

"This is the Victory!"

6th Sunday of Easter, Year B

I John 5:1-6

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

I John 5:1-6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

Prayer.

Late Friday evening,

I completed the Facebook quiz: "How well do you know rock music?"

I'm pleased to report that I've been identified as a "Natural Rock Wizz."

Isn't that special?

Something new to add to my resume.

I know the world of rock and roll music a lot better than the world of classical music.

My loss.

Though I often have classical music quietly playing throughout my day,

It would be hard for me to identify more than three or four pieces or masters.

I can identify Queen from Aerosmith and Neil Young from Clapton

But I can't tell the difference between Brahms and Beethoven, Chopin and Wagner.

What I have noticed about classical music, however,

Is that many pieces in a symphony

Have a common movement

Repeated many times by different sections.

The strings may introduce a theme

Only to be picked up at a later time by the woodwinds.

This is the method and pattern of First John.

Over the past five Sundays, we have been listening

To various sections playing their part of the common theme.

John's common theme is love;

Love of God and love of neighbors;

"This is the Victory!"

6th Sunday of Easter, Year B

I John 5:1-6

© The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

The loving sacrifice of God's own Son on the cross
 Is the same love that we should return to God,
 Is the same love that we should extend to our neighbors.
 Love comes from living in God
 And having God live, or abide, in us.
 While continuing the common theme of love,
 Today's passage is picked up by two different sections of the orchestra.
 One section is known as obedience and the other is faith;
 Obedience to God's commandments, and,
 Our belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Let us first speak of Obedience.

The author of First John is writing to reinforce the message from our Gospel today.

"If you keep my commandment, you will abide in my love." (John 15:10a)

Let's face it,

None of us like being told what to do or how to do it.

Freedom of choice is as American as baseball, apple pie, and Chevrolet.

As children of an Abrahamic faith,

We are even quick to make the argument that

Just as God gave Adam free choice,

So too, is free choice extended to each of us.

Adam's choices worked out well, don't you think?

I'm certain Eve and Cain would have no regrets for the choices they made.

I don't think so.

So to balance the unintended consequences of free choice

God gave us laws;

Commandments that serve as necessary guides

For faithful living together under God's tent.

Just as a loving parent must establish boundaries with their children

To grow in to safe, healthy adults,

So too, does God give us commandments

That we might grow in our love of one another

And in our love of God.

Commandments are not meant to punish.

God's laws are not punitive.

They are meant to preserve peaceful living in community.

They are meant to ensure justice is always being served.

They are meant to protect and provide

For even the weakest members of the community.

A dangerous historical precedence is

when humans attempt to add to God's commandments

"This is the Victory!"

6th Sunday of Easter, Year B

I John 5:1-6

© The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

and stake the claim that these human additions are God's additions.

They aren't.

They may have good intentions,

But let us be clear,

They are not God's laws.

Ten laws suddenly blossom to 613.

Added to that are the Talmudic and rabbinic laws.

To the ten that God gave Moses,

I can only count three more that Jesus added:

Baptism – Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and teach them all that I have taught you;

Communion - Eat and drink in remembrance of me;

And Love the Lord your God

With all your heart, mind, soul, and strength,

And love your neighbor as yourself.

It we stop our ego-filled tendency to protest

We can see the elegant Divine design;

The balance of free choice and God's holy laws.

"If you keep my commandment, you will abide in my love." (John 15:10a)

Obedience begins with keeping God's commandments.

Obedience is all about abiding in God's love

And having his love dwell in us.

Secondly, let us speak of faith.

God's "commandments are not burdensome," we hear from First John.

"For whatever is born of God conquers the world.

And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.

Who is it that conquers the world," John asks rhetorically,

"but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Jesus comes by water;

Which is to say he is baptized

And alighted on by the Holy Spirit

That descended as a dove from heaven,

With the heavenly voice from the cloud speaking,

"This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Jesus also comes by blood; the author of First John also reminds us.

Which is to say he is born of the flesh,

Fully human,

Whose body was broken, bloodied, and murdered on the cross.

Our belief, our faith,

That Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of man

Is the same movement of love,

Just played by a different section of the orchestra.

"This is the Victory!"

6th Sunday of Easter, Year B

I John 5:1-6

© The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

Faith is different from first hand knowledge.
 Not one of us are eye witnesses to his passion, death, and resurrection.
 We only have evidence collected from the scene of these events
 and the testimony of hundreds, if not thousands of people,
 who witnessed these events first hand.
 He is risen! We heard from the women at the tomb.
 He is risen! We heard from the apostles behind locked doors.
 He is risen! We heard from Thomas after he touched his hands, his side, his feet.
 He is risen! We heard from the apostles on the road to Emmaus.
 He is risen! We heard from Peter, John and the others who met him on Galilee's far shore.

This, then, is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.
 It isn't our human might that conquers the world
 For every dominate, militaristic civilization eventually fails.
 The only thing that endures forever and wins us victory is when
 The love of God can be spread to all the world
 By the testimony of our faith,
 And by the example we set
 By living according to the laws given to us by God.
 Faith isn't certainty;
 But it is testimony
 and it is living according to God's law.

Dearly beloved,
 Live according to God's commandments.
 Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born a man,
 Who on our behalf,
 Suffered,
 Died,
 Rose from the dead,
 And ascended unto heaven
 To be seated at the right hand of the Father.
 When we behave
 And when we believe
 We are given the victory
 That conquers the world.
 May it be so.
 Amen.