

“More Than What We See” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter 6 May 25, 2025

- I. **John 16:33** – “³³I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”
- II. **Trouble, hardship, and pain** always seem to be lurking around the corner.
 - a. As I look over the daily news in our world, I’m amazed by the number of tragic events that take place.
 - i. Just last week, storms went through the Midwest, and from what my daughter told me, a tornado started right beside Concordia Seminary.
 1. 5 people died and over 5000 homes were damaged or destroyed... in St. Louis alone.
 2. When I lived there, I was always concerned about tornados, but I was spared that tribulation.
 - b. Unfortunately, many people see the hardship and tribulation of life based on a “just” worldview.
 - i. I read an article from a Dr. Jamie Aten, a Christian who survived cancer...but also researches how different people respond to trauma.
 - ii. He said that we tend to believe that if we are good, good things will happen... so it’s challenging to figure why bad things happen.
 - iii. He went to the doctor to get some tests because he had shooting pains in his leg and soon found out he had a cancerous tumor in his pelvis.
 1. He kept thinking to himself, “Aren’t I a good person? Why is this terrible thing happening to me?”
 2. You see, his idea of a just worldview made him wonder why he had to go through this trial... bad things should happen to bad people!
 - iv. On the other hand, he told a story about friends helping the survivors of Hurricane Sandy.
 1. One man had his roof completely blown off in the hurricane... and do you know what he said to the relief team?
 - a. With a sense of optimism he said, “Sometimes you have to lose the roof to see the stars.”
 - b. He wasn’t focused on the loss, but something more...
 - v. Dr. Aten then explained, “My colleagues and I have interviewed and surveyed disaster survivors about their views of God in the wake of catastrophe. We have found that you can have two people who go through almost identical losses, with one believing God saved them, while the other believes God is punishing them. But... I encourage you: Even in the worst moments, look for the stars.”¹

- c. Oftentimes, within the troubles, hardships, and pain is the hand of God working in ways to support and bless us... or bless others around us.
 - i. We cannot count on much of anything when it comes to the world.
 - 1. The moment we think things are going well, another tragedy strikes... a health condition... a natural disaster... the outside forces of evil come knocking on our door.
 - ii. In all this uncertainty, we can look beyond the brokenness... with faith and trust in Jesus... who wins the battle over sin... over death... and over the devil.
 - 1. It's so encouraging to recognize the truth in Jesus' words that even though we will face tribulation from a broken world... He has overcome the world.
 - 2. In fact, when we know that Jesus is with us through it all, we realize that this whole mess of a world is more than what we see... it will ultimately be redeemed and restored by Christ.

III. **Jesus says that trials will not win the day.**

- a. The disciples begin to understand that Jesus will depart from them in body, but the Holy Spirit will guide them... and soon their requests and needs will go through their Savior.
 - i. Jesus helps them see that their plans and designs will be thrown upside down, and yet, they can still look beyond all that to remember that Jesus has overcome the world.
 - ii. He even keeps their minds in the right place by instructing them to pray to the Father through Him – in other words, Jesus is the access to our needs being met.
 - iii. Finally, Jesus tells them that they will be scattered to the wind when He faces His trial and execution... regardless of how strong and faithful they feel at this point.
 - iv. However, He concludes that they can be at peace, because whatever they are about to see, they can be of good courage or take heart, He has overcome... He has conquered the world.
 - v. No matter how bad things look, Jesus wins.

IV. **The challenge for us Christians is to trust that the trials do not win.**

- a. A big part of having peace and being of good courage comes from trusting that Jesus promises there is more.
 - i. Revelation 21 gives us a glimpse of the glory to come... that heaven is beyond our imagination with beauty, joy, and peace... and as our names are written in the Book of Life (v 27) we experience paradise.
 - ii. It makes me think about the story of Stephen, who was stoned to death for preaching the truth about Christ and what he saw...
 - 1. "But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of

Man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55-56) and then the people heard that and became enraged and stoned him until he died.

2. The suffering Stephen experienced was a terrible injustice that he didn't deserve, yet he became the first martyr whose death gives us courage to talk about Jesus to this very day.
- iii. In our own unjust suffering.... In the middle of our trauma... our anxiety... our guilt... our sickness... or our poverty... we trust in the words of Jesus: I have conquered... I have overcome the world.
- b. In yesterday's Iron Man gathering, someone mentioned the ways that God worked through trials even when life got messy.
 - i. Sometimes we are forced into a change that seems bad, but then God provides exactly what we need through that change.
 - ii. On Sundays we've been praying for Brett, Joann Shulz's grandson, who totaled his car – which seemed awful – but after finding no injuries, doctors found he had the early stages of cancer that might have gone unchecked for months.
 - iii. Other times a loss of something turns into a gain that far exceeds what we can imagine.
- c. Romans 8:28 tells us, “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.”
 - i. This does not always mean that we will be totally happy and without trials, but we have peace knowing that our connection to Christ, along with the growth of God's kingdom is always going to be a net positive.

V. **With Christ the Victor in our lives, we have more than what we see.**

- a. I've said this before, but regardless of what the future holds, I am a child of God... claimed in the waters of baptism and faith to an eternal relationship with Jesus my Savior.
 - i. Whether I suffer health problems, loss, or any other tribulation in this world, I am absolutely convinced that Jesus wins... and so do I.
- b. The Bible says that through baptism we are connected to both the death of Jesus and His resurrection (Romans 6:3-5) – and we will experience the resurrection to life and glory after this world and its brokenness are gone.
- c. Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead are the greatest events in history because God overcame sin and its ability to separate us from Him... He conquered death and power of the grave... and He crushed the devil so he can never claim us as his own.
 - i. As we believe that God did these things for us in Jesus Christ, He does the most amazing thing... He hands the victory over to us.
 - ii. By grace through faith, we know the battle is won, but even more than that, we know it's our victory because He loves us that much.
- d. So remember, whenever we feel down and out because of the tribulation of our world, Jesus has opened the doors of heaven for us.

- i. Yes, sometimes the roof gets blown off... but through it all, God allows us to see the glory of His salvation – the victory in Jesus. Amen.

¹ Source: Dr. Jamie Aten, "Spiritual Advice for surviving cancer and other disasters," *The Washington Post* (8-9-16)