

“God Always Had You in Mind”

Romans 8:28-39

Because my wife Malinda was born and raised 3 miles from my dad’s first church in Homestead, IA, many people assume that I at least lived a portion of my early life in Iowa. I always tell people, “I wasn’t even a thought at that time. I was born a few years later in Indiana.”

Now to my mom and dad, when they lived in Iowa, I wasn’t even a thought, or, at most I was a thought. But to my Father in heaven, I had been planned long before my parents even lived in Iowa. But not just me, the same is true of you. God foreknew and predestined you to be His child.

It is true about me. It is true about you. What our Lord once said to the prophet Jeremiah applies to us also. He said, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart.”

Our Baptism may have been our introduction to God, but it was not God’s introduction to us. God foreknew you from the beginning. God always had you in mind.

The world measures our existence from the day we were born until the day we die. This sinful, fallen world is blind, or at least near-sighted, when

pondering God and what He has done. Adam's sin stole away the lion-share of our potential. God measures our existence very differently than the world does. God has known you from the beginning. He then called you to faith through the Word and water of Holy Baptism.

He justified you. He declares you to be righteous, because your penalty for sin has already been paid by His Son Jesus Christ. You are that "pearl of great value" we hear of in our Gospel reading, and God your Father gave everything, gave His own Son so that you could be His child and no longer a slave to sin. And because we stand justified, He will one day call us out of this life through the death of this body, and we will be glorified in His heavenly kingdom which has no end.

Paul's words, which we hear in his letter to the Romans, are really a summary of our existence so long as we don't shipwreck and abandon our faith. God's knowledge of each one of you has always existed. God's plan for your salvation was always certain. Our glorious home is certain. The resurrection of the body and life everlasting is certain. And all of this is the result of God's divine goodness and mercy.

That is the confidence that the doctrine of predestination is meant to instill in each of us. But you can't take it too far. Predestination is only meant to answer one side of the equation. Last week, our Gospel reading was the parable of the weeds. God sowed good seed, but the devil sowed

bad seed. The weeds and the wheat grew up together, and the Master told His servants to wait for the harvest to separate them. And the wheat was taken into the Master's barn, and the weeds were burned in the fiery furnace where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The classic question is, "How do you turn a weed into wheat?" The classic answer is, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." The parable of the weeds, just like the doctrine of predestination, it is meant only to speak of the blessings of the harvest – of the end time. It does not explain how faith is formed. It is meant to give confidence and surety to our life and our future.

Because God foreknew you, because He knew you before He laid the foundation of the world, He predestined you to be His child. He called you to be His own. He justified you with the blood of His own Son. Because He has done all of this, there is every reason to have the confidence that you will also be glorified.

"You are here this day as God's people, not because you are smarter than other people; not because you are better or prettier than other people; but you are here this day as God's people because God loved you and has chosen you as His own. He has called you to be His child.

When God called us into faith, it was a pure gift of grace. We did nothing to deserve this. We did nothing to earn this. We were chosen by

the grace of God only because He chose to love us and demonstrate His true character by showing mercy to us.

We were predestined from the beginning. We were called to faith through water and the Word. We are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. And one day, we will join those who have been glorified as the company of heaven, and we will rejoice at the resurrection of the dead and take our place in the life everlasting.

That is the existence that God has planned for you from the beginning, and that is the plan that He has been carrying out throughout your lives. From our perspective, our journey in the kingdom of God began at our Baptism – and we would not be wrong in saying that. In fact, we do say that. But St. Paul reminds us that God’s plan for you began a long time ago.

Our life in the kingdom of God was never in doubt. God planned it from the beginning. This day, we give thanks to God for calling each of us into His kingdom of grace where we are justified and forgiven. And we look forward to the day that we are called into the kingdom of glory and join the angels, arch-angels and all the company of heaven, so that God may finish this good work that He began in us so long ago. Amen.