



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 30, 2010

1st Sunday after Pentecost - Festival of Holy Trinity

[1 John 5:5-12](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Numbers 6:22-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 150](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 16:12-15](#)

In the Trinity We Overcome the World

The Son came by water and blood
The Spirit testifies with the water and blood
The Father's testimony points us to the truth

As I read those couple of paragraphs to you, did you think you were all of a sudden watching an episode of CSI...testimony, liar, truth, overcoming, blood, water, all this evidence and testimony that surrounds us? That's kind of what it sounds like, isn't it? It's probably for a good reason that it sounds like evidence because that's exactly what John is doing. He's saying to look at the evidence. He starts out with a statement, "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." That person has overcome the world. I'm assuming you are here this morning because you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he is your Lord and Savior.

But tell me, do you always feel like every moment of every day as you walk through your life that you have overcome the world? Or are there times that it sure feels like the world is kicking your tail? Are there times when you look around and wonder, "God, where are you? Why are you letting this happen? Why are you letting that happen? You should be doing this. Or you should be doing that. God, you're kind of missing the boat here."

As John gets towards the end of his first letter and he starts summarizing some of the truths he had been talking about through the first part of his letter, he writes so that we might know that we overcome the world. He reviews some of the evidence and points us to the testimony. As we look at the evidence he sums up for us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we see him show us how in the Trinity we certainly have overcome the world. As you look at the evidence, the evidence shows us the Son has come in water and blood. The evidence tells us the Spirit testifies with the water and blood. And the evidence tells us if you don't believe this, you are calling God a liar...and if you're calling God a liar, you're just a spiritual idiot and there really is no hope for you because the Spirit isn't living in you.

What does it mean to overcome the world? You and I would like to think that means everything would go the way we want it to go and life would be easy and life would be smooth and we'd have no worries, we'd have no struggles, we'd have no troubles and our greatest worry would be steak or chicken or something along those lines. We'd like to think that's what God should have done in having us overcome the world. But Scripture never paints us that picture. God has never painted us that picture.

Overcoming the world is just that...not setting our sights only on the things of this world, but realizing now that this world, since it has fallen into sin, has all kinds of problems, all kinds of struggles, all kinds of troubles. And as God's faithful people, it means we are going to have to do exactly what Jesus said. We are going to have to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. That cross at times is going to be painful. It's going to give us slivers. It's going to give us blisters. It's going to give us problems because we live in a sinful world.

Overcoming the world doesn't mean that those things have been taken away from us. It means that they no longer bog us down and worry us so much that they take away all of our joy. As sinners, we are going to struggle with them. Our sinful nature at times is going to lead us to say, "You've overcome the world? Yeah, right, I don't see it." But that new self in us that believes what the Son, the Spirit and the Father have done, that part in us, that only can come as the gift of God, leads us to rejoice and find purpose and joy in day-to-day life even as we carry the cross. Overcoming the world involves overcoming ourselves...learning that it's not all about me. That's a hard lesson to learn, isn't it?

If someone asked you this morning when you were coming to worship, "Why are you going to worship," you wouldn't say, "It's all about me." But once you get to worship and you sit down in the pew, does it start becoming all about me? "I don't like that song so I'm going to shut the hymnal a little louder so everyone around me knows I don't like that song because it's all about me." "I don't like this order of service. It's too Catholic with the pastor singing. It's all about me." "I don't like this," or "I don't like that"...sometimes we have to overcome the world so we don't sit around just staring at our own bellybuttons and we start focusing on what we have come to worship...which is God. Overcoming the world involves that, not looking at ourselves, but looking at God.

Look at what we read from 1 John. It's all about God. He talks about anyone who believes, but it is believing what God has given. It talks about people that have overcome the world, but it talks about how God has done it for us. Now I'll grant you, he might point us to God in some ways that maybe make us scratch our head and maybe leave us a little confused. When he talks about whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God has overcome the world and then to explain that statement further he says, "This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only but by water and blood."

