

## 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 – Overcome the World and Its Power – Wednesday Prayer Meeting

Today our word is about the second enemy. The Holy Spirit has 2 ways of working. One way is signs, wonders, miracles and divine interventions where God gives us a breakthrough. The other way is when God does not change the circumstances but instead of that actually works within us to empower us to face up to those situations. That's the second way of the Holy Spirit. I thought that's how the early church overcame the challenges of the Roman Empire. They were killed, they were brutalised, they were put to the animals but they didn't succumb because they had the power of the Holy Spirit empowering them from inside. That's really where the whole thing moves.

Today I would like to begin with one testimony that proves our point. One of our own servers, the whole family contracted Covid and the others recovered but the husband became serious and complicated. For 12 days he was in intensive care on oxygen and a few days ago, early morning, he died. Everyone prayed, everyone expected a healing, everyone stormed heaven but experienced a death instead. At that moment, even I went through a great struggle on what to speak to this family, who full of faith had been praying and waiting on God. What do we tell them? What do you speak to them? So in fact I didn't even want to talk to them immediately. I wanted to wait a little before the Lord to receive a word that would help them. I wrote this message on Whatsapp about how we have come from the heart of God and we are returning to the heart of God and our life has been destined from heaven, our marriages are destined from heaven and we live beyond this world. I was trying to comfort the family and the wife writes back to me and says, "I am strong and I have chosen with the life that I have left to serve the Lord even more." I thought that was tremendous.

I saw that's the power of the early church. In the early church, children were thrown to the animals, people were persecuted and crucified but it didn't stop people from being faithful to the call God had on them, because the Holy Spirit was working inside of them. If that's happening among us that's the power. We really like the miracles, the signs, the wonders. We saw addiction broken, a healing of a person with a spinal problem. We worship God for that that, we praise God for that but we also have this grace of God's hand upon our lives that we can deal with the deepest crisis and still walk through it in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what we are looking for as we go forward.

So I told you we have 3 enemies: One is the flesh, and today we are dealing with the second enemy. The name of the second enemy is called the world. So let's try and understand what the world is. We have a generalized term called worldliness, but what's the world? What's its power? We will ask the gospel itself to explain it:

*John 3:16*

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..."*

God loves the world. When you look at the universe, we humans beings who live in the 21st century, we know more about the world and the universe than our ancestors knew. They knew one thousandth of what we know. If you go to the internet now, you can login to the Rover that is on Mars and you can watch what's happening on Mars itself. It's amazing what we can do in the 21st century, looking at the world. You can login to the camera on the space station and you can watch the earth revolve. You begin to realise the kind of world we are living in, the wonder, the magic of this whole thing. When you think about it, when you look out of the window you look at a world that's so still. But it's an illusion and we are not still.

We are hurtling through space, we are circling the sun and we are turning around its own axis and that's where we get our wind and momentum. We have this thing circling the sun, in 365 days we do a whole circle of the sun. The sun itself is doing a dance with the other stars and moving together in the galaxy of the Milky Way. When you look at the wonder of this whole thing, we have the words of scripture coming: God so loved the world.

In other words, He created it, He designed it out of great love. Then the universe, then the whole of nature, animals - each animal unique to itself, each plant, each tree. God loved the world, not only loved but He loves the world. How deeply? Loves the world enough to send His only Son. So don't let anyone tell you otherwise. We live in a world where sometimes people reject the world, despise the world but God loves the world. How much does He love? He sends His only Son.

*John 3:16 continued*

*...that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

In this text we have another revelation. There is a problem with this world and God sent His Son to fix that problem. I'm trying to word it in a way it can be clear in our minds. The problem in this world is everything that is born will die. Nothing lasts. It's the foundation of Buddhist understanding as well. Everything is temporary, everything perishes. But God in His love for us, sends His Son. Why? So that we don't end up dead but live forever. God loves the world but He doesn't want us to end up perishing that we don't exist anymore. He sends His Son that we can live forever.

*John 3:17*

*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

Listening to some Christians you think that God is waiting to destroy this whole lot. Most of the time it's very dissatisfied Christians who say that. They are waiting and saying, "When God comes He will let you have it!" Why is that? We also want to do what the other people are doing. We can do it because we are afraid that if we do those things we will perish. So we are containing ourselves, we are restraining ourselves, we are controlling ourselves and saying, "You wait until Jesus comes, He will let you have it!"

