1 John 5:5 5Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

For the first time in my ministry I had a whole new insight. We always note the Apostle Paul as the most prolific writer of the New Testament. After all, Paul is responsible for surely 12 of the Epistles and perhaps 13 if you consider that he wrote the book of Hebrews. When you add up the pages, Paul is responsible for 97 pages and if you add the book of Hebrews, then 113 pages of the New Testament.

But as I was reading First John it dawned on me that John is responsible for the Gospel of John, the three Epistles of John and the Book of Revelation! Although John’s writings only amount to 67 pages, still it is important to grasp that John’s books are exceedingly important that we might grasp the Christian faith. For instance, John’s Gospel gives us information and views not found most of the time in the other Gospels. Or John’s Epistles are more geared to sanctification rather than justification, and I view that as a nod to the fact that Paul laid out the truth of justification so well that John felt no need to add but wanted to help us grasp the next aspect of faith. Then there is John’s Revelation. It is the only prophetic book of the New Testament and what a joy and wonder that book is to read. Clearly the writings of John are important.

Of course, if you have ever attended my Bible classes the first thing you would know about what I just said is that it is only an academic, really only a mere observation of things that I don’t think count all that much! I am talking about the authors, the men who wrote the Bible. What, you don’t think that Paul writing this many pages and John this many and others that many is important? The answer is, “That’s right, it is not important what man wrote what!” It is not important for a reason.

The reason is simple. The New Testament of God (as well as the Old Testament) is God’s Word. It doesn’t matter who God used to be his secretary, the end result is that the secretary wrote and recorded exactly and only what God wanted him to say. That is the doctrine of “verbal inspiration.” That God breathed into the writers of the Bible his very words and thoughts that we might have an understanding and grasp of God’s plan and gift of eternal life and salvation. That’s why, even though you have 66 books of the Bible and some 40 different authors, they all say the same thing and agree on what is being taught. Yes, the individual personalities of the authors may even come out in this book or that, but nevertheless, what they wrote and said is God’s Word, God’s truth and God’s plan of salvation.

That doesn’t mean that man today, can’t take what God has given and twist and contort it so that we lose its meaning. Take those churches today that deny that Jesus was an atoning sacrifice for sin or that Jesus rose from the dead to be proclaimed Lord of lord’s and King of kings. Teaching like that is absolutely a twisting and contorting of what is actually said. I do not understand why people would belong to such a church, but they do. And the members accept this twisting as if it were fact. Trust me, if a church is teaching these falsehoods about Jesus that is not the only problem in their teaching.

Often, the false teaching can be done because so many today focus on the men who wrote the Scripture rather than on the Lord God who was absolutely behind that writing. If you don’t want to believe in God then just say so, but don’t pretend in the name of God that you are a believer when you deny his very Word!

I’ll tell you why that is on my mind. Because on Easter afternoon, I read an article that had a headline that said something like: “The Problem with the Christian Church is the church itself.” I thought that would be an interesting read. But it wasn’t long before it was clear the author neither believed in the Bible nor in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. That article in the name of God was espousing everything but believing in God, including the line that Christianity is nothing more that the teachings of white supremacy. Such is the state of the world in which we live. A world, as the Lord Jesus warned us that would hate what He is and despise those who follow him. I would submit that in the not too far future many of us might just have to make that hard decision to either follow Jesus and get hit with that hatred or abandon Jesus and live at peace in the world.

That’s where our text for today is very comforting and reassuring. John is writing about being Christian and what it means for us in the world. The words John is given truly do fit what is going on today. Our theme will be: **SURVIVING THE WORLD.**

Here is how our Lord starts out in his encouragement. He says, **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the God who has given birth also loves one who has been born of him. This is how we know that we love the children of God; when we love God and keep his commandments. In fact, this is love for God; that we keep his commands.** Just sit back and contemplate these words.

As you think on these words one thing clearly stands out. The idea, the reality that we are to love. We are to love God and we are to love the children of God. I don’t know why the world thinks that is such a horror. And if you want to grasp just what kind of love is being spoken of here, well then just look at the history of God. God loved and created the world. Even when his creation was ruined by sin by the first man and woman, God still continued to love. God promised a Savior. And throughout the whole history of the world you can see God working among people to bring about his promises and hopes, even though the people time and time again turned their backs on him. And then finally, God sent his Son Jesus into the world.

