

May 5, 2024  
Sixth Sunday of Easter  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

1 John 5:1–8 (John 15:9–17)

## THE LOVE OF CHRIST OVERCOMES THE WORLD

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Sometimes life can be effortless and beautiful. Other times, it can be difficult and overwhelming. You're not alone. Everyone has “*those times*” and “*those days*” when they feel as if everything that is good, right, and salutary has been lost and they have sunk deep into the mire where flood waters are sweeping over them. (cf: Psalm 69:1–2)

Everyone has good days and bad days. Think about excitement and wonder of Jesus’ disciples who by faith left ordinary mundane jobs to become preachers and teachers of the faith that would turn the world upside down. With their own eyes they personally witnessed God in the flesh of man perform His miracles: healings and cleansings and raisings that only God can do. And finally, they witnessed the miracle of His resurrection and ascension back into heaven.

But like you and me, there were “*those times*” and “*those days*” when the negative overshadowed the positive. Like when the disciples were at sea and a great storm arose. They believed their boat was going to sink. (cf: Matthew 8:23–27) Or on the night when Jesus was betrayed when He told the Twelve that one of them would betray Him. They were very sorrowful and began to question themselves saying: “*Is it I, Lord?*” (cf: Matthew 26:20–22) How must have Peter felt after boasting that he would die with Jesus rather than deny Him. (cf: (Matthew 26:35) And then, hearing the rooster crow after he had denied Jesus for the third time. (cf: Matthew 26:74–75) And then the trial and the horrible crucifixion of their Lord, followed by a week of hiding for fear of the Jews. (cf: John 20:19) Everyone has bad days.

In our epistle reading this morning St. John writes to a broad Christian audience throughout Asia Minor – and to all who have been born of God, including you brothers and sisters in Christ. There were many growing heresies in John’s Day. Some held that *matter* and the *material world* were ethically and morally *evil* – and – that the *spirit* was *perfect* and *good*. They said it was impossible for the Son of God to become a physical human being, since flesh was evil. Others held that Christ only “*seemed*” to have a human body. Still others held that the divinity of God came upon the man Jesus in His Baptism and left Him when He was crucified.

Having been among the inner circle of Jesus’ Twelve disciples, John writes with eyewitness authority about the truth of the incarnation – that is – that God taking on the flesh of man and dwelling among the people as a living breathing human being. He testifies that indeed the man

Jesus is the Son of God who came not by the water only but by the water and the blood – to which the Spirit testifies about this truth. (cf: 1 John 5:5–6)

John writes them so that all who read his letter or hear it preached, would not be overwhelmed by the world, not be overwhelmed by the bad days – but rather trust that Christ Jesus, who is the object of our faith, has overcome the world, sin, death, and the devil. (cf: John 16:33) Because He is victorious, you and all who believe that Jesus **is** the Christ are victorious.

Twice in the chapter previous to our text, John writes: **"God is love."** (cf: John 4:8, 16) We learn about this love through Jesus His Son whom God sent as the payment for our sins. There is so much hatred and unrest in the world, even Christians sometimes doubt that God is truly love. Or perhaps they have the idea that God's love is for others but not for themselves. But the truth is – God sent His only Son to suffer and die to save you from your sins, death, and eternal damnation. And that is your evidence of the love that God has for you in Christ Jesus.

Our text doesn't speak of the love of God so much – but speaks of the objective results from this love of God. To begin with, you didn't choose Jesus, but He chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide. (cf: John 15:16) Only those born of God are able to believe that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God. He called you either in the holy waters of Baptism or in the preaching of His Gospel and has given you the Holy Spirit. St. Paul says:

***"... you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*** (1 Corinthians 6:11)

In Baptism you were born again, born from above, born of water and the Spirit (cf: John 3:3–5) and were united to Christ's life, death, and resurrection. (cf: Romans 6:3–5) In his Gospel, John writes:

***"... [you] were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."*** (John 1:13)

That makes you alive and a child of God through faith in Jesus, the Christ. He has created faith within you so that you can believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ. What does it mean to believe? It means to trust with your whole heart that He is your only Savior and you would be eternally lost if He had not died for you. He's the object of your faith and you have a new status: ***you are a child of God***. Regardless of how beaten down and overwhelmed you feel, you have been given the status of a child of God, of which there is no higher or nobler status on earth. You are a new creation in Christ. Your old status ***in Adam*** has passed away; behold, your new status ***in Christ*** has come. (cf: 2 Corinthians 5:17) It is your objective status from the love of God.

Rejoice that you are a child of God. And not only are you a child, but that you also belong to a family. A family of others who have been born again, born of water and the Spirit, and have been given new life in Christ. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ **has** been born of God and belongs to the one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church, the family of God and body of Christ.

Given new life from God, given new birth by His Spirit, all who believe are His children. And as children we love our Father. Even a natural child loves its parent. How much more do we love the One who sent His Son to save us? John says:

***"2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments." (1 John 5:2)***

God always moves first, and we merely receive. You didn't choose Jesus. He chose you. He speaks. We listen. He instructs and we learn. He directs and we follow. Greater love has no one than Christ, who laid down His life for you. (cf: John 15:13–14) Who else do you trust in this life to carry you into life everlasting? Who or what is your greatest comfort in life on earth – and is your comfort in physical death? Whose love is without limit? And in response to His love of you and I who are the unlovable dregs of the earth, we love God and obey his commandments. As John says:

***"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3)***

When you believe with your whole heart that Christ Jesus was crucified on the cross to save you from your sins, death, and eternal damnation the Christian response is to love God in word and deed, and want to keep His commandments. You show your love of God in word and deed by loving your brothers and sisters who have been born of the same heavenly Father through faith in Jesus who is the Christ and Son of God.

Loving others in word and deed – and – keeping God's Commandments don't justify you in God's eyes – but Jesus did. He kept God Law and Commandments perfectly on your behalf. (cf: Romans 8:1–2) By His sacrificial death on the cross for your sins he paid the debt of all your sins. You have a victorious faith. John says:

***"4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4–5)***

Brothers and sisters in Christ, everyone has "***those times***" and "***those days***" when life is difficult and overwhelming. You're not alone. In Baptism, you have been give faith to believe that Jesus is the Christ and you **have been** born of God. It's your present tense reality. You are a new creation in Christ. You have overcome the world. Your old status ***in Adam*** has passed away; behold, your new status ***in Christ*** has come.

John says that Jesus the Son of God who came by water and blood:

***"... not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree." (1 John 5:6–8)***

Regarding this passage Martin Luther writes:

***"Thus the water cannot be proclaimed without the blood. Nor is the blood of Christ given without the water of Baptism. Besides, the blood and the water do not come to us except at the instance of the Holy Spirit, who is in the Word.***

*Therefore those three cannot be separated, but the three do one thing... For these three constantly accompany one another, and through the Word a daily immersion and a perpetual Baptism takes place, a perpetual shedding of the blood of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, a continual cleansing from sins.” (LW 30.316)*

Jesus was proclaimed God’s beloved Son not only in His Baptism but also by blood in His death on the cross. Just as He is the truth, so also the Holy Spirit is the truth. The Spirit testified at Jesus’ Baptism, marking Him as the Christ who was to come and the Son of God. (cf: John 1:29–34) The Holy Spirit reminds every believer of all that Jesus has said. (cf: John 14:26) The Holy Spirit always testifies to Jesus and glorifies Jesus and guides all who believe into all truth. (cf: John 16:13–14)

You **have been** born of God. It’s your present tense reality. You are not overwhelmed by the world – or by whatever may happen to you in the world – because in Christ Jesus, you have overcome the world.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.