

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:1–5 (ESV))

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Amen.

Everyone who believes; it is all about faith, and faith is the fruit of the vine. Last week and again this week we hear that picture from Jesus in the gospel reading regarding the vine and the branches, the fruit that the branches produce, the fruit that endures, that lasts, is faith and love. We see all through the letter from John, faith and love as the fruit of the vine. Not just faith for the sake of faith, or faith in faith but a specific faith a belief

that Jesus is the Christ; here in the Easter season as we celebrate and focus on the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth the key point is that he is ‘the Christ’. The promised messiah of the Old Testament, the Son of God, the one who came to save. He is the right hand and Holy arm of God that the Psalmist sang of who has worked salvation for both the Jews and all the world. He is the righteousness of God revealed to us causing all creation to sing with joy. Easter is the season to see the proof, the evidence that the risen one is the promised one so that we believe in him and are added to those who

has been born of God,: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Just as the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius were born again by the waters of baptism and the coming of the Holy Spirit so too are all those who believe in Jesus as the Christ. Faith brings new life. Believing in Jesus is a new birth. The life in the vine grafted into the Son is a new life vastly different from the old life of sin in the world for

everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. The other fruit of the vine is love for the other believers, there is no hatred, no hostility, no un-forgiveness, no I want it my way, no selfishness, no uncaringness in those who have been born again. Instead, those who have been born of Him, born from above, love the other believers, just as we learnt of the early communities in acts back at the beginning of this Easter Season; ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. Acts 2:44–45 (ESV)

The newborn believers are constantly on the lookout for ways to love their fellow believers, not just on Sundays, with material gifts and spiritual care, for we do not want any of our brothers and sisters in the faith to be cut out of the vine, but instead, we want them to remain in the vine and receive the same fruitful pruning of the vinedresser.

² **By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments.**

³ **For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.**

Firstly, the command that should come to mind is not an action on our part but the command that John reiterates earlier in the letter; ²³ And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he has commanded us. 1 John 3:23 (ESV)

So faith, trust, belief in the Son of God, Jesus the Christ is the first thing commanded. We are to fear, love and trust God above all things. Here is Jesus of Nazareth, John presents him to us, the Word who was with God before time, through whom God made the world, the word that became flesh and dwelt among us, believe him, believe in him, as per the previous verses.

And love one another, don't fear and love yourself, or the world, or anything else for that matter but fear and love God so that you see his commandments, the 7 others that expand on how to love thy neighbour as a joyful gift and fruit of his own vine.

The world and our sinful nature want to make his commandments an impossible task, a burden on joy. The world claims that to call upon him, pray to him, praise him, and give him thanks with his name is a drag. The world says that to deem his word holy and gladly hear and learn it is an imposition on our fun, work and rest. The world says that to honour, serve, obey, love, and esteem our parents and others in authority over us is foolish and counterproductive to happiness. The world says that to help and befriend my neighbour in every necessity of life impinges on my rights to get what I want and live how I desire. The world says the marriage bed is not sacred and can be shared around as any form of chastity or self-control must come from the pleasure police. The world says do what you can, to get what you want, never minding the well-being of others, or their possessions or reputations for caring for others is too much hard work.

John tells us these things are not burdensome. It is not burdensome to trust in our heavenly Father who gave us his son to save us, it is a gift. It is not burdensome to love others by keeping the commandments that Jesus has kept perfectly for us, it is a joy, it is a pleasure to be Jesus' friends and brothers and yet willing serve Him because He so willingly served and serves us.

It is only the world with its insistence on ignoring or discrediting God's commandments that find them burdensome. And we find ourselves as the world when our sinful nature joins in the same activity of bemoaning God's commands. But

⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

We are not of the world, although we are in the world. When it is our own sinful nature that causes us to find his commandments burdensome, we should run back to these verses and see that we have been born of God, we are grafted into the vine and this vine is not a cursed fig tree with no fruit and it isn't a wild vine producing sour grapes; this is a fruitful, pruned, clean vine producing faith and love, fruit that will last. In this way we have overcome the world or better yet, he has overcome the world for us.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Believing that Jesus is the Christ, for us, - faith – overcomes the world. Jesus promises that he has overcome the world for us, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (ESV) and he gifts that victory to us so that it is our victory. He delivers the victory in his faith-sustaining word and sacraments, so that when we feel defeated or even when we observe our

life and find we are of the world and actively fighting against the believers, we run back to our gracious Saviour who comes to us in flesh and blood and conquers the world. There we see that his commands are not burdensome but require us to trust and obey, to remain in his word and believe what he says about himself. When we are overburdened by the tasks of this life; we run back to the one who laid down his life for his friends and see that we also are his friends because he has given us faith to believe what he has done for us. And not only do we see that he has laid down his life, but he has taken it back up again; Christ is risen and all this he has done for me. When we see that we are fruitless or worse at risk of being cut out of the vine or we have willfully separated ourselves, it is then that we desperately need our Saviour in word (where he told us to remain) and in water and blood (that is baptism and Holy Communion) to strengthen and sustain our belief in him so that we remain as those who have been born of God.

Children of God, Jesus the Christ has been raised from the dead for you, to bring you his salvation and reveal his righteousness to the world. You are his dear children, born of God and grafted into the vine of Christ, live as his dear children. Trusting him and loving your neighbour.

Amen.