

Notes on Ephesians 6 : 10 – 20, John 16 : 25 – 33
'Believe the battle is won' 7th December 2025

This year we celebrated the 80th anniversary of both the Victory in Europe and Victory in Asia. We have all seen those iconic celebratory pictures of faces filled with joy, peace and hope. All they want to do is smile, smile, smile and I hope you know how to smile too; go on do it now. But do I believe you? Last week I had to cram in a lot as we thought about the complicated nature of the threefold enemy we face and you will be very glad to know that today the sermon is a lot simpler. Today all that we are doing is celebrating that Jesus has won the victory and so can you.

Advent is a time of year when it's pyromaniac's dream and especially so at our home when we have lots of candles on the dinner table and the oft quoted phrase is, leave them alone!! We light candles to celebrate the coming of light, the triumph of light, the unquenchability of light, the joy of light, the life of light and the peace of light. Advent celebrates Jesus' triumph, that he is King, that God keeps his promises and that Ephesians 1 verses 3 – 14 is true. But and this is an important but, we have to keep in mind that Advent also recognises the paradox of the Christian life and the very strange victorious life we're called to live. Advent says our victorious life is not a bed of roses life where all is smooth sailing, but one filled with and shaped by suffering. This is how Jesus describes the victorious life in John 16 verse 33, this is what we see in Paul's ministry as he describes it in 2 Corinthians 11 verses 24 – 31 and therefore why should we imagine that it will be any different for us.

In John's Gospel we see a story of triumph over the enemy from Chapter 1 verse 5 all the way to chapter 19 verse 30. In chapters 20 and 21 John describes what this victory looks like: Jesus is alive, Jesus breathes on them the Holy Spirit and this is sometimes called 'John's Pentecost', Thomas confesses 'My Lord and my God', there is the incredible catch of 153 fish which speaks of the Gospel being spoken to all nations, there is Peter's call being renewed and there is the promise of his martyrdom. All of these can be summarised in the wonderful phrase 'Christus Victor', or in other words – Jesus **WINS**.

Let me ask you a question, 'Are you persuaded that Jesus wins?' We have three good reasons for believing so:

Firstly – Jesus says so. This is his own understanding of his ministry as described in Luke 4 verse 13 where he says he has defeated satan; in Mark 3 verse 27, he says he has bound the strongman; in Luke 10 verse 18, Jesus saw satan fall because he'd sent the disciples out to preach and demonstrate the Kingdom and finally, it is the fate of Devil as described in Revelation 20 verse 10.

Secondly – in Luke 22 verse 42 Jesus is described as the obedient Servant from Isaiah 53 verses 10 – 12 and the victorious Son of Man in Daniel 7. These descriptions speak of how Jesus has fulfilled God's plans and purposes through the strange obedience of his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead.

Thirdly – in John's description of the death of Jesus in chapter 19 verse 30 he records that Jesus shouted, with a loud shout, '*Tetelestai*', which means '**IT IS FINISHED!!**' He has done all that the Father wished him to achieve.

When we speak of the victory of Jesus and the call for us to live victoriously this does not mean that the enemy will go quietly into night or just lie down and give up. Instead, we are to remember that it is implacable, malicious, a liar, a murderer and vicious to all who serve Jesus. We need to recognise that not all our ills will be healed because one day we will all die. Life is never smooth, instead this is a lie whispered by the enemy and one endorsed by our culture. On the other side of the equation, we need to remember that God is our tester, our purifier and our discipliner because in our stand against the world, the flesh and the devil we are imperfect and as our loving God, he tenderly corrects us. At our recent Teaching Team meeting we discussed what the theme next spring would be for those who preach when I am not and it was agreed that they would follow the theme of 'Handling life's issues' such as handling fear, anxiety, guilt, bitterness, depression, grief to name just a few – the list is 14 long. The reason I mention this is because, and thank you Don for your hard work in this, we need to recognise that our faith will be tested and our trust in God will go through times of purifying. This is why victory is rooted in the call to stand and to believe. We stand as those who believe the three reasons I gave above and when we do so we are comforted, helped, given light, given life, strengthened, given peace and given hope in and through the Spirit who is at work in us. In fact, this is similar to all that we receive when we believe what Paul has written in chapter 1 verses 3 – 14. We are to be as victorious as Paul was when he was in trouble in Lystra in Acts 14 verses 19 and 20; when he was in jail in Philippi in Acts 16; when he was caught in that storm in Acts 27 verses 24 and 25. This is what true victorious living looks like and it is this sort of victorious living which inspires me to seek to live the same.

Spiritual Warfare is rooted in our standing and in our standing together. The focus of Ephesians is on our identity as those who are One (chapter 2 verses 13 – 20), who are God's One Temple (chapter 2 verses 21 and 22) and the One Body of Christ (chapter 4 verses 1 – 6) so that we may stand and fight as One against the enemy. It is the enemy who sows seeds of disunity and we are to say **NO** to all his wiles and schemes for the Gospel which we hold, and which holds us, is a Gospel of reconciliation, Shalom and peace. This is the heart of all that I have said and when we live in these three things, we will discover how we are to stand and why we are to stand.