Is that immediately clear to you what he is talking about? This is kind of how Jesus always talked, isn't it? He who has ears, let him hear. The one that has the Spirit of God, they'll understand it because the Spirit will work that understanding in him. The rest of the people will be left going "I got no clue what he just said." But even with the Spirit, this is still a little tough. What is he talking about?

Some people have talked about the water and blood that came flowing from Jesus' side when he was pierced and how John pointed that out in his gospel so John is referring to it again here. Then you'd be saying that by his death Jesus overcame the world. Could

be. More likely it's probably that he is talking about everything that he had been writing about earlier since he is now summarizing what he had written to deny the false teachers who claimed that Jesus was only a man whom the Spirit of God rested upon for a time but he wasn't true God from all eternity. That's what Cerinthus and some of the others were teaching and to combat that, John again and again points to the testimony that had been given, the testimony of the Father. When Jesus came by water at his Baptism, remember what the Father said? "This is my Son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased. Shut up and listen to him." Then came by blood...that God's Son himself died to take away our sins. That was the punishment price that was demanded...the blood of the holy innocent lamb of God who lived perfectly in our place and who died in our place. I think that's more along the line of what John is talking about here. It's referring back to everything he had talked about.

It's talking about Jesus' ministry in our place. He came. He was pronounced as beloved by the Father. And he did everything that the Father asked, even to the point of dying to take away our sins. He didn't just come with the Father's favor, but he came with the Father's favor and then also with the actual Son of God dying for our sins.

He had talked about how he had seen this and how he was an eyewitness. But then he goes on to say, "But don't just listen to it and believe it because I say I was there and I was an eyewitness because Scripture says every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. And those two witnesses would just be me, what I have seen and what I have told you, but the Spirit also testifies." The Spirit, who works faith in our hearts, leads us to believe this truth that Jesus is true God from all eternity, that he lived in our place, that he died in our place. The Spirit testifies to this, you could also say, through the water and the blood and the Word, Baptism, Communion and the Word of God. The Spirit testifies again and again.

Then notice what he says... "We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it's the testimony of God which he has given about his Son." The Spirit also testifies there. I think he's quite clearly telling us that the Holy Spirit is God.

Then he gets into the truth that if you take the Spirit's testimony, the Spirit that proceeded from the Father and the Son has led people to write, and you say, "I know that's what God said there, but I don't believe it. I know better." If you don't believe his testimony, you've made him out to be a liar, which is what John is saying Cerinthus and the other false teachers had done that were troubling the people he was writing to.

But that danger is right there for us today also. When God tells us, "I sent the Son so that you might be saved and the Spirit to work faith so that you might believe and be saved and that means you have overcome the world, don't rely on what your eyes can see, rely on the promises I have made to you," there are going to be times when you and I are still going to want to say, "I don't know if I believe that. My eyes are telling me something different. My eyes are telling me that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. My eyes are telling me that I have sought to serve the Lord and I cling to his

cross for forgiveness for all the times that I have failed to serve him perfectly, yet I am still carrying these horrendous crosses at times in my life. So Lord, can I really believe the evidence?”

John is telling us is that it's all a matter of faith. It's not a matter of our eyes. It's not a matter of sight. It's a matter of keeping our eyes, the eyes of faith, focused upon God and not on ourselves or not on what we can see is happening to us. It's not all about me. It's all about the One who is three, three in one, believing his promises, clinging to his promises and not calling him a liar, but trusting in his truth.

Then we have exactly what he says at the very end of our text. If you look at that last sentence that I read to you, if you look at it in English, I don't think there's a word that's more than four letters long, is there? It's not written at a college level at that point in time, is it? The last sentence, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." That's not real confusing, is it? That's pretty straightforward.

That simple message is what he is saying to cling to every day of your life, every step of your life, every breath of your life as you struggle with "have I really overcome the world or haven't I?" He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. That's pretty straightforward and pretty simple.

So in the Trinity, we've overcome the world when we set aside what our eyes can see and we rest on what the Spirit has led us to believe.