

1 John 5:1-6

May 27, 2012 – PENTECOST

## Pentecost Victory of Faith

✠ **Known by Love (vv.1-3)**

✠ **Testified by Truth (vv.4-6)**

In the name of Jesus, who promised and sent the dear Holy Spirit, dear sanctified souls:

Many have forgotten why our nation celebrates this last weekend in May. Good reason for Memorial Day weekend: Do not forget our fallen heroes who secured and protected our nation's freedom from foes without and within. Without their sacrifice we could not worship in freedom here today.

In our dual citizenship as Christians we also want to remember how the **Victory of Faith** was passed down to us. We too have heroes of **Faith** who traced their trust and power back to Christ and His faithful fulfillment of a vital promise. On Pentecost, Jesus sent His Holy Spirit as He said He would.

You might compare Christ's disciples to a baseball team. When He gave them **Faith** it was like handing each of them a baseball glove. In His preaching and teaching Jesus gave them the Word which they caught in the glove of their hearts. But you can't play the game with just a glove and a ball. On Pentecost, God gave them the bat. And not just any bat; this one had the power to hit the ball out of the park – far beyond Jerusalem to a world of sinners who had to hear that we have a Savior from sin. With that powerful bat, the Holy Spirit also gave them the skill to hit home runs every time they stepped to the plate. God give us the glove, toss us the ball, and power our bats for **Pentecost Victory of Faith...**

✠ **Known by Love (vv.1-3)**

*“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.”*

The world and our sinful hearts always think God's commands feel like a burden. Even trying to love God seems so hard as it did for Martha when Jesus and His disciples came to visit. Remember how angry Martha was at her sister Mary sitting at Jesus' feet listening instead of helping? *“Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”* (Luke 10:40-42 NIV84)

Good News about the **Love** of God got around. On His way through Jericho Jesus passed under a sycamore-fig tree where a wealthy tax collector had climbed up for a view. *“Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today,”* Jesus said. Don't you love how Jesus invites Himself into your home and heart? None of us could know the **Love** of God or experience the **Pentecost Victory of Faith** unless Jesus came first and keeps coming on His own. When **Love** comes home to your house, faith receives Him and then shows **Love** for Him. Zacchaeus' heart was brimming over with **Love** for God when he stood up and said, *“Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”* Jesus said to him, *“Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* (Luke 19:1-10 NIV84)

**Love** gives without the law, like the widow with her two small coins. She may have had small children too, but she gave all she had, and Jesus said, far more than the rich who gave out of their plenty. You know what she gave first? She gave her heart to the Lord – in **Love** to God who loved her first.

So it was for the Twelve disciples when the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. The tongues of fire and the rushing, mighty wind showed He was present with His blessing. But the **Love** of the apostles was **Known** as they proclaimed Christ-crucified and risen throughout the world. All of them endured beatings and rejection. All but John endured death for cross of Christ and resurrection to glory that comes by faith.

And it wasn't just the disciples who were fired up by **Pentecost**. Everyone who heard and believed their message of God's love in Christ went to work like Dorcas. She showed how **Love** serves all. Dorcas "*was always doing good and helping the poor....[making] robes and other clothing*" (Acts 9:36,39 NIV84) for everyone in need. **Pentecost** still powers our hearts and hands to give in **Love**.

Truly God loved us first. "*Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows....*" (Isaiah 53:4 NIV84) **Pentecost** gives us clarity in Christ. That's real **Love** when someone knows you and still loves you. In fact, Jesus knows us by experience. Every tear we shed, He cries with us. Every heartache we suffer, is His heartache too. Every sigh of "Abba, Father," is His own loving prayer of intercession for sinners all. No one else can truly understand our soul's deep grief and pain (1 Corinthians 2:11), but Jesus has been there. He *knows by experience* and He cares. And Jesus our loving Lord and Savior has the power and loving determination to help. His own reputation (Name) depends on it.

Christians over the centuries gained a name-reputation for the way they loved one another. Killed by gladiators and thrown to the lions, they loved each other in Christ right up to the end. One Roman soldier who watched many Christians die in the arena said, "See how they loved!" Some even became Christians themselves, conquered by the **Pentecost Victory of Faith – Shown by Love**, and...

### **Testified by Truth (vv.4-6)**

It's never easy, yet "*everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.*"

The Holy Spirit was already testifying to the **Truth** in ancient times long before Jesus. He inspired His holy prophets to write the entire Old Testament and fill it with prophecies about the coming Christ. Israelite kings were commanded in the Law of Moses to have their own written copy of God's law and read it every year. Those who did were powered to stand with God's Spirit and testify the **Truth**.

Long after Pentecost in the Dark Ages the Gospel was nearly lost to the Church of Christ on earth. But God the Holy Spirit revealed His saving grace to a poor Augustinian monk named Martin Luther. Then He gave Luther the wisdom and strength to stand before emperors and church officials to give a clear testimony to the **Truth**. Until someone could show him from Scripture he was wrong, Luther said, "Here I stand....God help me!" He rightly divided the law and gospel in his preaching. Nor was Luther the first. A century earlier William Tyndale, "Morning Star of the Reformation," translated the Bible into English. His Roman Catholic enemies were so angry they burned his bones decades after his death.

"The world so entirely addicted to the pleasures of the moment is so alluring that we are tempted to let go of basic truths of the Bible in the interest of getting people to listen to any of it. We are tempted to make Christianity easy, painless, merely entertaining. For we fear that the call to the cross will put people off, offend them, send them running in the opposite direction." (Deutschlander, *Theology...Cross*)

One pastor tried many times to bring a straying sheep back to the fold. His member met him with friendliness, but always excuses and reasons for not coming to hear the Word and receive the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Finally in desperation the pastor blurted out, "Don't you realize that Jesus is the only Savior you've got?" That simple question pierced his soul and brought clarity in Christ. He came back and got reacquainted with the only Savior we have. May we all keep coming as we march from victory to victory in the **Pentecost Victory of Faith**. *Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love! Amen.*