

## Written Copy: 1 John 5:4-5 “The Victory We Have by Faith”

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Sunday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (Mother’s Day)

### Text: 1 John 5:4-5

<sup>4</sup> For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world---our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

### The text’s intent

John concludes his Epistle by focusing on the main points which are Jesus as the Christ, the human man who is also the divine Lord and Savior. We can only know and believe in this when we have been born from God in baptism, where we are given a new life no longer centered on living for self but living for Him in sacrificial love, and for those other members of my baptismal family with whom I am united in the same faith. This faith is in my life the power to believe in Jesus’ instructions even when they stand opposed to what my heart desires. By this love I am willing to sacrifice what my heart wants to do what Christ has instructed me, which is love God first, others, second, and myself third by sacrificing my wants in love for the other two. Born into this new baptismal life I receive by faith Jesus’ victory over sin, death, and the devil. His instructions are not burdensome because I am forgiven when I fail, and His indwelling Spirit motivates me to continued obedience by repentant faith. Therefore the devil can no longer claim me when I fail to live up to Jesus’ instructions because I have been forgiven and sealed as God’s own child in baptism. And by faith in His resurrection I have victory over death, which for me is no longer the beginning of the end, but the beginning of life eternal. The Spirit testifies that this faith is true through Jesus identity as the Divine Son of God in baptism, and His identity as the human sacrifice for my sin who shed His blood on the cross, who rose bodily to testify to my future life with Him.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus, through John’s witness declares unequivocally that we have victory over the world, which He won for us in His death and resurrection. He has called us out of the world and into the family of God, having been born into a new life in Him, and given His Spirit by which we are empowered and enabled to sacrificially love Him, by following His instructions, and sacrificially love others as our brothers and sisters in faith who share the same birth and the same love. He has defeated all that truly stand against us: sin, death, and the devil.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it’s important to know:

The world seems to be ripping itself apart as it fights with one another over such things as politics, racial inequality, and gender rights. It calls us to put our trust in the works and ideas of mankind to solve these problems. And when we oppose what the world says is good right and salutary it condemns us as bigots who are not loving, but intolerant.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Live out the new life of faith we’ve been given by obeying Jesus’ instructions to sacrificially love God and others. See the world through the eyes of what Jesus’ teaches, and those institutions that work to solve the world’s problems as means to do so from Him, not an end. Entrust that which is beyond us into His care, and live as the Church in the world, that has the victory of life with Him now, and eternal life to come.

### Subject Sentence: Jesus gives us His victory over the world.

## **Introduction: Feeling Like We Are Losing the War**

Did anything catch your eye as I read our Epistle Lesson today? Any certain word or idea that kept coming up? Well, the word “love” is repeated throughout John’s Epistle. There is the repeated phrase “born of God”. These are all important things to dwell on. But for me it was the repeated concept of “victory” in verses 4 and 5. **(1 John 5:4-5 <sup>4</sup>For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world---our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?)** It’s harder to see it in the English translation. But in Greek, the original language this was written in, the word translated “overcome” is closely linked to the word “victory”. So one could translate these verses to read **“<sup>4</sup> (This is) because everyone who has been born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory of the One who has been victorious over the world: our faith. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, who is the one who continues to be victorious over the world? Only the one who continues to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.”**

The concept of a victory means that there is some kind of strife, battle, or war going on. And we can certainly see this is reality in our lives when we turn on the News. Politicians in Washington fighting with each other along party lines so that they are unable to do the work of finding compromise. Here at home, the Flint City Council needs an Ethics and Accountability Board to watch over it in order to have efficient and productive meetings that don’t devolve into fighting, nastiness, and name calling. In our county police involved shootings spark violent protests that result in the destruction of innocent citizen’s property. 8 people were shot and killed at a FedEx Facility last month. Closer to home fighting and violence is happening daily and nightly at a Sunoco Gas station in Flint. Teachers and parents are struggling to teach kids at home remotely on the computer. Universities are struggling to enforce proper COVID-19 safety precautions on a student body that just wants to live the life of a normal young adult. More and more our world feels like a war zone, and it appears that we are losing the battle.

## **The Real War That’s Going On**

First off, we must admit that there is a war going on. It’s been going on since the beginning of Creation and it will continue until the Last Day. What we see are the human combatants. But there is an unseen figure behind all the strife that is going on in the world. He first appeared on the scene in the Garden of Eden as a serpent who talked God’s perfect creation, Adam and Eve, into disobeying their Creator. In doing so he mounted a successful attack upon God’s perfect creation, which the Devil hated just as much as he hated the God who created him. With that mankind fell from grace, and with that the rest of the created world with them.

But the Creator God appeared to his fallen creation and announced a counter offensive. **Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.** God pronounced enmity, hostility, war between the offspring of the woman and the serpent, war between us and the Devil and his demons. The actual fighting would not be done by us, we are ill equipped to take on Satan on our own. **(Psalm 51:5) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.** Because of the sinful heart that we inherited from Adam and Eve, we are born as prisoners of war, unable to escape, unable to stop sinning, bound to spend eternity in the same place of suffering that will be the Devil's eternal home.

