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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 11, 2021
1st Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 3:12-20, John 20:19-31

Hymns: 188; 201; 207:1, 3, 4, 5; 207:2, 6

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 John 5:1-6

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁶This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified and Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Celebrating the Victory of Jesus' Resurrection!

That is what the Easter season, or the six Sundays after Easter, are all about. In fact, one of the reasons we worship on Sundays is that

we are remembering Jesus' resurrection! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead impacts our faith and life in dynamic ways. As we read the gospel lesson we were reminded how the disciples fear and sorrow was turned to joy. We saw how doubt and uncertainty in life is replaced by faith. In our reading from Acts we saw how the apostles were emboldened by a resurrected and living Savior to proclaim the truth before the Jewish people rather than hiding in a locked inner room that didn't even have windows. It was the victory of Jesus' resurrection that made this difference, along with the Spirit endowing them with power from above.

The "before picture" or "snapshot" shows us the power of man against the devil and the evil of this world. The "after picture" shows what it means for the believer that our Redeemer lives! So it is that the apostle John complements his gospel message reporting Jesus' appearance to the disciples with this inspired message revealing how we are --

THEME: Blessed with a Victorious Faith in a Risen Savior!

This faith which we have in a Risen Savior is --

I. A Faith that Loves.

Our text focuses us in on our relationship with God being a faith relationship.

1 John 5: 1-3 Whoever **believes** that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

We begin with those who believe that Jesus is the Christ. By the grace of God, the Holy Spirit that includes us. This is what we profess, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. We believe and confess that "*God so loved the world so that He sent His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" (John 3:16) It started with God's love for a fallen and sinful world. And in His love He called us to

faith in His Son, Jesus the Christ, who in the greatness of His love for us gave Himself into death, bearing our sins on the cross. This Christ rose again the third day so that we might have life in His name. Love defines our faith relationship with God. *“We love Him because He first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19)

We are begotten again by the Father as Peter explains in the opening words of his first epistle. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* (1 Peter 1:3) This is key to understanding the wonder of grace that is ours through this victorious faith in a Risen Savior. Not only are we now brought into a loving relationship with God through faith in Jesus as our Risen Savior, but we are also brought into a loving relationship with our fellow Christians. We love God who not only begot the Son, but has also begotten us again through Jesus’ resurrection, so we also love Jesus, and we love our fellow Christians. All this flows from this faith which with which we were blessed, faith in a crucified and **risen** Savior.

This love is not just an emotion; it is an empowered life! To love God and then do nothing is impossible. Even when we love family members, that love is apparent in our behavior toward them. So it is with loving God. A true and living faith reveals its love for its Savior and God by keeping His commandments. We want to please the One who saved us, the One we love. We know it will please God and redound to His praise and glory if we live our lives according to His will, and love our neighbor as ourselves, also according to His will. This will be especially apparent in our relationship with our fellow believers, with whom we have this faith in common, this same faith relationship with our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

This loving faith relationship is so important while we are living in this world, a world that has been corrupted by sin. We all have our struggles with our own sinful weaknesses, and with our own physical aches and pains and health issues. Some we exacerbate with our choices in life. Others come with advancing age. We all know life will have its struggles. That our fellow believers reach out in love and concern, and support us in our hour of need is a

wonderful blessing that comes to us because we have this faith in common; we love God who sent His Son to die for us and rise again, and so we also love those whom God has called to be our brothers and sisters in faith.

At the same time there is an even more vital need for resurrection faith, for it is --

II. A Faith the Overcomes the World.

In our text we are assured:

1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith.
⁵Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

We live in troubling times. We see growing opposition to the gospel, and at the same time an increased pressure is being exerted on Christians not only to stop decrying the sins and wickedness of the world, but to embrace them. If we refuse to celebrate what we know to be evil, the world will seek to make our lives miserable. Right now, in America that has been pretty much limited to name calling and ridicule, and for some, restrictions of faith expressions in the use of some social media. There are open discussions of greater and even legal reprisals against confessing Christians. That's the world rearing its ugly head, with the devil prompting its actions, and it may cause some Christians some concern. Where will all this lead? What will this mean for my life?

