

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”⁵⁵ “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you conquered death and opened the gate to eternal life. Grant that we, who have been raised with him through Baptism, may walk in newness of life and ever rejoice in the hope of sharing his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be dominion and praise now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia. (Psalm 118:24 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

Victory! What comes to mind as you contemplate that word? Maybe you think of the warrior standing over his enemies who lie crushed and beaten beneath his feet. Maybe you think of the team triumphant on the field, hands held high and in full tilt celebration while the losers walk off with their heads hanging as limply as the hands at their sides. Maybe you think of the elation felt when your hard work pays off and the goal you were seeking lies fulfilled in front of you. Victory can often look like a lot of things but I'm guessing it probably doesn't look like Good Friday. A body beaten and bloody hanging lifeless on a cross while enemies sneer beneath it ... but it was! The cries from the cross showed us that Jesus was in full control of the situation and even if we missed it then, we can't miss it now ... empty tomb ... death defeated ... and what is more, it seems that victory always tastes sweeter when snatched from seeming defeat. And so the Apostle Paul sounds the victory cry this morning, *“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*⁵⁵ *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Do you feel like you are victorious of late? Maybe some of you are out there killing it everyday, I really do hope so for your sakes. But I'm guessing, just listening to conversations, trying to keep up a little bit on world events, dealing with some of the trauma that has found its way into people's lives, I'm guessing that life doesn't feel so very victorious right now. The workforce is stretched thin, so people are working harder and longer to get things done for the good of their fellow man out there and they're tired. I would dare even say more and more we are worn out. We aren't keeping up with demand so shortages seem to roll through our society like California blackouts in the height of summer. Which makes us uneasy as a people. War and a pretty sketchy one at that has broken out overseas. People are nervous and wondering if more and more countries are going to be pulled into the fray and ultimately what that might mean here back at home. The stress of the last few

years has left us mentally wasted, emotionally tattered, and on the brink of breakdown. Victorious? It sure doesn't feel like it.

But dear friends, this is exactly what Jesus came for. Consider that string of items Paul set in front of us. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. Death is frightening. It's ultimately why war, shortages, our health, and emotional well-being stress us out. It's all linked to that terrible word and our fear of it.

So if we want to defeat death we must move next to sin. Death only exists because sin does. Sin is the result of missing the mark when it comes to God's holy Law. Whenever we fail to keep it consistently, perfectly, without a single lapse in judgment, well welcome to our mixed up messed up world full of sin and every kind of wickedness, including the thoughts and attitudes of my own sin-filled heart. That's the problem, right? I couldn't do it on my own. I can never do it on my own and whether I like it or not, God's standard of perfection cannot and will not change.

So in walks Jesus. Ever since Christmas, as we have gathered together here in worship, we have watched Him grow in wisdom and stature, teach and preach throughout Israel, heal the sick and demon-possessed and over all of it, the words of Hebrews have wrung true again and again. *We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin* (Hebrews 4:15). No sin ... because He kept the Law perfectly, consistently, without a single lapse in judgment ... just look at that cross. Though it may seem a defeat, it is anything but. Every word spoken, every action taken absolute perfection sacrificed for us. By His blood, yes through His death, well John says it best *the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin* (1 John 1:7). Perhaps it's Paul again, though this time to the Romans who sums up the work the best, ²³ *The words "it was credited to him (that's Abraham)" were written not for him alone,* ²⁴ *but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.* ²⁵ *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification* (Romans 4:23-35).

Yep, the Resurrection is the seal, the sign, the rubber stamp over all of it that announces the work completed on the cross now accepted by the Father Himself and the fruit of the labor, well it is enjoyed by you. Paul wrote, ⁵¹ *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—* ⁵² *in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.* ⁵³ *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.* ⁵⁴ *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."*

Dear friends, I know it doesn't always feel like we are victorious in this world of ours. Satan works hard. He has plenty of help in a world overcome by the sin that rages within it and within us. They try hard to obscure the truth. They incessantly cover up our hope. There are times no doubt when it feels like we are on the brink of defeat. But they can ultimately do nothing. Even at their very worst they can only end up ushering you into the loving arms of our Savior for all eternity. They can only end up clothing you with the immortality we have always craved. And when that happens, well then faith and sight meet, the saying that is written comes true. And dear friends, victory always is sweeter when snatched from the jaws of defeat.

Until then, well, May we live in thanks, thanks for all our Savior has done for us. For His life, for His death, Yes, for His resurrection! *"Death has been swallowed up in victory."*⁵⁵ *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Looks pretty victorious after all! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!