Back in the Garden, the LORD God announced that He was waging a battle to win us back. And He would send an offspring of Eve who could take on the Devil on his own turf and win. That offspring would bruise the head of the serpent, Satan, resulting in a decisive victory over him. But that victory would come by Satan bruising his heel, working through mankind to have Jesus, the Son of God who became the Son of Man, beaten, tortured, and crucified. A scene that does not look very much like victory, not to Jesus' disciples back then, nor to the world now. But suffering and dying was the only way to free us from our eternal future. **Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** God is a just God. Sin is disobedience that must be punished by eternal death, eternal separation from God. That is what you and I deserve and earn. But that is not what we receive. By His suffering and dying Jesus paid the wages of our sin that we owed, and gives to us what He earned through His perfect obedient life: eternal life to come.

This gift became your gift in baptism. **1 John 5:4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world---our faith.** In your baptism you were born again, born from above, born into the family of God. The name of the Triune God was marked upon your forehead and your heart to declare you now part of the family of God. You were washed clean of all that would make you unworthy to be in His family. You were washed out of the devil's kingdom and into the kingdom of the Heavenly Father. Jesus was victorious over the Devil and won you back. And He gave you the gift of faith so that you can hold fast to this as the reality of your life now and into eternity.

And we desperately need that faith because it is the power to believe in the reality that we can't see. Jesus is the Son of God who came to earth to bring God's kingdom, God's reign and rule among men. While He has ascended back to rule over all of Creation, His reign and rule on earth has never left. It continues on in the hearts of all who believe, all who have been born of God, in the hearts of you and me.

But Jesus' reign and rule isn't just there. Our ascended Savior sits at the right hand of the Father still reigning and ruling over all creation. He is reigning and ruling in our world right now even though it doesn't look like it. This fallen world is filled with strife and animosity because it is being used as an attack dog by the Devil. He has blinded the eyes of people so that they cannot see the truth of who God really is or what Jesus came to do. This world is full of strife and warring because it doesn't know the true sacrificial love that can only come from God Himself to those who believe in Jesus. **1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.** Despite all that is going on in the world the Lord through the Gospel message proclaimed by us, the Church, is attacking and overthrowing the rule of the Devil in the world. Through the Gospel Message the Holy Spirit works to change hearts and minds to believe in Jesus, just as it did with Cornelius and his whole entourage in our First Scripture Lesson. He invades and changes how the person looks at life, and how the person loves. They begin to stop loving themselves exclusively and begin to sacrificially love the God who has saved them, and their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ for whom God has done the same thing. This is how Jesus attacks, overcomes, and wins victory in the lives of people in the world, one soul at a time.

But what about all the strife, and violence that is still going on in the world. As we watch the news it sure looks like Jesus' has lost control of things. But that is because we are looking at things through the eyes of the world and not the eyes of faith. When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve this creation became a fallen and broken world, cursed by God, and headed for destruction one day. Born into this world it's all we know. We love our lives in this world. We want things to return to normal, to what the world says it should be: a place where everyone is happy, and all things are fair. But since creation fell, this world has never been that kind of place. It had gotten so bad once upon a time that the LORD chose to send flood waters to kill all its inhabitants except for Noah and his family, 8 people in all who were saved by the faith they had in God's promises as shown by their building of an ark while the whole world laughed.

This world has once again turned evil and keeps getting worse. Jesus warned His disciples and us that this would be the case. **Matthew 24:6-13** **<sup>6</sup> And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup> All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. <sup>9</sup> "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end will be saved.** That all this is going on is proof that Jesus' words to us are true.

All that is going on in the world serves the purpose, will and plan of our risen Savior who still rules over all things. The Devil's worst attacks upon mankind and upon the Church all work to accomplish the final playing out of God's plan for the Last Day. That some would be driven to despair by this brokenness and be turned to Christ by His saving Gospel. That they would be born again into the kingdom of God. That they would be born to a new life of love for God, love for one another. That they would receive that victory that we have received by faith, the victory that Jesus won over the devil by removing our sin and the punishment we deserve. The victory that is our salvation from eternal death. This is Jesus' victory given from the cross and the empty tomb, it is eternal life for all who believe. The victory that is our faith, kept alive in us through all the suffering and tribulation going on around us. The victory that is kept alive by the Holy Spirit as He points to the ways we join in with world in loving ourselves instead of loving God. He points to our sin and then points us back in faith to the one who is still reigning and ruling in our hearts. He is the one who remains with us through all that is going on. And through His power you will endure to the end so that you will be saved.

## **Conclusion**

Despite how things look in the world around you Jesus is reigning and ruling. Despite how you may feel at times you have been given the victory He won. **1 John 5:4-5** **<sup>4</sup> For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world---our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** You gather here today as those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, your Lord and Savior. You gather here as those who have been born again, or born from above into God's family. You gather here as those who have been given Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil by the gift of faith. That faith enables you to see things through God's word of truth, and not with eyes of the world. The world sees Jesus' suffering and death as defeat, and His resurrection as an impossible event that could never happen. By faith we see Jesus' suffering and death as the place where He forever defeated the power of sin, death, and the devil over us. And His resurrection is our future, a future that the Devil cannot take away from us. By that faith, you and I have overcome the world and the ruler of the world as we hold fast to our faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.