Questions
6. Do all activities and crafts.
7. Close with prayer together: "Dear God, Thank you for everything. Amen."

Louise always taught and prayed with a definite purpose: to give the kids the very best God had to offer. So she would often say: "The Bible is the best book, Church is the best place." She recognized where God's very best was to be found and that is what she taught the children.

It is no wonder then that her favorite Bible passage was Romans 8:28. All things work together for good. God takes our worst and turns it into his best. In other words, no matter what we see with our eyes, worry about in our minds, feel with our emotions, experience in our bodies, we know that God is working all things together for good. Even in such a loss, we can confess with confidence that God has given his best: for Louise and for you. And that is our comfort this day. So we have chosen for today's address, Louise's favorite Bible passage – Romans 8:28 and the following verses.

### **Romans 8:28–30**

*28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

*29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

We pray, Lord comfort our sorrows with the promise of your word and the hope of the resurrection. Amen.

### **1. The Bible is the best book**

But how do we know God has really done his best? And how can we know that best is good enough? After all, from all outward appearances, it seems God wasn't able to keep her alive. She died. Is this supposed to be the best God can do?

One of Louise's 7 points when teaching a Sunday School was "Tell the story." And that is what we are here to do today. Tell the story. Louise knew that there was a story to tell, and it is not our story. It is God's story. And the book in which this is written is the Bible. That is why Louise say to the children, "The Bible is the best book."

The Bible is the best book because it tells the story. Not just any story. But God's story. The story of God's relationship with the world he created. There we find out why Louise died. And we find it in a Sunday School story. One she taught many times. It begins with Adam and Eve, God's first creation, perfect and full of His life, until the devil entered, and they sinned. And "through one man, sin entered the world, and death through sin, and death spread to all men, because all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). That is why Louise died. She died because like all of us, she inherited that story, the story of sin, the story of death; but that's not the whole story.

The Bible is the best book, because it reveals an invitation into a new story. Through the Bible God brought Louise into His story, and that is the story of His Son, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, the Savior. "For is not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9); and He wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4); and "this is how he has loved the world: He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). And Louise was baptized into this story.

*Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

And the way we know God has predestined us, is to look to the word and discover the story and hear the call which invites all the world to receive the salvation which God has prepared and which he gives in the baptism which now saves us. This is God's very best. A story which Louise belongs to, and which all who believe belong to. A story which never ends, for it delivers us from sin, death, and the devil. So Louise would be sure to emphasize point 5. "Remember the story" because she knew, "the Bible is the best book."

## **2. Church is the best place**

I have here another one of Louise's crafts. This one on the third commandment. It says, "Church is God's house; Praying; Singing; Reading the Bible; a Big Family; Classes - Bible and Sunday School; Praising God; and Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." In other words, as Louise would say, "Church is the best place."

When someone dies, people will often say things like, "she will always be with you" or "I feel like she is here among us." But I like to emphasize what the Bible emphasizes, that when Christians die, they go to be with the Lord. They are not lost spirits, roaming around the world, looking for a home, talking to us in our dreams. The place to find Louise is in the same place where we find the Lord Jesus. And that place is Church.

Church is indeed the best place, when we understand it in its truest sense. I'm not talking about the building, or the name on the sign; I'm talking about the promise of Christ's presence among us. Our God is not a lost spirit roaming about the universe looking for someone to conjure him up in feelings or imagination or nature. No this is a God who is somewhere; who is found where he has promised to be found: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Church is the God's best for you, because here God is found and God finds us; and here reveals himself to us in His word and in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper. Here he comforts us, hears our prayers, teaches us his will. So what I would like to emphasize to you is if you want to remember Louise, remember Jesus. Here is where God gives you his very best. His own Son in word and water, in bread and wine. When you come to the Lord's Supper, you find Jesus' living presence in body and blood. And when you find Jesus, you find Louise too, together with all the saints (believers), in heaven and on earth. Those whom he has predestined, chosen, called, justified, and glorified. For Church is God's house: the place where he is to be found and where His people are gathered; praying; singing; reading; praising; and yes, "one big family."

