

Easter I

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[0:00] For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

! And this is the victory that has overcome the world.! Our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Let us pray. O God, who has caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning, be with us now to sanctify unto us the truths that shall be delivered from them.

Enlighten our minds by the mighty working of your power that raised Christ from the dead. Bring into the way of truth all of us, all such as have stumbled and have deceived.

Be pleased to strengthen those that do stand and comfort and help the weak-hearted and raise them that fall and finally beat down Satan under our feet.

[1:03] All this we humbly ask in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen. We, this morning, are going to be in the epistle reading.

1 John chapter 5, verse 1 to 12. It's on page 1213 of your pew Bible. I invite you to follow along. Page 1213. Last Sunday, we stood with the church at the empty tomb as we heard the angel's proclamation.

And what was that proclamation? He is not here. He is risen. Amen. And we rejoiced in that mighty act of God in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

But we are not to remain only at the moment of resurrection, at the empty tomb. We are called, as the first disciples, the first eyewitnesses were called themselves as well.

We are called to go forth in proclamation. Because resurrection is not merely something that happened to our Lord. We are drawn as well into this new reality as His people.

[2:17] It is not merely an event to be remembered. It is a life to be lived. And so today, on the first Sunday after Easter, we are invited, all of us, to consider not only the fact of Christ's resurrection, but we are called and we are invited to consider our life in the life of the risen Lord.

St. John, in his epistle, opens this mystery to us. He shows us that the risen life is not abstract or distant.

Rather, it is real, tangible, present, and active in those who are born of God. And he shows us three things in this supposed to read.

The victory of life that we are now invited and called into. The source of that life. The bringer of that life. And the witnesses of life.

And so let's first look at the victory of life that Paul speaks of. St. John begins with a bold and simple claim. Everyone who believes that Jesus Christ, that Jesus is the Christ.

[3:33] Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Notice how he speaks. He does not say will be born, but has been born.

The new birth is already accomplished In those who believe Faith is not the cause of new birth In the sense of something that we produce in ourselves Rather it is the evidence Faith is the evidence That new birth has already taken place It is the sign of life It says a newborn When it's first delivered from his mother's womb What is the first thing you're waiting And the mother and everybody in the room is waiting to hear That cry The cry does not give life The first drawing of breath into that lung And burning in the lung of that child Is not what gives him life It's the sign and the evidence That there is already life there Faith is not the cause of new birth It's the sense of something It's a sign that there is already life

So this immediately raises a present question To all of us Especially in our present age And the question is this What does it mean to believe rightly about Jesus?

You know we live in a world that is deeply confused Not only morally But spiritually Truth is no longer something to be discovered It is treated as something to be constructed It is my truth that I'm

constructing But what was once called good Is now called evil What was once recognized as evil Is now celebrated as good In the world we live in And even the most basic realities of our life Of creation What it means to be human Even that truth Most basic of all Is under construction In the world that we live in It's being denied and redefined And so the question becomes urgent for the church What are we to believe?

What must we confess? How do we know that we are truly born of God? And St. John gives us the answer With clarity And without apology He says Who is it that overcomes the world?

[6 : 12] Except the one Who believes that Jesus Is the Son of God This is the dividing line For Apostle John To believe that Jesus is the Christ The Anointed One The Promised Messiah The Eternal Son of God To believe that Is not a secondary matter It is the very foundation Of the Christian life If we reduce Jesus To just a teacher Reduce him to just a moral example Or even a great prophet We may admire him But we will not have life in him For a teacher can only show the way But cannot give the power to walk in it Jesus is more than a mere teacher So when we confess that Jesus Is the Son of God Everything changes For now we are not merely following an example We are united

To a living person And this is where victory begins For the believer As St. John says it This is the victory that has overcome the world Our faith This is the victory that has overcome the world Our faith Now we must be very careful here When the scripture speaks of faith They are not speaking primarily of the strength Or intensity of our believing That's not what the Bible means when it speaks of faith Rather the Bible is speaking of the object Of our faith It's not great faith that saves But faith in a great Savior That's what saves The object of your faith Is what's important And this is where many Christians stumble I think We begin to look inward And we begin to ask ourselves Do I have enough faith?

Is my faith strong enough? And in doing so We turn the Christian life Into a kind of performance Of measuring Thing Evaluating Striving Constantly Inward Inward gazing But St. John Directs us away from ourselves And he directs us Toward Christ If you would know Whether you have life If you want to know If you have life Do not first look at yourself Look at Christ If your faith is weak Look to Christ If your faith is trembling Look to Christ If your faith feels small Look to Christ For he is the one who holds you He is the one who preserves you He is the one who has already won the victory On your behalf And that victory is not theoretical It is real

It's real And it was won at the cross Where sin was atoned for It was vindicated at the resurrection Where death was defeated And it is proclaimed Even now As Christ reigns At the right hand of the Father This is why the Christian can stand firm In the world That seems to be unraveling Because the outcome Is not uncertain Christ is king And those who are united to him Share in his victory And in his reign So having shown us the victory of life John now turns to its source Who is the bringer of this life And he says This is he who came By water and blood Jesus Christ Not by the water only But by the water and the blood

Now this is a profound And mysterious statement But it is central To understanding the Christian life Our Lord did not come Not merely to announce life He came to give life And he gives this life In a way that is both spiritual And tangible In a real way Through what St. John calls The water and the blood It came with water John first tells us Water speaks of cleansing Water speaks of new birth In only baptism We are washed from our sins We are united to Christ We are made members Of his body By the waters of baptism St. Paul calls it The washing of regeneration And this is not merely symbolic It's not just mere symbolism

[11 : 15] It's a real participation In the life of Christ That's what's going on In baptism We are brought Into covenant With God We are grafted Into the living vine As it were We are made partakers Of this new resurrection life And so St. John is careful to say Not by water only though He came with water By water But he came with the blood For we need more than cleansing We've been seeing this Through Holy Week We need more than cleansing We need life To be sustained To be nourished And to be deepened And so John speaks of blood In scripture The blood Is the life In the blood Life is in the blood And our Lord himself says He that eateth my flesh And drinketh my blood Has what?

