**I Have Overcome the World**

**John 16:23-33**

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

Who do you know that keeps their promises? Parents all keep their promises, right? Well, OK, they usually keep their promises. And, if they have to break their promises, it is usually dad’s fault. Right?

Whether intentionally or not, we have all broken promises, even parents have broken their promises. There is however, one who has never broken a promise – God. Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, also true man, born of the virgin Mary is the only one in human flesh who has never broken a promise.

Although Jesus makes a promise in our text which I personally wish would not come true. He says, “In the world you will have tribulation.”

Some of you may be thinking, “Great, Pastor, thanks a lot for pointing that one out. It isn’t like I didn’t already know there is tribulation in the world. I want some nice promises from God, something that gives me evidence of God’s love.”

We do not like to hear such things because what we want the most is a quiet place to which we can retreat from the worries and troubles of life, a happy place where we can be refreshed and renewed. We want a place to which we might escape where there are no problems. Or if we can get away for a bit and escape the problems of life, when we come back, everything will be fine and life will go smoothly.

There are all sorts of well-intentioned, but false preachers out there who tell you that if you only believe, everything ***will*** go smoothly. They like to tell the people that God wants them to have a successful and prosperous journey through life, that He gives them the desires of their hearts. The teachings of such preachers are enticing, it sounds good. If the truth were told, the words of such false preachers are oftentimes preferred to the very words of our Lord Jesus in our text. Appealing to many indeed, is falsehood over the truth of Christ.

Even real life disagrees with the false preachers, we from experience that is not how it happens. Just when we get our life in order, and things seem to be sailing smoothly along, something seems to barge in and ruin the ride – illness, the death of a loved one, loss of a job, or unexpected bills. Or maybe it is a relationship that has gone sour, strained to the breaking point. It is amazing how even a simple misunderstanding can be blown out of proportion and ruin a long friendship. And of course, there is always that unexpected crisis, whatever it may be.

No matter what happens, Jesus’ promise looms large, “in the world you will have tribulation.” It is too true, tribulations always seem to be the one thing of which there is always an abundance. Life sails along smoothly and out of nowhere the boat is upended, almost drowning us in the tempestuous sea of life.

All by itself, that one phrase, “In the world you will have tribulation,” sounds pretty forlorn and without hope. It certainly does not sound like evidence of God’s love. But, it is also an honest appraisal of life in this world**.** While everybody wants life to be peaceful and without troubles, that is not the way it is, Jesus promises that tribulations will come upon us in our life in this world.

But is that true? Listen to Jesus’ words just before that promise of tribulation, Jesus says, “I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace.”

It does not make sense. “Jesus, are you telling us that we will have tribulations, in order that we may have peace? How do you figure?”

That promise does free us from some things. It frees us from having to put on an act, that everything is just fine. We don’t have to fake that pastors are perfect at all times, that our sons are perfect angels, our spouses are perfectly loving toward us, or that parents – mothers or fathers – are always self-sacrificing and caring.

If we look at Jesus words, “In the world you will have tribulation,” He is not simply talking about the world around us. This is as much a commentary concerning the world within us. This is calling the Old Adam, our sinful nature, what it is. It is what keeps us from perfectly loving our family members – it keeps children from always honoring their parents, and it sometime causes parents to resent children as a burden instead of a blessing. It is this sinful nature which complains about God’s blessings of a Graduation parties as adding to many “honey-dos” to a list that is already overly long.

When we read those words, “In the world you will have tribulation,” these are the things we think of. But they are also words that call us to repentance.

It is a word from God that confronts us in our sinfulness, grumbling against God, that life has too many tribulations. We are like the Israelites in the reading from Numbers who grumbled against God. They sinned in their whining about how poorly they had it, although God was providing for all their needs for this body and life.

It is in repentance that we need to remember that the Scripture always needs to be read in context. Jesus said, “I have 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.”

“I have overcome the world,” He says, “I have conquered the sins of the whole world. I have overcome your sins. All the things that trouble you, I have overcome. I took on human flesh, I endured the tribulations of this world – even to the point of sweating blood in the Garden. I know heartache and disappointment. Some of those whom I loved, died! Close friends betrayed Me. Those who promised never to abandon Me, fled in My greatest hour of need. All those things that trouble you now, your health, your losses, your broken heart, you sinfulness – I took into Myself upon the cross of Calvary.”

It is in His suffering and death that Christ endured the worst tribulations of this life, and He proclaimed that it was for “this hour” that He had come. He came as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” to overcome the tribulations in this world. He defeats death by swallowing it up in the victory of His own death. That victory boldly proclaimed by His rising from the dead on the third day.

It is upon the cross that Jesus overcomes the world. His crucifixion is the event that is the most vivid evidence of the Father’s love for you – for me – for all. He allowed His Son to endure suffering and death, to bring you through your tribulations. Easter’s empty tomb nearly screams that the victory was won on the cross, “See, it is true, I have overcome the world. Death has no claim on me, neither does it upon you. All that is mine, is yours. I have overcome the world.”

But Jesus’ cross is not some event left in the past. It is not simply something we remember fondly. God’s love, evidenced upon the cross, is delivered to you here. Your grumbling against God is forgiven in the blood Jesus shed, applied to you today in the Word of forgiveness spoken into your ear – sin and death are gone – I have overcome the world.

Your hunger and thirst for more, is satisfied when the body of Christ is placed into your mouth and His blood is poured between your lips. This is eternal food, granting you forgiveness of sins and eternal life, it proclaims to you, I have overcome the world.

Jesus warns us of tribulation that we may have peace. He knows our sinfulness, that which brings sorrow and tribulations into our life and our little corner of the world. Christ overcomes the devil, the world, and our sinful nature. That is why it is only in Christ that we have peace – a peace that passes all understanding. We are in a newly restored and right relationship with God by His love in Christ Jesus. We are restored in the relationships we have broken with others, by the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Yes, we may face of tribulations, but although we have tribulations in the world – Christ has overcome the world.

You and I dear friends are in Christ Jesus – baptized into Christ – into His death and resurrection. As Christ has overcome the world, all that is His is ours – so it is that Jesus has overcome the world not only for us, but in us. We wait however to see that day come when it will be finally realized. Your baptism is your daily strength which brings true peace when you face tribulations, for in your baptism, you have already been brought through them. As Christ has risen from the dead, you too will rise – and risen, you have an eternal dwelling place where there will be no more tribulations.

The will of the Father is simple, believe in the One He sent into the world, to overcome the world for you. He invites you to call upon Him in your tribulations, knowing that He also has endured them. You are His dearly beloved children, and Jesus has returned to His Father’s side to prepare a place for you. While you yet remain in this life… and flesh… and world, remember His words to you, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” And so He has done for you – and in you. Amen.