

**April 23, 2006**  
**Easter 2**

*"Resurrection Faith Born of God"*

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### **1 JOHN 5:1-6**

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**E**veryone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. <sup>2</sup> This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. <sup>3</sup> This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. <sup>6</sup> This is the one who came by water and blood-- Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

In his book, *Against the Night*, Charles Colson tells of a young Christian man named Armando Valladares who witnessed to his Christian faith in Cuba under the communist regime of Fidel Castro. He spent time as a prisoner in the notorious Cuban Isla de Pinos with other persecuted Christians. The communists took the Christians to the firing squad at night under the cover of darkness. The darkness could not silence the prisoners who would shout as they were being executed, "Viva Cristo Rey!" "Long live Christ the King!" Eventually the guards had to gag those about to be executed. They could not tolerate their defiance and the confidence that came with serving a Savior and a King that had risen from the dead, a risen Lord who takes care of his people even in the face of persecution and death.

This morning, dear Christian, you sit here as resurrection people with a resurrection faith in your risen Lord. This resurrection faith is not something you have developed in yourself. Your Lord and Savior came to you with his words "Peace be with you." With the eyes of faith you have seen the nail marks in his hands and with the eyes of faith you are willing to give your life for Jesus. Jesus said, "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." This morning we want to take a closer look at what the Apostle John says about this resurrection faith that is born of God, a resurrection faith that is able to do amazing things only by God's grace.

### **This resurrection faith clings to Jesus as the Christ**

A resurrection faith believes that Jesus is the Christ, the one God has chosen to get the job done and get it done right. Our text tells us, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Peter once confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus told him "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father which is in heaven." Nothing, absolutely nothing in me, in my heart of hearts, leads me to believe to confess that Jesus is the Christ. This is born or birthed into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Do you ever wonder if you are a Christian? How do I know I am a true believer? Do I look into myself and my feelings or emotions? Do I look at the quality of life I am living? Do I check if I am truly sorry for my sin? The real litmus test of being a Christian is asking

the more important question, "Do I believe that Jesus is the Christ?" According to John you can recognize the Christ by looking at the one who came by water and blood. "This is the one who came by water and blood- Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is truth." Look at Jesus coming out of the water at his baptism. Listen to Father say, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." Look at the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus in form of the dove. Everything at Jesus baptism points to the fact he is the Christ. Jesus also came with blood. The blood that falls from the body of Jesus as he is being beaten and crucified is blood that bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ who fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament and the blood of sacrifices that pictured how the Messiah would give his life as a ransom for many. Resurrection people see these things about Jesus and believe they are true.

Dear Christian, the Holy Spirit has given you faith eyes. When Jesus appears to his disciples on the night of his resurrection, you believe he is also appearing to you. You find yourself in that room listening to his words, "Peace be to you." You find yourself looking in amazement as Jesus shows you his hands and sides. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. You have that same joy through the faith given to you by the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." You are blessed, truly blessed that Jesus is the Christ, the perfect solution to the problem of sin, the Son of God from all eternity, the perfect fulfillment of God's plan to rescue us.

If you need your car fixed you go to a mechanic. If you need your teeth fixed you go to a dentist. If you need a haircut you will go to a barber. If you need your plumbing fixed you will call a plumber not an electrician. Resurrection people, with a faith birthed in them by the Holy Spirit, see Jesus as the Christ, the one God has chosen to do the impossible task of removing our sin and making us acceptable to God. Resurrection faith believes I can find nothing in myself that can ever in any way contribute to my salvation. As the Lord tells me in Isaiah 59, "So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness." There is nothing in me that can overcome my deep-rooted problem of sin and give me peace with God. As one man told me as he was facing death, "I just want to hear about Jesus."

### **Resurrection faith produces remarkable love**

Wherever you find resurrection people with a resurrection faith you will find them gathering around each other, celebrating the resurrection, encouraging each other in the Word and receiving the Holy Sacrament. John writes, "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God; to obey his commands and his commands are not burdensome." The early Christians witnessed boldly to the resurrection. They also witnessed by the way they loved each other. The heathen Romans often commented on the quality of their love. "Look at how they love each other." Slaves began to love their masters and masters loved their slaves. Husbands loved their wives as much as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

John wrote about this amazing love that comes from a resurrection faith in the previous chapter. "This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so

loved us, we also ought to love one another." A resurrection faith does not sit down and hold back when it comes to showing love. It jumps up with joy and says, let me be the first to walk across the room and show love, even to people whom it is hard to love.

A man was complaining that if he became a Christian he would have to give up so much in his life, especially the wild times he had with his friends. His Christian friend gave this answer: "Do you enjoy eating mud?" The man emphatically said, "No!" Then the Christian said, "When your faith in Christ grows you will look at sin like eating mud, and you will not want anything to do with it." When we were little kids, I can remember my sister and my cousins making mud pies. I don't ever remember eating any of the mud pies they made. With a resurrection faith you look at God's Word and God's ways as the best ways. When people mistreat you or become inconsiderate of your feelings, you welcome the opportunity, you jump at the opportunity to demonstrate love, because you have seen risen Christ and you have seen the nail marks in his hands.

On this Sunday after Easter I always enjoy telling the story of Michael, the twelve year old boy in Florida who nearly lost his life to a large alligator. He and his cousins were swimming in a small lake near their house. Suddenly someone shouted, there is an alligator in the lake. Everyone swam to shore as quickly as possible, except for Michael who was snorkeling underwater. When he surfaced, he heard the screams and saw his cousins swimming for the shore. Then he saw the gator coming after him. He swam as fast as he could. His mother was on the shore pleading with him to swim faster. Just as his mother reached out to pull him to shore the large gator clamped on to Michael's foot. A vicious tug of war ensued between a 120 pound mom and a 400 pound alligator. When the gator opened its mouth to get a better grip, mom gave it all she could and pulled Michael to safety. The gaping wounds on his leg needed stitches, but they healed. Later he would show his friends the large scars where the gator nearly got him. What he was most proud of was the scars on his hands, where his mothers fingernails had dug in to hold onto him and rescue him. Today, with our resurrection faith, we are proud of the scars on the hands of Jesus. It is the love that we see in these scars that leads us to say with Paul, "The life I live I live for Christ who loved me and gave himself for me." That life enjoys following God's ways and especially showing love even to people who may not show the same kindness and love to us.

### **A resurrection faith overcomes the world**

A resurrection faith overcomes the world as John tells us, "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes Jesus is the Son of God." The night before he died Jesus told his disciples that he had come into this world to overcome, to conquer and be victorious against the forces of evil. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus said that we have a peace this world cannot give. We have the peace of knowing that nothing will ever separate us from the love that Jesus has for us. This is the victory Paul wrote about in Romans when he said, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth,

nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In my personal devotions I have been reading through the life of Job. No matter how many times I read through this book of the Bible, I am always amazed at how much Job had to suffer, what bad advice his friends gave him, and how low he sunk, even bursting forth in anger against God. In the deepest darkest pit, when he was burning up in anger toward the Lord, the Lord caused the light of the resurrection to shine brightly. He was able to confess. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-I and not another." If the Lord was able to flip the heart of Job from being down in the dumps and angry against his God, he can also flip your heart and mine to joyfully confess our resurrection faith even in the lowest moments of life. Even when we face death we can join the prisoners in saying, "Viva Christo Rey!" "Long live Christ the King." Amen.