

The Rev. Christopher Adams
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For Us

“What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. This, in all of its brash and uncompromising conviction...this is what we mean when we speak of God. God, the Ground of all Being, the Essence of the Universe, the Maker and Sustainer of All Things...the One whom we call God is not a distant and disappointed Observer. This is a God for us...this is a God perpetually working for our good in the midst of hardship and pain. To borrow from Archbishop Rowan Williams, God is the one who is inexhaustibly resourceful in recovering us from our sin and failure, offering to us an inexhaustible promise of being drawn into total joy.

For many in our town, this has been the week from hell. Death has once again cast its insidious shadow over our community. We have recently lost a beloved member of our parish, and this town is still reeling from the tragic death of a young man in the prime of his life. Two funerals on the same day was almost too much to bear. Add to that whatever kind of pain we hold within our own hearts, and you have the perfect recipe for weakness and despair. Even then...even when we are near the end of our rope, hope abides. For in our weakness, when we reach the breaking point of knowing not what to pray, or even how to pray, or maybe even wondering to whom we pray, God is the One who makes the first move toward us. Like the most amorous lover who can no longer hold back their passion, God is the one who closes the gap that seems far too wide for us to overcome. *The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know*

how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. At every moment, during every painful and destabilizing event, God as Spirit is the one who prays on our behalf, who is so overcome by the abundance of his love that he refuses to let us flounder in our own frailty. Any Christian theology that portrays God as one standing off to the side, waiting to be called upon first before acting on our behalf needs a refresher in this most radical and beautiful notion. Even during the most painful and sense-shattering experiences, the God revealed in Jesus Christ is the resource that makes it possible for any situation to be transfigured and taken forward. Even in our silence, or perhaps our disbelief, God is the One tirelessly laboring for our good, for our restoration, for our wholeness

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else...Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The God that we call upon is not a God who promises a life of bliss and comfort. God is, after all, much more of a realist than we are. The world is hard, and full of pain, and suffering, and a whole host of crises that threaten to crush us and toss us like dust into the wind. What is promised, however, is that we will not endure such suffering alone, nor will we have to labor on our own behalf for the strength to face the world on its terms. For the grace, love, and mercy of God are given to us as pure gift...as something to simply be received with open palms, something to be trusted in as we give ourselves over to the God who is always for us, never

against us, passionately in love with us, tirelessly working for our good even in the midst of horror.

For the God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ is a God who is always saying ‘Yes’ to humanity. Even when the blame for the carnage and chaos of our lives lies squarely at our own feet, even when with the loudest scream we can muster we rage at God, “No!”...even then, even then God remains a God for us, a God perpetually saying ‘Yes’ to us, overcome by an inexhaustible love for humanity. *He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?*

This is the God I pray to. This is the God I worship. This is the God who offers us hope in the midst of hopelessness, healing in the midst of pain, and life amidst the ruins of a death-marked world. *In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth...and, we may be so bold as to add “nor our secrets, nor our addictions, nor our traumas, nor our divorces, nor our psychoses”, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*