This is when we need to stay focused on that resurrection faith we have been blessed to receive as a gift of God. Jesus knew that difficult days lay ahead for His disciples. Jesus sought to prepare them for the trials that lay head of them on the evening He was betrayed. The words that Jesus spoke to those with Him as they walked out to the Mount of Olives are words that should bring hope and joy and strength to our faint hearts as well. *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33)

Jesus spoke to the disciples of His going to prepare a place for them, and of the hope of life and salvation that we have in Him. And yes, we **do** have peace in Christ Jesus. Jesus went to the cross and died for us, and on the third day rose again, showing Himself victorious not only over sin, death, and the devil, but over this sinful, wicked world.

Yes, in this world we will have tribulation, and we will face persecution, and we may suffer some loss in some temporal or material things, maybe even our lives, but that is all the world can do. Christ brings us the hope of everlasting life that no one can take away from us. Christ has overcome the world! Their mightiest powers had done their worst, and yet Jesus rose and lives forevermore! In His resurrection He showed Himself to be victorious. We have an absolute hope of everlasting life and glory through faith in Jesus.

With that we are assured that we also have overcome the world. Our text doesn't say that we **will** overcome; it says that we **have** overcome the world. And it states it in this way, "*Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*" (v.5) Having been blessed with a victorious faith in a risen Savior, we also have overcome the world. That is what the Apostles came to realize as the Holy Spirit took charge of their hearts and lives, and suddenly they were bold professors of this faith in a living Savior.

Again, this morning I would like you to take note of the passage and image on our bulletin cover. "*Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken!*" (Acts 2:25 NIV) The passage continues on to declare the hope of resurrection in a living Savior whose body did not see corruption. These words of confession first written by King David, were quoted by the Apostle Peter on Pentecost to the great crowd that had assembled before them. Peter found the same boldness of faith David had in knowing the Lord, our ever-living Savior was at his right hand. Peter declared that "*this Jesus God has raised up*" and "*made both Lord and Christ.*" (Acts 2:32,36) This is the victory of faith we have in knowing Jesus as our resurrected Lord. **He is at our right hand!** He lives and so:

"Though I be by sins oe'rtaken,

*Though I lie in helplessness
Though I be by friends forsaken
And must suffer sore distress,
Though I be despised, contemned,
And by all the world condemned
Though the dark grave yawn before me,
Yet the light of hope shines o'er me!"* (The Lutheran Hymnal 2076:3)

You see, this is so because we have been blessed with --

III.A Faith Created and Sustained by the Spirit's Testimony.

John speaks directly to why we possess such a clear and certain faith. The Holy Spirit assures us of the truth that is in Jesus Christ. We read the last verse of our text:

1 John 5:6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

These words at the beginning of this verse reference the big events in the ministry of Jesus as the Christ, events that pertain to the certainty of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God. The first came with water, that is at Jesus' baptism. We recall what happened as Jesus came up out of the Jordan River. The voice from heaven declared Jesus to be God's beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. With that John the Baptist also saw the Spirit of God descending visibly in the form of a dove and not only landing but abiding with Jesus. Jesus is the Christ who was to come into the world.

John proclaimed this truth based on this testimony of God. *“John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” ... “And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ...³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.* (John 1:29, 32, 34)

The second reference, that this is He who came by blood, does indeed reference Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. On the cross He shed His blood as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' manner of death caused even the pagan Roman Centurion to

declare “*Truly, this Man was the Son of God!*” (Mark 15:39) This is our Redeemer, who died for us. He died for us and rose again and lives forevermore!

This is the gospel truth the Spirit has used to call us to a living faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. This is the truth of the gospel that we hear time and again as we gather around Jesus’ Word and Sacrament, and this is the Word, the true and certain Word of God with which the Spirit of God **sustains** our faith.

Our strength of faith is not from within us. Our faith cannot be sustained by our own good intentions, or the thought that “since I already know all this; I’ll be fine.” The Spirit works through the hearing of the Word of God. The Spirit lifts us up and sustains us in our hope of life by the hearing of this gospel of a crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Please note those closing words of our text, “*it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.*” (v.6)

This faith which we have in our hearts, this special treasure of knowing Jesus as our Risen Savior is “*not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works.*” (Ephesians 2:8-9) We are blessed with a victorious faith in a risen and ever-living Savior.

*“Grant me grace, O blessed Savior,
And Thy Holy Spirit send
That my walk and my behavior
May be pleasing to the end;
That I may not fall again
Into Death’s grim pit and pain,
Whence by grace Thou hast retrieved me
And from which Thou hast relieved me.”* (The Lutheran Hymnal 2076:5)

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)