We can't do it if we do we will perish. So we are controlling ourselves and saying, "You wait until Jesus comes, He will let you have it!" But here it is said, the heart of God is He sent Jesus that the world we live in will live forever. Otherwise, this world, the natural systems will perish and will cease to exist. One of the main premises of Buddhism itself says, everything that's born will die. Therefore if you hold on, if you're attached, you're going to suffer pain because you're going to lose loved ones, you're going to lose what you possess and in the end you will lose your very life. Therefore, let go these attachments because it's going to only bring you pain.

But the Bible says, God so loved the world that He didn't want the people to perish but He wanted us to live forever. Therefore He has sent His only begotten Son. Therefore, God loves the world but there's another problem in the world. It is called worldliness. The problem is not with the world. The problem is with something called worldliness. Tonight I would like to offer you the definition of worldliness as given by St. John in his letters:

*1 John 2:15*

*Do not love the world or anything in the world...*

It's a contradiction. God so loved the world and then St. John is saying, do not love the world or anything in the world.

*1 John 2:15 continued*

*...If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Sometimes you have to scratch your head when you read the bible and you have to tear your hair. It says one thing in one place and the exact opposite in the other. Let me explain this text to you tonight. Do not love the world means don't limit your life to the things of this world. Don't limit your vision to the things of this world. If you limit yourself to the things of this world, you will perish with the world. It says don't get lost in the temporary things that are going to pass away. Don't make it the absolute of your life. If you do that your heart has been given to something other than the eternal God, your heart has been given to something that's going to end, that's going to die and it's going to destroy you as well. Jesus said it in a very uncomplicated way. He said, one man spent all his effort and time and he built this barn and he put all the stuff he had built into the barn. After he had filled the barn then he went to his armchair and he stretched and took his whiskey and soda and lit his Cuban cigar and stretched out and said, "I'm going to enjoy what I have accrued." Then he gets a heart attack and he dies. He says, you stupid man, tonight I will take your life! You have invested, you have focused your attention on things that will not last and it will destroy you.

That temporary reality which has become absolute for most people in the world is called the world. God loves the world but He is talking about worldliness. If you are in worldliness, in the end you are going to be disappointed. The films on The Godfather show this. In the second one, the main character Michael Corleone, he manipulates everything. He kills this one, kills the other one, gets this business running, bribes the other one, gets the other one done, gets everything worked out, he is in control of his life until suddenly a bullet meant for him kills his daughter before his eyes. His whole world falls apart because suddenly he discovers that all he built crumpled before his eyes.

This worldliness infects us because this guy has a colleague inside us -- the flesh. The flesh and the world work together.

*1 John 2:16*

*For everything in the world -- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and boasting of what he has and does...*

This is written 2000 years ago. Has anything changed in human nature? 2000 years!

*1 John 2:16*

*For everything in the world -- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and boasting of what he has and does -- comes not from the Father but from the world.*

The scripture is telling us, if you are holding on to temporary things, temporary positions, temporary honours, temporary glory, temporary love as the means of fulfilling your heart and your life, you're going

to be disappointed, you're going to be lost because with death everything will cease. The scripture gives it so beautifully:

*1 John 2:17*

*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

When God designed us, God designed us for eternity. He designed us to live forever. He designed us to have this relationship with Him in heaven forever and He sent us to this world like a training camp, like boarding school, like the army boot camp. We are being trained and transformed in this little time we have here, so that in this transformation we will be made ready for the life that He has for us for eternity. If you have that awareness you can deal with death. That's why I was so happy with the server in our group. Having two young children, unexpectedly losing her husband had the deep awareness of God and eternity enough not to be shaken or floored by that experience. We are called to live forever.

