

Conquerors
[1 John 5:1-6](#)
Rev. Curtis Bablitz
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When I was a kid, there was a TV cartoon show called Pinky and the Brain, about two genetically enhanced laboratory mice – one was a genius, and the other was his unbalanced, less-than-helpful sidekick. At the start of every show, Pinky would ask Brain, “What do you want to do today, Brain?” and Brain would answer, “The same thing we do every day, Pinky – try to take over the world!” And then these two mice would come up with some ridiculously elaborate scheme to conquer the entire world, and it would always come very close to succeeding before something inevitably went wrong. At the end of each episode they would find themselves right back in their cage in the lab, waiting for a new day, a new chance to try to take over the world, all over again. It was a very silly show. There are lots of stories, movies and comic books about dastardly villains trying to take over the world and the valiant heroes who try to stop them, but there were no heroes in

Pinky and the Brain. The only thing that stopped them from achieving their goal was themselves – their clever plan always backfired on them in the end, and they were their own worst enemies.

Which is probably also true of most of the actual people throughout history who have tried to conquer the world – generals like Napoleon, Genghis Khan or Alexander the Great, they win battles and conquer territory, but eventually, things fall apart – disease or defeat or bad weather or bad luck, or just their own hubris and human error, inevitably something goes wrong and the vast empire collapses. History is littered with the grand claims of past potential world conquerors, who, like Ozymandius in Shelley's famous poem, truly believed that their victories would last forever – look upon my works, ye mighty, and despair – and yet nothing remains, it's all rubble and ruins in the desert, nothing lasts, nothing endures. Whether you're a dictator or a general or a super-intelligent rodent, trying to take over the world is a silly, foolish thing to do.

And so when you hear today's passage from John's first letter to the church, where he tells us that whatever is born of God conquers the

world, you can probably guess that he isn't laying out a plan for global domination. John isn't telling us that the church should rule the world – that we should launch crusades and holy wars to bring the world under Christ's dominion whether they like it or not, because we know that ends in disaster, for the church and for the world. No, when John talks about conquering the world, he's not talking about the world out there – he's talking about the world in here. All of us live in this world, and everyday we hear all sorts of voices, all sorts of messages from the world around us that find their way into our minds and into our hearts, that subtly define the way we see everything around us and how we see ourselves. The world tells us that the most important thing we can do is to consume – that we are what we buy and what we own. The world tells us that we should pursue pleasure and comfort and control at all costs, that our own personal safety and happiness is the highest good we can achieve, even if it means others might suffer. The world tells us that our identity comes from our race, language, gender, nation, that these are the things that define us, and that anyone who isn't like us is a threat. The world tells us again and again that our value is derived from what

we achieve, what we obtain, and if we fail, it's because we're worthless. All these lies seep into our lives, seep into our hearts, and we hear them so often we don't even question them, we don't even notice them; we just keep living as good, obedient citizens of a world that is toxic and destructive and demonic. All those failed conquerors throughout history did what they did because they believed the lies the world told them, they tried to conquer a world that had already conquered them, conquered their minds and hearts. The world that we need to conquer, destroy, dismantle piece by piece, it's not the world out there, but the world in here, the fortresses of rebellion and sin we build up in ourselves. And they won't be conquered by our own efforts. There are no brilliant schemes we can devise, no battle plans, no victories won through strength or cunning. We can't do it ourselves. John tells us that the victory that conquers the world is our faith, when we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, because Jesus Christ has already conquered the world. When the world tells us to consume, Jesus tells us to give away all that we have and follow him. When the world tells us to seek pleasure and comfort, Jesus tells us to serve and love our neighbours as

we want to be loved. When the world tries to define us, Jesus tells us we are his beloved children, made in God's image. When the world tells us we are worthless, Jesus tells us we are worth dying for. And when we believe in Jesus Christ – when we listen to his voice and trust in his love for us, then we start to see the lies that the world has been whispering to us for what they truly are: empty rubble and ruins, grand boasts of power from a decaying, defeated empire. When we follow Jesus Christ, the world has no power over us. When we trust in his voice, then we know we have conquered the world, we know that we have been set free from slavery to sin and death, we know we can forever serve the only master who will never fail us, never abandon us, whose kingdom will never have an end.

Today, we are celebrating the sacrament of baptism. In baptism, we recognize what Jesus Christ has already done for us, we celebrate that we are born into God's family, children of God, claimed by his love. And as God's beloved, baptized children, we respond to that great gift by professing our faith – as we grow up into maturity in God's family, we declare that we are going to put our trust in Jesus Christ – that every

single day of our lives, we are going to choose to listen to the voice of Jesus instead of the voice of the world. And that won't always be easy. There will be days when we get discouraged, when we grow tired and uncertain, when it gets harder to hear Christ's voice and the world seems stronger than ever. And yet even those days cannot change the reality of what Jesus Christ has done for us. All our doubt, all our uncertainty, they can't keep God's love away. They can't change the truth of what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us. Each and every day, we are called to affirm and reaffirm our baptism, to confess and profess our faith over and over again, to keep reminding ourselves that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he has conquered the world, and that when we follow him, when we trust in him, we will conquer the world as well. What are we going to do today? The same thing we do every day – trust in Jesus Christ, and conquer the world. In the name of Jesus Christ – Amen!