

## "We Have Conquered The World! " 1 John 5:4-10 Quasimodo Geniti

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In August of 2012, Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, a 40-year old nurse from Austria, became the first woman to reach the world's 14 highest peaks without the use of supplemental oxygen. She clinched the record when she conquered the notoriously treacherous mountain known as K2. This Himalayan giant, the second highest mountain in the world, claims one out of every four climbers that sets foot on her. It was a mountain that Kaltenbrunner had tried to climb six times before. How did she eventually conquer it? With much perseverance. For example, there was a stretch that took her six hours to climb 180 meters. Can you imagine that? Six hours to crawl just half a block!

Even if you're not into mountain climbing, you must be somewhat envious of Kaltenbrunner. Wouldn't it be great to have accomplished what she did? She has stood on the 14 highest points in the world and did it by her own effort, not by flying to these peaks in a helicopter. Today's sermon text teaches us that even the youngest and the frailest among us has accomplished something even greater. We have conquered the world! How? And now what? Let's answer those questions.

Last Sunday we celebrated Jesus' victory over death when he rose on Easter morning. What's great about Easter is that Jesus' victory is our victory. Because Jesus lives, we know that we too will come back to life from the dead. That's great, it really is, but it's still in the future and so we might not appreciate this blessing a whole lot right now - like the five-year whose father promises to buy him a car...when he turns sixteen. What good is that promise to the child in the meanwhile?

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If that's what we think about Jesus' Easter promise, we'll want to pay close attention to the words of our text. The Apostle John writes: "for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:4, 5).

John says that one blessing we enjoy right now as believers in Jesus is having overcome or conquered the world. That doesn't mean that we'll look like conquerors. Take the Apostle Paul for example. In our First Lesson today he stood on trial before the rulers Festus and Agrippa. They had come into the court with much pomp and ceremony and were dressed in clothes that only the rich could afford. They lounged in comfortable chairs while Paul stood before them in chains, probably dressed in clothes that could have used laundering if not mending. Yet Paul wasn't envious of those rulers' position. He didn't whine and complain about his situation. He just took the opportunity to speak boldly about Jesus as he had done with the previous ruler, Felix. When speaking with Felix, Paul had explained about the coming judgment. This scared the Roman ruler, while Paul spoke about it as if he was describing a coming reunion with an old friend (Acts 24).

This is what it means to conquer the world: you enjoy a genuine peace and calm even though your situation doesn't look all that great. I've been doing a lot of counselling with some people who are really feeling down on life. The one person has repeatedly told me that they don't want to bring a new child into this world, because it's too overcome by sin. As I counsel them, I find myself repeatedly thinking, "If I wasn't a Christian, if I didn't have the hope of eternal life in a new world, I don't know how I could stand living in the rotten

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world we have right now. I would be burdened with so many worries and concerns."

But this is John's point in our text. We who have faith in Jesus have overcome the world. We have peace even when we read headlines about senseless violence. It's not that we don't care, we just know that one day Jesus will come to free us from all this. Likewise, when your doctor announces that you have some dreaded disease, you can respond as did the hymn writer, Christian Gellert, who when told he only had an hour to live exclaimed: "Praise God. Only an hour!"

Faith in Jesus also helps us overcome the world in our attitude about material wealth. No, this is not a replay of that sermon on the 9th and 10th Commandments when we studied God's commanded to stop coveting and instead to be content. John's point helps us realize how blessed we are when we find contentment in God's Word and the material wealth that God has given to us. Life really does become more enjoyable when you're not expending energy on worrying or complaining about what God hasn't given to you. Through faith in Jesus God has given you an attitude that Buddhist monks desperately seek through meditation: release from the cares of this world.

But how can we really be certain that we have conquered and don't have to worry about our needs now or in the hereafter? Listen again to what John wrote in our text: "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 6 This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood" (1 John 5:5, 6a). We can be certain of our victory over the world because the Jesus in whom we put our trust came not only by water but by water and blood (1

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John 5:6). Huh? Yeah, that's what Bible students have been saying for centuries about this difficult passage. John seems to be talking about Jesus' baptism (water) and his death (blood). His point being that from the beginning of his ministry to the very end, Jesus did everything necessary to win our salvation. If John had been a hockey fan, he would have said: "We are victorious because Jesus dominated the game from the time the puck was dropped in the first period until the buzzer sounded at the end of the third period."

So now what? Are we to just mind our own business and chill until Jesus comes again? Not exactly. John also wrote: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome" (1 John 5:1-3).

Those who believe in Jesus do so because God himself has given birth to them when he gave them faith. And this faith is active. It shows itself in love for others – especially in love for fellow believers. In fact if we don't love each other, it means that we really don't have true faith in God. But here's the astounding thing about God-given faith: it gives us such an attitude that we don't think of God's commands as burdensome.

Really? Does your heart leap for joy when your spouse hands you a "honey-do" list? Do you give your mom a hug when she asks you to clean your room? No? Then does this mean that you're not a true believer? It means that you're still living in this rotten world where your selfish sinful nature is still active.

This is why it's worth remembering your baptism every morning. In baptism the power of our sinful nature over us was

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broken. It still issues commands, but we don't need to listen to those commands any more than a hockey player will follow orders from a former coach who is now an opponent. We now instead wear our Savior's uniform, which not only covers our sins but empowers us to love one another. And since this is what leads to lasting peace and happiness, obeying Jesus' commands is about as burdensome as following the directions on a recipe for a chocolate cake!

What Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner accomplished is impressive: 14 of the world's highest peaks – conquered! But what's it all for? Her ascents haven't helped me a bit. I still struggle just to get out of bed in the mornings. It's not like Kaltenbrunner's stamina and energy has been transferred to me. On the other hand, Jesus' slow ascent of a small hill called Golgotha on Good Friday didn't look impressive but when he made it to the top, his cross stood as a gigantic exclamation mark affirming his love for you and me. And then three days later Jesus rose from the dead. He conquered sin. He conquered death. And because of that you have conquered the world and all its cares and concerns. Amen.