**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**

**Watertown, WI**

**“I Have Overcome the World”**

Pastor Aaron Reseburg

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*John 26:23-33*

Many people in the world today think that Christianity is boring. Part of the problem is that most people have a flawed understanding of what Christianity actually is. They think that Christianity is all about being a good person, or at least about being the best person that you can possibly be.

Many people view Christianity as a religion that is trying to limit their freedom, trying to limit their fun. If something isn’t fun, then it must be boring.

Now, there is certainly a part of Christianity that involves following rules, but Christianity at its heart is not primarily a religion of the Law, rather, it is a religion of the Gospel. Christians are called to put their trust in Christ and follow Him wherever He leads them.

Most of the time, Jesus does not lead us into glitz and glamor and doing what the would have us do, and He certainly doesn’t give us the instant gratification that the world promises us. Being a follower of Jesus can make your life dangerous. Being a follower of Christ requires you to put your whole trust in Jesus.

Sounds simple enough, but that is a hard thing to do. Even the disciples struggled to trust Jesus and they could see, hear, and touch Him. We find the disciples in the upper room on Maundy Thursday in our text for today. Jesus has done quite a bit of teaching, and the disciples seem to be a bit confused.

Much of what Jesus has taught the disciples the last three years was hard for them to understand; it was hard for anyone to understand. People disagree as to why Jesus teaches in parables so often and why it seems to be so hard for people understand what He means. It isn’t until after the resurrection that Jesus explains everything to His disciples.

Some people say that Jesus teaches in parables so that the people wouldn’t understand Him. I think that Jesus teaches in parables because what He is teaching them something so deep, there was no other way to do it. The people, even the disciples, did not yet understand the key to what He was teaching. They knew bits and pieces, but they didn’t know what we know. They didn’t fully understand the future death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For the moment, Jesus does want His disciples to understand something, so He speaks plainly without a parable or illustration. Jesus needs the disciples to understand something very important. He needs them to understand that it’s going to be okay. This is the last thing that Jesus teaches the disciples before He dies. After this, He will pray and then they will go to the garden. In the garden, the disciples will be shaken to their core. They will abandon Jesus when the soldiers come to take Him. Jesus needs them to know that it’s going to be okay.

The disciples needed to trust Jesus. They needed to trust Jesus after His crucifixion, and they would need to trust Jesus the rest of their lives. The disciples would be sent out all throughout the known world. They would risk their lives over and over for the sake of the Gospel. They would watch as one by one all their friends died for their faith. They would know the real meaning of tribulation, and they would know what fear is. Their lives would be far from boring. They needed to know that it was all going to be okay.

That is one of the biggest conundrums of Christianity, isn’t it? Jesus promises us that everything is going to be okay. He promises us that He has overcome the world and encourages us to be courageous. But, every day, people die. Good people die, babies in wombs die, the poor and vulnerable are exploited. Every day, it seems like the bad guy wins and the good guy loses.

I said before that many people think of Christianity as boring; they view going to church as a waste of time. If Christianity were just about following rules and being a good person, that *would* be boring. But that is not what Christianity is and anyone who has ever tried sincerely to be a Christian knows that.

It takes courage to be a Christian. Our country and our world grow more and more hostile to Christianity every day. Being a Christian is a counter-cultural thing today. It takes courage to follow Christ; it takes courage to put your faith in and trust in Christ, especially when things are hard.

Of course, the only time you can show true courage is when times are hard, when there is something at stake. It’s hard to trust that Christ is truly going to care for you when money is low, when you are surrounded by unbelievers, when you are getting sick, when you are standing face to face with death. When the world and even your own sinful nature is telling you to do one thing but you know it’s wrong, it takes courage to trust Christ.

In this world, you will have trouble and tribulation. People you love will die, people will lie to you and hurt you. In this world, you might get sick, your life might disappoint you. In this world, following Christ might make things awkward around your friends, you might not have as much free time, you might not have as much money as you would have had otherwise. In this world, life may not be easy.

But take heart! Have courage! Trust in Christ! He knows what it’s like to suffer, to be lonely, to grieve. Jesus knows what it’s like to face pressure to compromise or give up. Turn to Him and trust Him and His words, rely on His strength. His strength is all that you need. His strength overcame sin, death, and the devil. His strength has overcome the world and all of its trials and temptations.

Jesus has overcome this world, and if you trust in Him, He will bring you through this world to the world to come. Put your faith in Christ, and He will bring you to a new world without pain and suffering, without trial and tribulation. There, He will give you life eternal, life everlasting.

So, if your life is easy or difficult, turn to Jesus. Don’t look for peace in money, family, friends, or anything else in this world. Look to Jesus because, in Him, you will find true and everlasting peace. You will find the peace that surpasses all understanding. You will find peace that is able to overcome all the trials and all the tribulations of this world. Turn to Jesus and take heart. Be courageous! In this world you will have tribulation, but He has overcome it all.

In the name of Jesus, amen.