



Easter 6

May 6, 2018 – 9:00 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: CHRIST'S LOVE OVERCOMES ALL THAT WOULD OVERWHELM US IN THIS WORLD!

Sermon Text: 1 John 5:1-8 (NIV)

Faith in the Incarnate Son of God

⁵ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³ In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Can you imagine how **overwhelmed** Jesus' apostles must've felt from time to time? They'd been called from the simplicity of fishing nets, a tax table and other ordinary trades to be preachers and teachers of the faith whose efforts would end up turning the whole world upside down—or, maybe more accurately, right side up! Surely **overwhelmed** by their Master's miracles they'd witnessed; totally **overwhelmed** by His victory over death and His ascension into heaven; and often **overwhelmed** by the miracles He still did, often thru them, even after He ascended. Yes, it's fair to assume that the apostles were **overwhelmed** from time to time.

Those “up times” weren't all that **overwhelmed** them. They were **overwhelmed** by what they deemed “down times” too: the night they were caught in a fierce gale on the Sea of Galilee while their Master slept in the stern of the boat; the night in Gethsemane when Jesus' enemies arrested Him; that same night in the high priest's courtyard when Peter denied—three times—even knowing Jesus, much less being His close friend; the trial, judgement and horrific crucifixion of their Lord, and the week afterwards when they hid in the upper room; and, of course, Judas—one of their own—killing himself because he was **overwhelmed** with guilt and shame at betraying Jesus to His foes for 30 pieces of silver and a kiss on the cheek.

St. John had been **overwhelmed** by such things. So he wrote to his “**dear children**” (2:1) in Ephesus so that they wouldn't be **overwhelmed** by the world. The Spirit inspired John to assure his readers of every time & place to trust that

CHRIST'S LOVE OVERCOMES ALL THAT WOULD OVERWHELM US IN THIS WORLD!

Friends, John would first urge us not to be **overwhelmed** by the false claims about Jesus Christ made by the 1st c. defector, **Cerinthus**. He taught that the *man* Jesus wasn't born of the *Virgin* Mary, but was the natural-born son of Mary *and* Joseph. He also taught that the man Jesus and the divine Christ had to be distinguished from one another since the Christ only descended upon Jesus at His baptism and then left Him at His crucifixion. **Cerinthus** also taught that Jesus was buried and will only be raised with the rest of mankind when Christ comes again at the end of time to initiate a 1000-year kingdom on earth known as “The Millennium.”

Still today, there are those who, like **Cerinthus**, have partly or entirely renounced the historic Christian faith. Some—like **Episcopal bishop John Shelby Sponge**—deny the virgin birth. Some deny that God took on human flesh, insisting as did the **Princeton-educated theologian Bart Ehrman**, that church councils made Jesus into God. Some, like the **modern scholar Gerd Luedemann**, deny Jesus' resurrection. The **Jehovah's Witnesses** say that Jesus is but the incarnation of the created archangel Michael and not true God and man in One Person. Dressing up these ancient heresies in new clothes doesn't disguise the fact that they're still the same old lies Satan has put forth since Eden. Nor ought they **overwhelm** us, for, John wrote: “**everyone born of God**”—and that includes us—“**overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**”

It's easy to feel **overwhelmed**, at times, like Jesus' disciples did. Hostility to God's Word is ramping up from both inside and outside the church. It's gotten more onerous for believers like us to express our faith in an antagonistic environment. At times, we struggle not only to explain the Bible's more complex doctrines but to grasp them ourselves. 1st c. believers wrestled with this too. St. Peter wrote: “**Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him... His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant**

and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction”

(4:15-16). We can also be **overwhelmed** by our sin of *complacency*, when we refuse to counter distortions of our faith; by our sin of *compromise*, which weakens our confession of faith; and by our sin of *being silenced* by the fear of conflict with—or *rejection by*—those to whom our love of truth would lead us confess our faith.

We take these sins to God in prayer, along with our many other offensive thoughts, words, actions and loveless in-actions, confess them in sorrow, and reach out in faith to grasp the pardon Christ earned for us. Trusting that He died and rose again, we rise to live out our faith in ways that **overcome** both the sin that resides in us as well as the many threats to our faith that come at us fast and furious from the godless culture we live in. John wrote of us: **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands.”** We **overcome** through our Spirit-borne faith in Jesus as the Christ and our love for Him that we evidence by obeying His will.

John tells us that God’s **“commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world.”** I’m reminded of our Savior’s gracious invitation, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:28-30).

Could any invitation be more kind or generous? You and I have been **“born of God”** through the water and Word of our Baptism into Christ. That’s the day He adopted us into His family of faith and gave us all the rights and privileges of being a prince or a princess in His kingdom of grace here on earth, and heirs of His everlasting kingdom of glory in heaven above! And the Holy Spirit continues to nurture our faith through the Word of God He inspired the prophets and apostles to pen as well as thru the Sacrament of Holy Communion, in which we receive the genuine body and blood of our Savior, Jesus, in concert with the earthly elements of bread and wine that we eat and drink. The incarnate Son of God—God in human flesh—uses these Means of Grace for our spiritual benefit!

To counter **Cerinthus’** deadly heresy that the divine Christ was simply imparted to the man Jesus for but a short while—from the time of His baptism, when the Spirit of God came down in the form of a dove and rested on Him, to the time He prayed from the cross, **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”** (Lk. 23:46)—John testifies in our text: **“This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.”**

The purpose of John’s statement is clear. **Cerinthus** and his ilk denied that the Christ had ever been fully human and subject to suffering and death. John rightly regards this as a denial of the redemptive activity of God. It was the Son of God who came into the world. It was this same divine Son who was baptized and received the Holy Spirit. It was the Son who, with the Father’s approval and in fulfillment of the Father’s plan of salvation, shed His blood on the cross to redeem mankind. God would not be involved in man’s redemption apart from the Christ’s true humanity, suffering and dying. As a result, **“water and blood”** became the key words of the true understanding of the Christ’s incarnation. Jesus, the Son of God, came. He came through the water of baptism. He came through the cross. It is this coming by **“water and blood”** that is the basis of mankind’s salvation. And the incarnate Son of God still comes today in Word, in Baptism and in His Supper.

Thru these divinely appointed Means of Grace, you and I—as those who’ve been “**born of God**”—ultimately “**overcome**” everything in “**the world**” that—if we were without Jesus—would **overwhelm** us! Victory in Christ is the theme by which St. John lived and with which he died! Christ breathed that theme into the Revelation St. John penned. It was his last will and testament to the churches John so loved. Seven times he speaks of what awaits all who, in Christ, “**overcome the world**”:

1. In **Rev. 2:7** (NKJV): “**To him who overcomes I will give [the right] to eat from the tree of life.**”
2. In **Rev. 2:11**: “**He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**”
3. In **Rev. 2:17**: “**To him who overcomes . . . I will give a new name.**”
4. In **Rev. 2:26**: “**And he who overcomes . . . I will give power over the nations.**”
5. In **Rev. 3:5**: “**He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.**”
6. In **Rev. 3:12**: “**He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.**”
7. In **Rev. 3:21**: “**To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.**”

We aren’t **overwhelmed** by the world or by whatever may happen to us in it, for we are—as St. John says—those who in Jesus Christ are **overcoming** the world. Amen.