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Overcoming the World – Receiving the Promise

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*My soul, be on thy guard; Ten thousand foes arise;
The hosts of sin are pressing hard To draw thee from the skies.
O watch, and fight, and pray; The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day, And help divine implore.
Ne'er think the victory won, Nor lay thine armor down;
The work of faith will not be done, Till thou obtain the crown.
Fight on, my soul, till death Shall bring thee to thy God;
He'll take thee, at thy parting breath, To His divine abode.*
(1940 hymnal #555)

These words, from our opening hymn this morning, were written in 1781. They address an issue that we continue to deal with today and one that Job had to deal with in his. The book of Job is thought to be the oldest writing in the Bible, which, for today's purpose, will illustrate for us a grand similarity that has been common as far back as we can look. But, today, we'll not stop there...Today we have a very unique combination of readings that, together, tell a story of persistent evil, Christian response and a homecoming.

And I must say, it was a clever devise the Lord used to inspire me for this Sunday. Early-on in the week, as I was thinking about today's scriptures, a familiar nursery rhyme kept getting in the way of my thoughts. And I couldn't shake it until I realized its purpose. When we consider our start in the Garden we understand that this was the highest point of our relationship with our Father in Heaven. Then sin entered in and ruined that relationship. And as we fought against the sin that separates us from His love we realized that we couldn't do it on our own. Then the Incarnate Son comes as a ray of sunshine and melts away our sins paving the way for us to once again reach our proper place with the Father. You may know the nursery rhyme I am speaking of: "*The itty bitty spider went up the water spout and down can the rain and washed the spider out, out came the sunshine and dried up all the rain and the itty bitty spider went up the spout again.*" I hope, by the end, you too will understand the spider's metaphor.

Being prevented from the Garden we are now left to our own devices and have become increasingly responsible for our own actions. As we will see, not much has changed since Job's day and yet...much is different.

Job writes, *"They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together...They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold."* Winter is coming. We see in Job's day those who cannot defend themselves being sent away, being pushed out...the helpless left without the barest necessities to suffer come what may. Can we possibly read Job's words and separate ourselves from the similar reality we live in today? We would be hard pressed to hear these words and not think that Job is speaking directly to us. We used to feed the hungry at Hawthorne Park here in Medford. Then it was decided to clean up the park by pushing out the homeless and stop those who were carrying out the ministry of feeding them. The park was closed and a new location was introduced where the hungry could be fed. But then, oops. The city council did not realize that the new location did not meet established standards and the homeless were once again pushed out...this time with no alternative provided. They smell...and we tell them under our breath "take a shower", they beg for a dollar and we belittle them with "get a job." Do we really understand their situation or is it easier for us to simply blame them for their position in life? They steal for lack of food and we call them criminals! I wonder who God thinks is the criminal. So, if we rebel against God in such easy matters as helping the needy in our own community should we not expect a more rancid reaction from those who detest us as Christians?

Job continues and the crimes against the Children of God become more comprehensive and grow even greater. *"Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them. They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof.* As we neglect and push out the poor and oppressed we see on a larger scale groups like ISIS, rebelling against God by pushing out and killing our Christian brothers and sisters all over the world! We watch our televisions and stare in fear, as it seems they are winning and we ask ourselves, "Where is our God! Why does He not intervene?"

Job's cry continues; *"The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me and disguiseth his face."* And these traits of the inhumane carry on even today. Those who do evil against their fellow man devise their plans to take advantage of the vulnerable; those without the means to protect themselves. Knowing their acts are evil they hide behind a façade to disguise their true thoughts which are evil at all times, be it a mask as the ISIS killers hide behind or the semblance of a college student with misguided and evil intentions. *"If one now them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death."* Day and night they are evil...no one is safe from their twisted desires.

Job writes some heavy stuff...and if we stopped here our burdens would be great. But praise be to God! The wicked are not the only ones with a plan! God knows both playbooks and through Titus He tells us what plays to make to win the victory!

You see, we are in the world not of the world, so our Christian reaction is from a different realm...the heavenly realm...the spiritual realm. And as we must live in the world and deal with it's evils we must also realize that we are also spirit indwelt by the Holy Ghost and that...is something the world cannot comprehend.

Titus tells us to *"Speak the things that become sound doctrine."* And he goes on to list those things, which are edifying to God and the Christian life. Our response as Christians to a perverse nation, a corrupt world, is to be spiritually understanding of the times we live in, properly reacting to the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. We should be passing on the good and glorious things of God; nurturing a happy home despite the wickedness that persists all around us; and we must nurture each other in righteous behavior. Love is the secret weapon God has armed us with.

Our flesh does fight against the spirit...and it is up to us how we engage the battle. "They smell" do we talk about them under our breath or do we provide sanitary accommodations? "They beg for a dollar" do we shun them as lazy or do we offer to point them in the right direction? "Their hunger drives them to steal" do our own full bellies have naught

for compassion? In verse 11 Titus says this, *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”* God has show himself to all...and told us what is right...we have no excuses. We are told to live Soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. The Christian response, in the face of all the evils that the world engages, is to keep strong in our FAITH and to show GODLY LOVE. WE are to become a ‘peculiar people’ zealous of good works. When Christ is in us, ‘good works’ become our desire and ‘suffering’ our edification of Christ. Good Christians...we are to be bold in the face of worldly rebuke and unwavering in our love for our fellow man.

So, to this point we have seen the spider lose sight of God and by sinful desires, fallen from a great height. It was only then, by his reaction to his fallen state that he recognizes his dependence on the Son, who clears away the sin and provides a way back to that right relationship with our Father in heaven. Psalm 72 is that promise! And it is a promise that has already been fulfilled! *“The mountains also shall bring peace, and the little hills righteousness unto the people.”* This is the ultimate sovereign government of God who is judge over all the world and He *“shall break in pieces the oppressor.”* *“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: even as drops that water the earth.”* The draught is over! The Holy Spirit has come! Those who are in Christ have Christ in them by the Holy Spirit – the battle is won!

Do not give into the fear the world offers. We have seen the work of Christ in our lives and in the lives of those martyred for their faith. The love of God is real, Christ’s love for us is real and our love for our brethren in the world is real. Fight the good fight knowing that you have already won and live in eternal life.

The glory of creation topped the Heavenly realm
Then down came satan and took away the helm.
Out came the Son and shinned upon the earth
That through our faith in Him we all can have rebirth.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen