

Second Sunday of Easter

April 12, 2015

1 John 5:1-6

The Victory that has Overcome the World

Rev. George Ferch

Fellow-Redeemed,

“So, what does Easter prove?” That is a very good question about the confession we will make about Jesus after this sermon, “on the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.” Jesus’ resurrection proves he is God who paid for our sins. It proves our bodies will rise from death. It proves Jesus’ victory has overcome the world. Jesus’ victory over the world is ours since we are “born of God,” our new birth of faith.

It is no burden for newborns to love the mother and father who hold them in their arms. It is no burden to love the brothers and sisters who kiss, and hug, and snuggle them. Born by the Spirit, we daily translate Christ’s resurrection into love.

Our victorious life means it is no burden to love our heavenly Father and carry out his commandments. “Everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.” It is no burden to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Love for God and love for one another simply are the ways we express justifying faith in our hearts.

John writes about **The Victory that has Overcome the World**. It comes by the power of our faith. It takes great delight in doing God’s will – love.

Our justifying faith stands on two mighty pillars. Those pillars are Christ’s baptism and Christ’s crucifixion. “This is the one who came by water and blood-Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood.” At his baptism, Jesus placed himself under the baptism meant for sinners. At the Jordan Jesus entered the work of his public ministry. At his death on the cross, Jesus finished the work of rendering full satisfaction to his heavenly Father for our sins and for their guilt.

The Holy Spirit testifies these truths about Jesus Christ. The gospel reveals those truths, truths that overcome the lies and slander the world speaks against Jesus and against us. The Spirit’s truth creates and sustains faith in our hearts. The power of our faith that overcomes the world is the truth, “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” The apostle whom Jesus loved asks and answers his own question, “Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

We all must face the temptations to sin that come through the lies and schemes of Satan, others around us, and especially our own sinful flesh. Living the life of justifying faith in love toward God and one another is not a burden but it sure is a fight. However, it is not a fight we carry out with uncertainty about the outcome. Jesus’ empty tomb already has guaranteed the outcome. God has given us Jesus’ victory.

We fight the good fight of faith in the ceaseless conquest to overcome sin and evil in our lives. We fight not in our own power which would mean certain defeat. We fight in the power of our faith which is the power of Christ’s resurrection triumph. We realize that living our faith is not bumper sticker theology, “Honk if you love Jesus.” Living the faith is not pious talk about having to do our duty to love God and love one another in spite of ourselves.

The victory that has overcome the world comes by the power of our faith. It takes great delight in doing God’s will – love.

The Spirit teaches us this truth through John's pen, "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to keep his commands."

Love feels no load. Faith in God means strength from God. Our victory in Christ has overcome the world with its power and its pleasures and its purposes. Our victorious faith manifests itself in our daily striving for godliness to God's glory. Obeying God's commands is a pleasure.

What a horrific lie of Satan that being a child of God means obedience to the Ten Commandments is like carrying a ton of rocks up a mountain in a backpack. The psalm writer describes our relationship with obedience to God's will this way in Psalm 119:13-16, "With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees. I will not neglect your word."

Our victorious faith has overcome the world. In faith we say no to sin and yes to righteousness. We deplore the evil we commit and embrace God's forgiving love that moves us to strive for a living love. We do not fall into the trap of falsely believing that the justifying faith I have in Christ is my excuse for continued sinning. I cannot appreciate God's love for me in Christ and then proceed to love a life clearly in contradiction with God's will and Word. God's love is not license to sin. God's love is the power not to sin and the assurance of forgiveness when I do sin.

Jesus defined obedience to the law this way: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And, love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul uses the strongest language to express the principle by which believers live. When the new birth has taken place in the heart, the wonderful power of love exists to overcome the world. Ours is victory over the entire kingdom of sin and evil. The resurrection of Jesus Christ bodily from the tomb is proof of that.

To put it a different way, love is the offspring of faith. Luther wrote in his commentary to the Galatians, "After I have apprehended Christ by faith, have died to the law, have been justified from sin and have been freed through Christ from death, the devil, and hell, I do good works. I love God. I thank him, I practice love toward my neighbor."

In the three ecumenical creeds, we confess our trust that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We confess our trust in our Father in heaven and our membership in God's family through the sanctifying -work of the Holy Spirit. To do so from the heart indicates that we have been born of God. Faith is our power. Obedience is our great delight. Amen. <SDG>