

1 John 5:1-8

Sixth Sunday of Easter (Series B)

Lessons for the Day: Acts 10:34-48; 1 John 5:1-8; John 15:9-17**Our Glorious Victory!**

May 5, 2024

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 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? This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; 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. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.”

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

The weather and I don’t always get along. Pressure changes in the atmosphere can play havoc with my head and I can suffer anything from headaches to full-blown migraines. Some days I can cope with them; other days they knock me down for the count.

There are also days when I seem to be a reflection of the weather. I imagine we all have had those kind of days. It is dark and gray, and the clouds are blocking out the sun. We often feel gloomy on days like that, too. Then the sun comes out and our mood brightens with the sky. I heard more than a few people grumbling when the snow showed up again last week, just as we were starting to look forward to spring! The weather can influence us in more ways than we might like to admit.

There is a quote, often attributed to Mark Twain, but is more likely from a friend of Twain’s, Charles Dudley Warner. I’m sure you’re familiar with it: “Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.” All of our climate change fear-mongers and fanatics notwithstanding, the truth is that the only one who can do anything about the weather is the God who created the world and who continues to guide all things in nature. Jesus reminds us: *“your Father who is in heaven... he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* (Matthew 5:45, ESV) When Job questioned God’s ways, the Lord answered, asking Job a rhetorical question: *“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’?”* (Job 38:34-35, ESV) The answer is, “of course not”. Only God can guide the weather, and He works in His wise, perfect ways for our good, even if there are days when our moods are affected by the weather.

Everyone talks about the things happening in the world around us, but no one seems to do anything about them. I know that there are many people would argue with me about that statement. After all, we have all sorts of so-called experts who think they are helping improve our world. There are those who think the world is a better place for our so-called “woke” world and our cancel-culture attitudes. There are those who continue to advocate for abortion rights and who promote the evils of medical assistance in dying as a benefit and improvement to our society. Have you heard the messages of many pro-Palestinian protesters? It is frightening to think that students on campuses in the US—and I’m sure it is true here in Canada, too—are chanting “Death to America!” and carrying “Final Solution” signs in support of Islamic terrorists. The final solution for them is the “final solution” of the Nazis to exterminate all Jews. What is going on in the world today?

Everyone talks about the things happening in our world, but there is only One who can do anything about it. Thankfully, we come here in the joy of these Easter days knowing that God can—and did—do something about the things happening in our world. We have a real, living, abiding hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Him we have a glorious victory. As John tells us in our text today: *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* Yes, God has done something. Christ comes to bring forgiveness and life to His people. He comes to give us victory over the world. Trusting in Him we have that wonderful, glorious victory, given to us in His resurrection from the dead.

After the clouds, the rain and snow of the past week a beautiful, sunny day makes everything seems brighter and more alive. But we all know what happens, don’t we? Calgary has been re-branded as the Blue Sky City. Those who have been involved in this effort tell us that the new brand is a nod to innovation—Calgary being a city of blue-sky thinking—and one that reflects all Calgarians. It is also supposed to be a reflection of Calgary being one of the sunniest cities in Canada. I know that Calgary gets more sunny days than I remember in Ontario, but I also know that the weather here can change faster than in many other

parts of the country. The first day Brenda and I were in Calgary, we had snow in the morning; we were outside at noon without jackets because it was warm, and then it got cold and rainy by the end of the day.

Isn't that what life is like? In the gloom and doom of our world, Easter morning breaks forth with a brightness that makes life so much better. But even though we know the blessings of Easter, the reality of life continues to overshadow the joy of that day. We celebrate Easter with joy, but before we know it we're back to the daily grind, doctor appointments, trouble with kids, stress at the workplace. Life still goes on and it isn't always the simplest, the brightest, the most joyful life. Sin is still at work in our world and in our own hearts, too. Like my headaches and the weather, our lives can be overwhelmed by the things that happen around us. I have listened to people who, like the psalmist, have asked: ***"O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?"*** (Psalm 94:3, ESV) How can our world keep going down the path to destruction? How long will people turn from the church to follow their own desires? How long will we be hated by the world?

My dear people, loved by God, we have no reason for despair! We have a glorious victory through Jesus Christ. John tells us: ***Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*** Apart from Christ, we can talk about all the things happening, but can't do anything about them. Thankfully, we have the victory in the Christ who came for us. In Christ, the faithful know the victory that the world can only long to see. John declares that Christ came to be our Saviour and Victor. He came ***by water and blood . . . not by the water only but by the water and the blood.*** The water speaks of Jesus' baptism, where both the Father and the Spirit testified to his identity as the Son of God. In the water of the Jordan River, Jesus took His place beside all of sinful mankind. He took His place beside us. But the water was only the beginning. He would go to the cross, to complete the work that was necessary for our forgiveness and to bring us the freedom from sin, death and hell. On the cross the Lamb of God took our place, and His blood, shed for us, testifies to the love of God for us. More than that, John tells us earlier in this epistle that ***"the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."*** (1 John 1:7, ESV) We, who were dead in our sins, lost and condemned forever now know the glorious victory that is ours in Jesus Christ.

Just as our moods can be affected by the weather, so the reality of life imposes its will on us. But our faith and trust in the living Lord brings a real change to the things that no one else can change. We have the joy of knowing the testimony of the water in our Baptism for we have been born of God through His gift of the water, empowered by His Word. We have the testimony of the blood as we come to the Lord's table, and He gives us that very body and blood given into death for us on the cross. The water and the blood testify to our victory, and this testimony is made clear through the Spirit—the very one of whom Jesus said: ***"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*** (John 14:26–27, ESV)

It is this glorious truth which enables God's faithful people to cope with the uncertainties and doubts of life. To be honest, no one knows what will come in the days and years ahead. The world is a hostile place. But this we know: in Christ we are victorious, and will remain so. Sin, death, and the evil one cannot defeat us. Christ's victory does not fade after the Easter lilies drop their petals. This victory, like our faith, is renewed day by day through Christ as he comes in Word and Sacrament. Every day for the Christian is a victorious Easter!

Jesus rose, and that means our sins are forgiven. Jesus rose and that means everything will turn out all right in the end. Think of life as a book, with God as the author, Christ as the hero, and ourselves as characters in the story. Here we are, still in the middle of the book, with chapters we still must live. Some of those chapters hold good things that will make us glad; some will make us sad. There will be joy and there will be trouble in our lives before the story is finished. As characters in the story, we have no idea how things are going to turn out. But in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God reveals what is known as the denouement; He shows us the climax, and how all things come together. We see that Christ, our hero, triumphs over the devil who causes all the grief and trouble and pain of our lives. And by faith we share in the victory of Christ. That is why Easter is such a time of joy, for we know that through faith in Him who rose from the dead, our life's story has a happy ending.

Yes, even as the world presses hard against us, we have the assurance John gives us in our text: ***For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*** We trust in Him who was baptized for us, and who joins us to Himself in our baptism. We trust in Him who was crucified for us, and who rose again from the dead. That living Lord feeds us with His holy body and blood that we may know our victory in Him. He gives us His Spirit, who brings us the faith that overcomes the world. Jesus lives, and in Him we have the joy of knowing that even though we may have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we have nothing to fear, for we also will rise from the dead. Until that day, in all the ups and downs of life, we still have this glorious victory, what Peter called ***"a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"***. (1 Peter 1:3, ESV) Rejoice in that victory that is yours in Christ! Amen.