

I believe that today, in all of God's wisdom, someone needs to hear these powerful words from the book of Romans. Someone among us needs to be reassured, to know again the depth of God's love for us, to feel the power of the Spirit sighing on our behalf. Someone among us needs to know that our God has not and will not abandon the beloved creation.

Because today, the apostle Paul, with all his run on sentences, is asking the question we all ask, whether in a fit of despair or in frightened anger: **what about suffering?** What about it? **All** the suffering: both the garden variety suffering that we run into on a daily basis,  
and the bone crushing, breath stealing variety of suffering which makes you wonder if you can go on.

We are not the first ones to ask this question. We won't be the last. But perhaps, today, it is exactly the question that needs some serious consideration.

**In words that capture the deep longing of the human heart, Paul writes**  
**‘for we do not know how to pray as we ought but the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words’**

**the depth of our sighs reflects the depth of our suffering.** The Spirit intercedes not because we cannot form the words but because we *do not know what words to form*; we do not know what we want. We have no idea what will help – or even if there is help available.

Whether we find ourselves in the deep silence of 3 am or lost in the cacophony of sights and sounds and demands in an overloaded world.....**we cannot even voice our own needs**.....we can't manage the energy necessary, we cannot form the thoughts.....

**so the Spirit whispers to the heart of God,**  
**and God whispers back      I will not abandon you.**

Is that enough? Can we hold on?

Notice there is no talk about instant success or yellow brick roads, no,  
this is talk about faith grounded in the crucified one, this Jesus, and this God.

I will not abandon you. Is that enough?

Let's be honest. Suffering will come our way: famine and disease and death. It is possible to be crushed by very ordinary hardships piled one upon another. Add an extraordinary episode or two and each of us has probably wondered at some point Where is this all leading? How will I endure? Where is my God in this?

So Paul goes back to the very beginning, when God filed the original blueprints, God's plan for the creatures and the creation God loves.

No matter how much those beloved creatures mess things up, no matter what catastrophes we

cause, no matter what storms arise, God pre-destined all of creation – for life.

That's the plan: life. Not wrath. Not destruction. Life.

God launched creation out into the cosmos and then began pulling us back in toward the source of all life once again. God draws us forward – constantly working in us and among us – **to shape us into what we have always been from the beginning – an image of the loving, creating God.**

**The great arc of God's story for creation bends toward life and is powered by love – a love that resolves all conflicts and errors and flaws in the act of resurrection: where there is life after life, life beyond life.**

The Jesus who took on human flesh and died at the hands of his oppressors was the Savior who stood in solidarity with the reality of our existence.

The reality of immigrants held in custody, of prisoners on death row, of children living in poverty, of black and brown skinned people oppressed by the authorities,

of farmers who work long hours at little return, of undocumented farm workers, of cancer patients wasting away and of people lost in the maze of mental illness, addiction and dementia.

He became one with our suffering, fully endured it all so when we walk that path, we will also know that Jesus walks with us. I will not abandon you, God says to us. No matter what, I will not let us go. Jesus is my pledge.

There are no rainbows and unicorns here, but rather the promise that the crucified and risen Jesus is one with us, and now draws us forward to be one with him in glory – holding us, carrying us, loving us each step of the way.

We will not only endure, we will be conquerors because the power of God cannot be defeated. We are more than conquerors through him who from before time predestined us to life.

Nothing which is thrown in our path: not life nor death, not angels or powerful rulers, not things today not things tomorrow, not height or depth or.....ANYTHING else in all of creation will separate us from God. NOTHING.

Not because we are so strong and faithful and pious, but because God is who God is,  
the one who created us for himself, the one who created out of love,  
the one who walked with us and died with us,  
the one who calls us into an even greater experience of life.

This God who offers a future and a hope that the world cannot give. This God who holds us in the palm of his hand.

This God!! Will Not Be Defeated. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever.

For I am convinced .....