

The Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 22, 2022

Pastor Peter Gregory, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Westminister, Massachusetts

Tribulation Overcome

John 16:23–33

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

Jesus said: **“I’ve said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”** (vv 32–33)

I have overcome the world, Jesus says (v 33).

But even as He speaks these words, the world is out to get Him.

At the same time, Judas and a band of soldiers are marching out of Jerusalem.

They’re in search of Jesus.

They’re going to arrest Him.

They’re going to put Him on the cross.

So how could Jesus say that He has overcome the world?

The opposite seems to be true.

It looks like the world is about to overcome Him.

Jesus spoke about that, too.

He said:

In the world you *will have tribulation* (v 33).

Not *might have* but *will have*.

He knows what He’s talking about.

He had tribulation in the world,

and He was about to have more of it.

And so would His disciples.

And so will you.

There’s no shortage of trials and distress,

troubles and pressures in this world and life.

Satan may be a defeated foe,

but he’ll still go down roaring and swinging.

He still looks successful and strong and fearsome.

So Jesus tells us these thing.

That in Me you may have peace (v 32).

Peace of heart.

Peace of mind.

Peace even in a trouble and turbulent world.

For He has **overcome the world** (v 33).

Jesus puts it in the perfect tense.

He speaks of overcoming the world as a completed action—
as a completed action with an ongoing result.

He's saying that He's already done it.

It's already over.

That's true, in a way.

Jesus had overcome the diseases of the world by healing them.

He'd overcome the demons of this world by exorcising them.

He'd overcome the sorrow of this world by raising the dead.

He'd overcome the sin of this world with His forgiveness.

Yes, He'd overcome so much.

Yet He still wasn't done.

When He said these things,

He was still to face the last and greatest enemy of all: death and the grave.

And yet He talks like even that is done, over, and past.

I have overcome the world.

Like His suffering and crucifixion are behind Him.

How can He speak like that?

Because, when Jesus makes a promise,

it's as good as done.

Jesus speaks of the future as if it has already happened.

Because it will.

One hundred percent guarantee.

The future is more certain for Him than the past is for us.

Even when we think we know the past,

we learn something new about it.

Our knowledge of the past is incomplete.

It's not like that for Jesus.

He knows all things

—knows the future just as completely as He knows the past.
 And so his promise for the future is as good as done.
 He said it, and so it will be.

The disciples still must learn that.
 The next three days would test them and their faith.
 When Jesus rose from the dead, they would learn.
 Death couldn't win.
 The grave couldn't hold Him.
 Jesus *had* overcome the world.
 There's nothing in this world that isn't under His feet.
 Nothing.

That's something we need to learn as well.
 Whether it's three days, three months, three years, or even longer,
 there are times in our lives that test our faith.
 Times when we struggle to believe our Lord and His word and promises.
 Times when it seems like the world is overcoming us,
 overcoming the Church,
 overcoming God's word.
 Times when it seems like God is losing.
 False religions flourish and false gods grow in popularity.
 The objective morality of the Bible is replaced
 by whatever we decide is right and wrong.
 Living and talking about Jesus publicly is risky.

Take heart; I have overcome the world (v 33)

seems like wishful thinking,
 just like it did to the disciples when they saw Jesus hauled away and executed.

But it *is* as true for us today as it was back then for the disciples.
 Today's reading from Revelation gives us a glimpse of that reality.
 The Church, Christ's Bride, isn't defeated but beautiful and radiant.
 The Lamb is on His throne, victorious.
 The apostles' names are on the foundation of the holy city.
 The Church was built on their word and witness.
 Yes, they experienced much tribulation,
 even to the point of martyrdom,
 but they couldn't be overcome.
 They suffered yet rejoiced.

They were killed yet lived.
 They were hated yet loved those who hated them.
 They were scorned yet prayed for those who scorned them.

They could do that because the victory was certain.
 It was already theirs.
 And they knew it.
 So they lived in that confidence and victory.
 Nothing could overcome them in Jesus. Nothing.
 He had overcome the world.

That's why Jesus spoke the words that He did about prayer.

Truly, truly, I say to you,

whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

Sometimes people hear those words and think that God has to give them
 whatever they want—a new car, lots of money, healing, a good grade on a test—
 whatever they want as long as they say “in Jesus’ name” at the end of the prayer.
 But asking for those things like that is really asking in my name, not Jesus’ name.

Those are the things of my heart,
 my mind, my wants, my wishes, my desires, my hopes.
 God may give those things
 But that's not really what these words are about or what they mean.

Whatever you ask in My names goes with I have overcome the world.

If He has overcome the world,
 then there is nothing that can stop our prayer from coming to the Father,
 and nothing that can stop God from giving us everything.

Satan is defeated, so he cannot stop it.
 Our sin no longer separates us from God, so that cannot stop it either.
 So pray, ask, Jesus says.
 Not because His name is magic, but because bearing His Name,
 we can pray to God as dear children ask their dear father.
 A Father who wants to provide.

What He wants to give you most of all is **joy** and **peace**.
 Not only here and now, in this world and life, but forever.
 The joy and peace of Jesus,
 of His forgiveness,
 of knowing that He has overcome the world.

We heard that from Jesus today: **Ask . . . that your joy may be full;**

and, **I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace.**
Satan wants to rob us of that joy and peace
and give us only sorrow and despair, distress and disbelief.

Cast all that on the Lord.

**Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you;
He will never permit the righteous to be moved.**

So cast on Him the burden of sorrow, despair, and distress over sin
and hear His absolution:

I forgive you all your sin.
I paid for it all on the cross;
there's no debt left for you. **I have overcome the world.**

Cast the burden of trials, troubles, and doubts about your life
into the water of the font, that they be drowned in Christ there,
and hear His Word of adoption:

You are mine; my son, my daughter.
I baptized you into me; you are mine. **I have overcome the world.**

And cast the burden of weariness, struggles, and disappointments
of your failure, your shortcomings, all your weakness
at His altar,
and hear His Word of assurance:

I took all that to the cross.
It's gone. Dead and buried.
Here is the new life that you need,
and the forgiveness and strength you need;
here, in My Body and Blood. Take, eat, and drink. **I have overcome the world.**

So ask for His gifts.

Ask for his help.

Ask for His strength.

Ask for Jesus to fulfill his Word.

Ask that you be made new.

Ask for the confidence, joy, and peace you need.

Ask, Jesus says, and you will receive. For when Jesus makes a promise, He will deliver.

And when you have all that,

the joy and peace of Christ, His Word and promises,

and the assurance that He has overcome the world,
you are truly and extraordinarily blessed.
Even without the new car, good grades, or facing health crises.
Even in the midst of a world gone mad.
Even when the crosses laid upon you seem to much to bear.
You are not alone. You are in Christ and Christ is in you.
Which means that not only has Christ overcome the world,
but in Him, really and truly, already now, so have you.

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ
Jesus.

Phil 4:7

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<http://www.saint-athanasius.org/Sermons/2016/Easter/2016-05-01.htm>*