

## Victim or Warrior 12-13-15

Lord, as we prepare for Your coming – both as a baby in Bethlehem & when You come again – help us to hear You speaking to our hearts that we'd know how to focus on You and You alone. You are our life, our hope, our peace. Amen.

Here it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Advent. 1 more Sunday b/4 Christmas! Jesus & the Apostles didn't come up w/the idea of Advent & other seasons of the church year. The church did that w/the hope that all aspects of the life of Jesus would be covered in a year. Therefore, living in expectation of the end of all things & Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, and walking in repentance are Advent themes. However, they are a part of the Christian walk all year. Since we do not know the day or the hour of His return, we need to be ready at all times. We've heard scriptures about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming - "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting w/fear & w/foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Wow! That will be a time that we have to know that we know that the Lord takes care of His own! Last week we heard John the Baptist crying in the wilderness – "Make straight the pathways of the Lord." "And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Today we heard again about John. Jesus highly praised him, saying "among those born of women none is greater than John." I

believe that Jesus praised John so highly because of our great need for repentance. John spoke it clearly – no frills. It is a wonder that people flocked to him – a man who ate locusts & honey, dressed in camel’s hair & a leather belt – a man who didn’t mince words.

John the Baptist calls us to repentance. What does that mean in your life? Do you take sin seriously? God does. We tend to minimize sin – especially our own we aren’t so bad. We live in a world that doesn’t take sin seriously, but that does not mean it isn’t serious. The reason repentance is so very very important is sin is anything that separates us from God. Yes, we sin everyday & we don’t get kicked out of God’s family. God still loves us – He is kind & patient w/us. But listen to the question Paul asks in Romans 2: “Do you presume upon the riches of His kindness & forbearance & patience? Do you not know that that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” Yes, God is longing for us to turn to Him, to restore fellowship. It’s pleasing to God when we walk with Him. Yes, He is love. As we receive His love we long to please Him -not just get by w/stuff. His love leads us to repentance.

Listen to an excerpt of something an NALC pastor put on FB. “He (Jesus) conquered death. He defeated the devil and then Jesus descended into hell – not to suffer, but to prove that he reigns even over hell. **Jesus wins and you are on his team.** Therefore you win.

And that’s pretty amazing because you are a loser. I know. That sounds harsh. I am a

loser as well. I am a loser because I lose battles against temptation every day. I am a loser because I lose my temper with my wife and children. I am a loser because I lie. I am a loser because I lust. I am a loser because I am a lost and condemned creature.

But Jesus purchased and won me from all sin, death and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death. I am a winner because Jesus died my death and suffered my defeat. I am a winner because he conquered death with his resurrection. Jesus wins and therefore I win.

**Jesus wins and therefore our enemies cannot.** Sure they can cause us pains and problems here on this earth, but they can't win. They can't stop the gospel. They can't stop Jesus. They can't take away our eternal victory in heaven." And I would add, they can't rob us of peace & joy right here on this earth. Yes, we have times of sadness & mourning, & pain & distress, but we know in our inmost parts that God is God & He can give us His peace right in the middle of our worst circumstances. He is our Savior, our healer, our Lord & King.

But back to repentance - repentance is not just changing our minds, or feeling sorry for something that we have done, or even promising to never do it again. Instead, repentance means to turn around and go in another direction. That's different from promising to never do something again. What John the Baptist wanted the people to hear was: get your eyes off of yourself & your sin. Get over yourself! You are flesh! What do you expect? Look to Jesus! This is not negative. This is the most encouraging thing one could ever hear! We cannot look to ourselves to change our behavior – we may want to change it, but we do not have the strength w/in us to do it. That's why we look to Jesus! The only One who can help us! Jesus not only

helps us want to be good, He helps us in our weakness. He helps us do it!

We need to know we are loved far more than we can imagine. We need to face our sin straight forward – acknowledging it b/4 the Lord. When we receive forgiveness, we are clean, righteous. That’s all baby food. We have bigger fish to fry! We need be armed for battle. And like I said last week, the only part of God’s armor that is offensive is the sword – and that’s the Word of God. There’s a spiritual battle going on for the hearts and minds of people – young & old. Christianity is mocked. The Bible is ridiculed. We can either lay down & play dead, or we can arm for battle.

**7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

**8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. (James 4)

When Jesus sent the disciples out to minister,

Luke 10:17-20 **17** The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” **18** And he (Jesus) said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **19** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. **20** Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Power over the enemy – all in a day’s work! The norm! Rejoice because great is your reward in heaven! Rejoice because The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty One Who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; No need to fear! The Lord will deal w/your oppressors! God hears prayer! He listens to the voices of His children!

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

The Lord is at hand; **6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication

with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In the horrible shootings in San Bernadino, Shannon Johnson held his co-worker, Denise Peraza. He most likely protected her from death. His last words to her, “I’ve got you.” Whatever the future may hold – signs in the sky, distress in the nations, people fainting in fear, may you hear Jesus’ words to you, “I’ve got you!” Amen.