Eternal life Here is the deepest mystery Of our communion with Christ We are not only washed We are fed We are not only forgiven But we are sustained We are not only brought into life But we are kept in life The life we receive This eternal life Is not our own It is the life Of the risen And ascended Christ That has been given to us This is why the church Has always held these two together We are

regenerated by water We are nourished By the body and blood of Christ The instrument for this Is faith Paul has already said that Right?

Faith In Christ He being the object Of our faith This is the double cure For sin That we have as Christians Not only pardon And forgiveness And debt cancelled Justification We don't only have that We have that But we also have pardon Not only pardon But we also have power In this new life We don't only have forgiveness But we have participation In divine life This is the life We're called into And finally John tells us That this life Does not remain hidden He talks of the witnesses Those who are witnesses Of this life This new life Is not to be hidden This spirit He tells us Is the one who testifies The spirit here Is the Holy Spirit The spirit of Christ And the spirit And the water And the blood Agree

The life that God gives Becomes the testimony That God is true And this testimony Is not merely external It is also internal So you have The water of baptism Which signifies The cleansing That you are justified And you have been forgiven You have the blood The body and blood of Christ Which sustains you These are external truths And realities And graces That are given to you But you have the internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit And all three agree And they agree That whoever believes In the Son of God As the witness In himself The Christian life itself Becomes the evidence Your Christian walk Becomes the very evidence That you are in this new life

That you have this new life And how is that life seen How is it seen John gives us three marks Three witnesses That we are to have That the believer has That shows that They indeed have In possession of this new life The first is love John tells us Everyone who loves The Father Loves whoever has been Born of him Now we already know To be born of God Is to be drawn Into a family And in that family Love is not optional It is essential It is a family trait We love God And we love those Who belong to God And these two things Cannot be separated You cannot say

[16:09] I love God And at the same time Say I despise This guy Or this This brother Or this sister Those two things Cannot go together In the Christian life But here again As we say this We must be careful Love As we speak of it Is not merely A feeling Love is not measured By emotional intensity So you may say I don't feel Love For that person When I look at John I don't feel Love For him Sorry John I do I love you I love you That's not the measure Of it Is it It's not the feeling Love Biblical love The kind of love That God calls us to Is not merely The feeling of intensity It is expressed In concrete Faithful action

According to the word Of God I do feel love For you brother I love you But it is not Just merely Feeling Because that's what Happens We go back to that If it's about just Feeling and measuring Intentions We go back to that Thing Where we start to Look inward And navel gaze Well do I really Love him I don't No it's not about Your feeling It's about action Faithful Concrete Faithful Obedient Action And obedience To the word of God You love God Love your brother And sister And you show your love To your brother And sister By the way You act towards them Your disposition Towards them You're going Drawing near to them When they're mourning Mourn with them When they're rejoicing Rejoice with them This is how you love It's obedience That's the second thing Love is first Second is obedience John goes on to say This is the love Of God That we keep His commandments And His commandments Are not Burdensome Isn't that wonderful To know The word tells us That obedience Is restrictive That freedom Is found In casting Of all restraints But Christ Tells us The opposite He tells us My yoke Is easy And my burden Is light God's commandments Are not given To crush us They're given To guide us Into life And we know this When we draw To Him We obey His word We're formed By His word Rather than The culture Of our own Sinful inclinations And yet We must also Acknowledge this We do not Obey perfectly None of us Do So if I hope

Is to be rested On our obedience We would have No hope at all But I hope Rest Rest Not in our perfect Obedience But rests In Christ Who is the Righteous one The propitiation For our sins And as we are United to Him His life begins To take shape In us And so These three witnesses And they believe In love Obedience And third Victory Victory John tells us Everyone who has been Born of God Overcomes the world That's a wonderful Glorious declaration Do you know That you're Overcomers You're World beaters You're Conquerers Yes the world Looks at you And says I don't see a World beater here I don't see

Jeff Bezos Or Elon Musk That's not Our God Measures That's not Victory In the Math In the Arithmetic Of our God The word of God Tells you Everyone who has been Born of God Overcomes the world This is the Final mark And the final Witness Of a believer The life Of victory This victory

[21:12] Ease It does not Mean the absence Of struggle It does not Mean freedom From suffering That's not what Victory means But it means Certainty In the midst Of all of these Things Certainty in the Mist of struggle Certainty in the Mist of suffering Certainty that you Belong to Christ And the end Is already written You are on the Victors side It means that no Matter how fierce The battle The outcome Is secure The world Is passing away But the one Who does the Will of God Abides forever The one Who is in Christ Abides forever And so even When evil Seems strong Even when the Church might Seem weak Even when Suffering Presses in We stand on This unshakable Truth Christ

This Eternal Life And this Life That he's Given us Is in His Son So Whoever Has the Son Has What Life Everything Comes down To this Everything Comes down To this Not Merely Knowing About Christ Not Merely Admiring Christ But Having Christ To Have Him Is to Have Life And if You Have Life It Will Show Itself In Love In Obedience And In Victory So the Question Remains Do you Have The Son For If you Have Him You Have Life And That Life Is Nothing Less Than The Life Of The Risen Christ At Work In You Now And Unto Eternity In