Look at verse 16 again:

*1 John 2:16*

*For everything in the world -- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, the boasting of what he has and does...*

I was just thinking, the power of the flesh, the world within us -- this is actually a life that is focused on our senses. The world and the flesh is a life focused on our senses. If our life is focused on our senses, a cat has better eyes than we have. They can see in the dark also so the cat is better. If it is hearing, a dog can hear much more than us. You blow the dog whistle and nobody can hear but the dog and they go crazy. That is because they can hear more than we can hear. They have better senses than we have. When the tsunami came, many of the animals knew it before we knew it because they have better senses. We human beings, if you live at the level of the senses, like these animals, we will end up without any awareness of death. No animal is aware of death. They are not even conscious of it because they are living only in the things of the senses. In the same way, when we are focused on the world, what will happen is, our awareness of death, of eternity disappears and we are focused on the things of this world. Becoming the chairman becomes #1, getting that contract becomes #1, beating the other and telling the others I'm better than you becomes #1, having this thing becomes #1. Little by little our world is limited to this world.

In studies they found this in Japan. Japan was the postwar miracle because from an economy that was zero at the end of the Second World War, Japan rebuilt their economy in no time and they were the wonder of the world. But they also began to see, stress, suicide, heart attacks, sicknesses, inundating the people. They asked the question, what is the problem? Then they began to realise it is because the things of this world had consumed their heart and mind. That can easily happen to any person.

Last week I spoke about King Herod who did this amazing thing. He killed the firstborn to try and destroy Jesus but he did something amazing. Four days before he dies he kills the heir to the throne. I think in his own mind he was convinced if he kills him he can continue to be the king. How much the things of this world consumed him!

Now, what is the world? In the biblical sense, the world is a collection of people who think only at the human level, a collection people whose ambitions, desires, purposes are of this world only. So here we have the flesh inside us and here we have the world outside us -- millions of people whose only vision in

life is of this world. Achieving this, achieving that, collecting this, collecting that, having this, having that. People who have everything, what do they do? Then they want something others don't have because the heart is restless. You want a painting -- Da Vinci's painting you want, Rembrandt you want. Why? Because nobody else has it and whom do you show it to? No one! I want to keep it in my house and look at it and say, "I bought this for 10 million dollars." Why? Because the ambition is only of this world. We can easily do it through our children. The ambition of our hearts, we push our children to become achievers in this world.

We have people who think only in the level of the world. We have institutions that think only at the level of the world. We have governments that operate only at the level of the world. We have problem solvers who solve only at the level of this world. Wherever we go, we talk to them, we meet them, we interact with them and soon we become a part of this world. Then we have become worldly. Then we think that people who are not worldly have something wrong with them. That becomes the next issue and they ask, "What's wrong with you? You're not thinking like us." Then we say, "Sorry sorry, I was misled by these Christians. I'll become a realist once again."

There's a beautiful story of a European traveller called Robert Knox. Robert Knox travelled in Asia and he travelled in Ceylon at that time. Robert Knox writes that he got the freedom from the King to walk across the country. So while he was walking across the country he met many people. He spoke about how peaceful our country was, how loving the people were. But he made some remarkable comments. He said every time he met people and he greeted them and they greeted him, everyone felt sorry for him and they had pity on him and said, "How sad!" Then he asked them interpreter why they were feeling like this. They explained it was because everyone chewed betel at that time - men and women - and everyone's mouth was discoloured and red or yellow or whatever it is. They felt sorry for Robert Knox because his teeth were white and they said something is wrong with him.

Today they are feeling sorry for the pure, for the virgin, for the one who has committed to the right principles. They feel sorry and say, "These people have been restrained. They have been constrained. They are being controlled by these Victorian age thoughts. They can't enjoy life." People who go to work learn immorality when they see it practiced by others. We are influenced by the world. Everyone is doing it so why not us? Once I was doing this programme for a company and each was sharing their experience and one guy personally came and spoke with me. He said, "I'm having a tough time in my life. I'm an alcoholic and I'm going through terrible addiction." I asked him when it started and he said, "I was raised a teetotaler, I never drank and I never smoked. Then I joined the forces and one of the initiation processes was that you had to get drunk when the training was over. Everyone had to do it." He said, "That day I drank and that's the day I discovered I had an alcoholic tendency. I had been having it all my life and I didn't know. The moment I drank that first drink I was lost." Who took him there? The world, the value systems around us, the people who talk to us, the language we used, the things we aspire to are influenced not by God but by the world.