### **3. Jesus is the best (and only) Savior**

One part of Louise' Sunday School lesson that could not be overemphasized was her emphasis on Jesus. She would say, "the Bible is the best book;" and "Church is the best place;" but she would always want the kids to know that, "Jesus is the best (and only) Savior." This is God's best for Louise and for you.

If Louise had anything to say, I don't think she would have liked us talking about her today. She never liked to be talked about. It's easy to get carried away with stories and memories and sorrow and loss, that the day becomes all about Louise or all about myself. But there is a way we can honor Louise's wishes. Because this day is not just about her, today is about Jesus.

I've heard a lot about Louise's endless efforts. She seemed to always give her best. But when it comes to God, even Louise's best was not good enough. No matter how any of us work, or how much we do for the church, for the community, for our spouse, for others, for God, it is never enough to take away sins. The Bible reveals that even our very best still comes up short of God's glory; still we are sinful. That is why today is not about celebrating Louise's best, but praising God's best.

God has given his very best, 100% in an almighty, most merciful sense: for Louise and for you. He has offered up his very best, His own Son, in order to save Louise and you from sin and death. Jesus is the only human, to ever truly offer God what he deserves. And he gave such righteousness, in all he thought, prayed, worked, and loved, that God accepted his sacrifice as a worthy payment for the sins of the world. So that he might justify, declare forgiven and righteous, all who believe in Him. And he raised Jesus from the dead so that all could see what God's best looked like. Jesus is the best (and only) Savior).

#### **4. Louise received the best outcome (and so will all who believe in Jesus!)**

And now we can see what God's best looks like. It looks like Jesus. Jesus, who was raised from the dead, who was crowned with everlasting glory, who lives in the presence of God for all eternity. That is what God's best looks like, and that is what God has purposed to do for Louise, and for all who believe in Him.

*29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

What God did for Jesus, God is doing for all who believe in Him. His has chosen Louise to be conformed to the image of His Son. In other words, what happened to Jesus, will happen for her. Called, justified, glorified. Just like Jesus.

I've heard several people say, you couldn't keep her down. And that is why when she went into the hospital it was kind of a shock. It was as if we all thought, she would just get better, get up, get back to planning for the historical society, or Vacation Bible School. But she didn't get up. At least not yet.

But we know that all things work together for good. So God's best for Louise is not known by what we see. For hope that is seen is not hope. So we hope and know that one day, the last day, God will turn this into something good. This very same body will get up. Not because of her resiliency. Not because she has VBS coming up or Don needs her. But because of God's resiliency. Because she has been conformed to the image of God's Son. And what has happened for Jesus, will happen for her.

This is what it means for God to give you his very best. Jesus. A hope and promise of that the best is yet to come. That on the last day, God will do what is best. He will work all things for his good purpose. He will raise up her mortal body through His Spirit. And he will give her body the life it was intended to have. A body that never wears out, that never gets sick, that never has low blood pressure, that never grows old. For we know that all things work together for good. Called, justified, glorified. Nothing, neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God which will accomplish this in Christ Jesus.

And God will do His very best for you too, Don. Nothing can separate you from that love which is in Christ Jesus. No matter how you love your wife, God's love for you is stronger. And he has promised to keep you company. To do the same for you as

he has for Jesus. For all things work together for good for those who love God. On the last day, he will wipe away every tear and as he brings you to the same good purpose that he has given to Louise – the very best outcome, for Louise and for all who believe in Jesus.

And so it ends with a thank you prayer. It is point number 7 on her lesson card. Louise would end every Sunday School lesson with a prayer: “Dear God, thank you for everything.” Louise wanted the kids to remember that in everything, no matter how mad or bad or sad it seems to us, God deserves a thank you. Because he is working all these things for good. There is no event, no time, no situation where thanksgiving would be inappropriate. Even Louise’ death. Even in the sadness of this event, even in the challenges of the days that lay for the family, even in the unexpected nature of this loss, we can pray: thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15). Louise’s closing prayer is a confession of what she believed. And I pray that we can all join her in confessing our belief that God has done his very best for Louise and for us. And so we pray: “Dear God, Thank you God, for everything. Amen.”