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More Than Conquerors

Core Faith

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

For the Ninth Sunday of Pentecost, this reflection on Romans 8 invites the church to wrestle honestly with suffering, hope, and God’s grace. It reframes being “more than conquerors” not as power or triumph, but as redemption through Christ and deep belonging in community, where the Spirit intercedes, sustains, and draws us closer to God and one another.

REFERENCES

Genesis 29:15-28

Psalm 105:1-11, 45b

Romans 8:26-39

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

COLORS

Green

Worship Planning Notes

Focus text: **Romans 8:26-39**

In 2006, Disney released *High School Musical*, a TV movie that spawned a franchise that now includes additional movies, a TV show, a junior TV show (*Kindergarten: A Musical*), a stage production, and more. No matter how you feel about the musical and artistic quality of the original movie, it touched on—and continues to touch on—something meaningful for its audience. While I’m sure many themes resonate with audiences then and now, I have to wonder whether one of them is the importance of community. Any time someone mentions *High School Musical*, the first

thing I hear in my head is the chorus of the grand finale number: “We’re all in this together...” Whether Paul would have been interested in a musical about putting on a musical and winning a basketball championship (spoilers!) in the treacherous interpersonal context of a U.S. high school, I think he would have gotten behind this song.

Now, I’m not suggesting you sing *High School Musical* in worship this week, though if you have the volunteers and the opportunity, let me know; I’d love to hear how it goes! But I do think the core of our passage this week can be summed up in just five words: “We’re all in this together.” *Including God*. God is in this—whatever *this* is—with us. God’s never-failing love is in this with us. The Spirit is in this with us, even when we don’t have words for what *this* is. We are not alone.

Corporate worship is our opportunity to practice this togetherness. We can say (or sing) that we’re all in this together, but living it is so much harder. Community requires vulnerability and commitment, mutual support for one another, and building trust that others will show up with and for us. What Paul points us to, though, is that the foundation of our community is in God’s infallible, unbreakable love. We have assurance that we can build community because through God’s love, we are more than conquerors—*or, as the NRSVUE says, we are victorious*—over all the ways that sin tries to pit us against each other.

So, sing of God’s love and faithfulness. Pray for guidance and discernment to notice and cooperate with God’s work to knit your community together. Invite your congregants to find out how they pray for the people sitting around them in the week ahead. Consider having a potluck after service to extend opportunities for connection. You might even include conversation starters at the tables to help people connect! In all that you plan, point your people back to God’s never-ending, never-failing love as the foundation and inspiration for the community we build together in the local church and as the Body of Christ in all times and places.

Author biography:

Dr. Lisa Hancock, Director of Worship Arts Ministries, served as an organist and music minister in United Methodist congregations in the legacy Northwest Texas and North Texas Annual Conferences. After receiving her Master of Sacred Music and Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology, she earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University, where she researched and wrote on the doctrine of Christ, disability, and atonement. Lisa is also the co-lead of the “Growing in Grace: Accessible Worship for All God’s Children” initiative.

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