



Sermon, Sunday May 12, 2024

“What Is the Faith that Overcomes the World?”

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 5:1-12 ¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burden-some, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? ⁶This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. ⁷There are three that testify:^[b] ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree. ⁹If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. ¹⁰Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God^[c] have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Introduction: Competitive spirit is human nature

Today is the 7th Sunday of Easter. The flowers and trees in the nature we live in are becoming more refreshing, but the world we live in is conflicted and unable to reach consensus on political, social, and diplomatic issues. There are many reasons why people cannot reach agreement on an issue. However, when there are conflicting opinions among the parties who must negotiate these issues, a feeling of having to subdue the other party arises. This is because of human nature: our competitive spirit.

There is a Korean drama called ‘**Squid Game**’ that aired on Netflix in 2021. This drama is a story about 456 contestants who are pushed to the edge due to lack of money and risk their lives to become the final winner of \$38 million. The worldwide success of this drama a few years ago shows a side of the human competitive spirit.

In fact, the pleasure humans get from winning a competition is close to instinct. So, when people enter a competitive situation, they are willing to make sacrifices. This kind of human competition not only exists between oneself and others, but also within the most intimate relationship, a married couple.

However, the problem with this kind of competitive human life is that not only is the pleasure gained from winning the competition not continuous, but it does not fundamentally enhance human life.

So, how should Christians live in a world like this? Is there any way for us to live a satisfying life in this world other than the thrill of victory through competition? Today’s text offers answers to these questions.

Body: A life that overcomes the world with faith

Today’s text, 1 John 5:4, says: ‘**For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.**’



According to this verse, Christians overcome the world through faith. This claim from the Bible may sound like nonsense to those who believe that they can get what they want only by winning in competition with others. These people believe that they can only win by subduing their opponents. They feel happy when they win a competition, and unhappy when they lose one.

I sometimes play table tennis with my wife. But when I win a game against my wife, I feel good, and when I lose, I feel bad. When my wife sees my childish side, she smiles and asks me, “Are you so happy that you won a table tennis game with me?” In fact, the important thing here is not who won, but that you had a happy time playing table tennis with your loved one. In that sense, my wife is a broader-minded and more relaxed person than me. On the other hand, I am a person with a stronger competitive spirit than my wife.

So what do you think is true victory? It is not that we win by subduing the other person, but rather we overcome ourselves. Yet many people are so self-centered that they find it most difficult to overcome themselves, they constantly look for something to fight for and win outside of themselves.

Verse 4 of today’s text says, **‘This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.’** In this verse, the faith that overcomes the world is connected to our own problems. In other words, the text does not mean trying to subdue others or change them to suit our will, but rather to fix ourselves.

So, the Bible repeatedly emphasizes faith. Abraham, the father of faith in the Old Testament, also gained true life through faith. Additionally, the Apostle Paul in the New Testament said that faith is the only way for us to be righteous at the ultimate level.

So, what is this faith that can overcome the world? The doctrinal answer to this question is faith in God and faith in Jesus Christ. However, what is important to us is how such faith is concretely applied and put into practice in our lives. Verse 1 of today’s text says: **‘Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.’**

What does this verse mean? It means those who have faith, love. In other words, the faith and love that the Bible testifies about are not separate but connected. If we want to know how deep we have entered the Christian faith, we need only look at how much the power of love is revealed to us. Because the power of love is the power to overcome the world.

Verse 1 of today’s text consists of two sentences. The first sentence is **‘Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.’** We were born into this world because of our parents, but Christians are people whose past selves died with Jesus' death on the cross and were reborn through the power of Jesus' resurrection. Christians confess their faith through the rite of baptism. In other words, Christians are people who see their lives and the world anew through a new relationship with Jesus Christ, and as today's text describes, they are people born of God.

The second sentence of verse 1 of today’s text is **‘everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.’** This verse says that Christians love God just as they love their parents who gave birth to them. However, the part we need to pay attention to in this verse is the phrase, **‘everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.’** So who is the father's child in this verse? They are our fellow believers and neighbors all over the world. In this way, all people who believe in God are our brothers and sisters.

However, the brothers and sisters around us may not be worthy of our hearts. Nevertheless, we must love them. Because we are people who love God, we must love our brothers and sisters around us, even if they do not deserve our hearts.

However, living with this kind of love is not easy. This is because we only see people we don't like, and we don't see God who created them. If we are to overcome these problems, we must meditate more deeply and understand what it means to live in relationship with God.



However, verse 3 says the following about our thoughts and hearts that find it difficult to love brothers and sisters who we do not like. **‘This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.’**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Can you agree with this statement that loving one’s neighbor is not burdensome to those who love God?

In fact, it is not easy to be intimate with someone who has different values, character, and attitudes from us. That is why it is even more burdensome to be told to love such people. The fact that we feel this burden means that we do not truly love God. As a preacher, I also find it burdensome to be close to people with different values, character, and attitudes. However, I know which direction to take. So, I try to love God and get closer to the Lord. I think you all have the same concerns as me.

Let us consider in more detail what it means to say that the commandment of love is not burdensome to those who love God. A few days ago, I almost collided with the car in front of me while driving on the highway to take my children to school. Fortunately, it did not lead to an accident, but if it had, it would have led to a major accident. These things often happen in our lives. To put it simply, such events almost bring us to the brink of death. Every time we experience these things in life, we realize what an amazing blessing it is to have life and live each day. And we experience freedom from many things that have been problematic for us. Of course, these experiences have limitations that do not last long, but these experiences make us clearly aware of the limits of our existence, and at the same time, they bring us opportunities to awaken more deeply to God, the ruler of eternal life.

Christianity refers to the being we encounter in our lives as God. Therefore, those who love God do not feel burdened about loving their neighbors because they have experienced entering the mysterious depth of existence and life. Today’s text tells us that part.

Conclusion: Water, blood, and the Holy Spirit

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Now let’s summarize today’s message. Verse 6 of today’s text says that Jesus Christ comes by water and blood. In this passage, water and blood refer to specific human attributes. The author of 1 John used this expression to refute the claims of the Gnostics who do not acknowledge the humanity of Jesus Christ. The life of the human Jesus, who came into the world, was not lacking in showing us concrete love and putting it into practice.

Therefore, living as Christians in the world means experiencing and accepting Jesus’ love for the world, obedience to the Father, and power as ruler of the world in our lives, and at the same time living through that power.

Therefore, the church, the body of Jesus Christ, values specific people and their lives, good or bad. Also, the church tries to connect with specific people and love them. Furthermore, the church does its best to specifically change the social structure so that we can create a world where everyone can live like human beings.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Christian faith appears as concrete love in human life and history. Therefore, overcoming the world with faith means overcoming the world with the power of the Lord’s love. So, as Christians, we must constantly ask whether our faith is filled with love, and through this process, we must be able to achieve the precious fruit of love.