Can we use a mirror tonight? Ask yourself before the Lord as you sit at His feet: Lord, where is my heart? Is it influenced by you and eternity or is it influenced by the world and the things of this world, pulling me down to a perishable end? Tonight I want to offer you the answer before I finish:

*John 1:9*

*The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*

Jesus the Son of God is revealing to us about the Father, he is revealing to us about a way to live on the earth, enjoying life but not attached to anything. He is revealing to us a life that is waiting to go beyond this world into eternity. He is the light of the world. He is revealing to us the true purpose of our existence. He is revealing he is the light. That is why he is called the light of these world. The true light has come.

You can't say that Jesus is the only light. There were others that came with kinds of lights. The philosophers came, the Greek philosophers came and they spoke about looking beyond the senses. People who reflected on the Greek philosophers said, "Yes, there is something more to life than just eating and drinking and partying." Then the Lord Buddha came and he revealed a deep truth. He gave a light into the world and he said, "Holding on to the things of these senses is only going to make you sad and unhappy and it's all going to finish with death." Light came.

But the Bible says the true light -- the complete light has come into the world:

*John 1:10*

*He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.*

If he came like Caesar, if he came like the Pharaoh, if he came like Herod, they would have recognized him. The world did not recognize him because he was caught up in the life of the Father. He was caught up in the eternal vision and the mission he had and the world could not understand his heart. It's like as today where the world cannot actually understand his heart.

*John 1:11*

*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

This is about the Jews. He came to the Jews who were studying the law but they couldn't see that he was the light because they were caught up in the things of this world.

Isn't it also true about us today? We have Christian philosophy, we have Christian theology, we have Christian ethics, we have Christian values, we have people who teach it but whose heart is focused on the things of this world. My promotion, my position, my honour, my glory. You can see that. If you look at the history of the church also you will see. People who poisoned somebody for a position, who fought for the things of this world without knowing it has entered religion itself and it can enter our own lives. When I sat before the Lord I was praying and repenting: Lord, I have to admit in my own life, the things of this world have come in surreptitiously into the depths of my being and taken over many little parts of my heart. How do you know? When you're rejected. How do you know? When something doesn't go your way. The kind of disturbance within me shows that I have been caught up in the world. Somebody's opinion was so great for me, these people not giving me honour really bothered me. I am stuck in the world. The philosophy of Jesus, the theology of Jesus is not helping me.

Then how does one find an answer?

*John 1:12*

*Yet to all who received him...*

All who received HIM. You must never forget this. Christianity is not a philosophy first, not a theology first, not principles first. Then? Christianity is a person -- Jesus Christ risen from the dead and alive. He is here

now because he died, he rose from the dead and in the power of his Spirit, has come back. All who receive Him into their hearts. Here is the good news: In other religions you have to follow the philosophy, you have to accept the truths, you have to deal with and work with it by your own self, you have to make your own way. In Christianity, you open the door of your heart and you allow the person of Jesus Christ to come inside. He is alive. He has come to save us, he has come to redeem us. That's the good news. We can be the hardest nut to crack, we can be the toughest position in the world, we can be lost in the biggest problem. It's alright because he is there. He is alive and he comes. The light is a person and that person is coming into our hearts.

When we were growing up as children, in Christianity, we had lost this awareness. We were thinking of religion, of religious knowledge, of this and that but not about the person, while the Eucharist was the focus on that person! We went to the church, we said the mass but we were going through the process. We never connected to that moment when we realised here in this host is a person who is coming, the light is coming, the purpose is coming to shift and change everything inside us.

*John 1:12 continued*

*...to those who believed in his name, he gave the power to become children of God...*

Drawn into God's own family. There is God the Father, there is Jesus His son, there is the Holy Spirit, together a family and there is me now. When I believe in Jesus and he comes to live inside me, he draws me into the family of God. Eternal life, living with the power of God, enjoying that freedom from the illusions of this world, going beyond into eternity, seeing things beyond the levels of this world. Then we have the true signs of the kingdom -- peace, love, joy in the midst of any situation because we have Him inside us.

If we have been caught up in the world and the world has become our home, tonight in our worship, let's turn to Him and say, "Lord, I want to rediscover you as the light and the center of my life."