Jesus so loved us, that he gave his life for us. Let that example of love sink in. Even the people Jesus was born among, rejected and spurned him. Even when Jesus did nothing but good and wonders among these people they decided to put him to death. I am going to guess that had the world understood that Jesus on the cross was the plan of God to pay for the sins of the world, the world would have tried something different. But that’s what happened. God’s Son gave his perfect life to atone for our sins. God Son showed the ultimate love by suffering our damnation and hell just so we could have the promise of eternal life and salvation. And then so we would know this gift of God in Jesus, Jesus rose from the dead, exactly as God had promised.

Now what does God demand of us? Our text tells us. First love God. Well, that’s how I put it but in reality we need to grasp that we love God because he first loved us. This is where a knowledge of this whole book we are looking at comes in. Here is what 1 John says: **“Let us love one another because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God…This is how God’s love was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”** This book goes on and on in that way. We are being encouraged in love, true love, because of the love of God for us.

Of course, where the world gets all hung up is with the idea of obeying God’s commands. We are encouraged to keep his commands, but really, the command is that we believe and trust in the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Savior from sin. That does mean we have to acknowledge what sin is and then we can grasp and understand that with faith in Jesus our sins are and have been forgiven. As we grasp onto the wonder of Jesus, God’s love moves us, changes us, and leads us to rely on Jesus and the wonders of God.

You realize that I just told what the world’s problem is? Part of believing in Jesus is to grasp and understand the nature of sin. That all of us, by nature, are enemies of God, dead in trespass, blind to the light, and inclined to evil. God has changed our very beings, made us new creatures, His children, created to do good works in him. That’s what the gift of faith in Jesus does. But the world rejects that gift. The world would rather chase sin and revel in sin. The earlier words of this book help us to grasp this.

1 John also says: **“God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him but still walk in darkness, we are lying and do not put the truth into practice…If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us…If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us….Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything of the world—the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, boasting about material possessions—is not from the Father but from the world.**

The Holy Spirit understands how the world will be. That’s why our text tells us: **“And his commands are not burdensome, because everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”** And there it is, this wonderfully simple and beautiful proclamation of God. The world has been overcome. The trials, tribulations, diseases, struggles, persecutions, hatreds and disasters of this world are overcome. One of the books I read in preparation to write this sermon said this: *“Though we may suffer in the world now, we shall leave it all behind when we join the victory parade on Resurrection Day!”* There is the marvel of it. We realize that everything and anything in this world is temporary, but a moment in the vastness of eternity. Because of the hope of Jesus, because He promises eternal life and salvation, because He has given this eternal life and salvation, this life and world is entirely bearable.

Here is what we are reminded of in other portions of the Bible. Colossians 3:1-4 **“Therefore, because you were raised with Christ, seek first the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”** Romans 8:18 **“For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed in us.”** 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 **“Therefore we are not discouraged. But even if our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. Yes, our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond any comparison. We are not focusing on what is seen, but on what is not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”** 1 Peter 1:6-7 **“Because of this you rejoice very much, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various kinds of trials so that the proven character of your faith—which is more valuable than gold, which passes away even though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.** And finally, how about 1 Peter 4:12-13 **“Dear Friends, do not be surprised by the fiery trial that is happening among you to test you, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead rejoice whenever you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”**

I love these passages. They tells us that the struggles of this sin laden world are the way it is but that God has given and prepared a better thing for us in Jesus. That is truly the point of verse 5, **“Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”** Your faith has eternal consequences. Your life has eternal consequences. In Jesus, the consequence is forgiveness of sin, eternal life and salvation. In Jesus there is the hope, the promise, the absolute sureness of the eternal gift of heaven because Jesus has won the ultimate victory.

I don’t know, I contemplate this wonderful, life giving, peace promoting, love filled message of Jesus and I am puzzled at why the world hates it so much. Maybe that’s just because God has called me to be his child, and that’s why I don’t see the problem with Jesus. I hope and pray it is truly the same with you too. That you don’t grasp why the world so hates this gracious and loving Savior of ours. In Jesus we survive the world. Amen.