

*"In this world you will have trouble, but take heart. I have overcome the world."* - Jesus (John 16:33)

Back in 2020, we looked forward to this year with hope in a new beginning. We said, "Well, 2021 can't be as bad as 2020!" and then laughed nervously. We needed a light at the end of this tunnel, and we chose 2021 as that light.

Someone posted a picture recently of the Scooby Doo clan chasing 2021. They finally caught it, and in their usual flourish tore off 2021's mask only to reveal that it was really just 2020 in disguise the whole time. This is how many of us feel after just 12 days of this new year. Globally, we've seen new strains and even higher mortality rates from COVID around the world, with cities all over the globe setting records and going into even tighter lockdowns. Nationally, we've watched armed insurrectionists storm the Capital building and threaten the lives of fellow human beings simply because they disagree with them. Personally, we've lost loved ones and been to sparsely attended funerals for those we loved. And this in only 12 days.

Now more than ever, we have to remember that Jesus promised us two things in this passage in John. The first we know better than we ever have: "In this world, you will have trouble." But the second is the one we need to remember, to remind this world about, and to bring us hope: "I have overcome the world."

It's hard to watch the news and still believe that Jesus has overcome the world. It's hard to look again and again at our social media feeds and remember this truth. It's hard to sit in fear, anger, grief, and depression and have any hope. But this is exactly what God offers us today. Hope! Because truly Jesus has overcome the world.

This world is created by God, but sin has corrupted it. God didn't create this world so we could set up gallows and chant for our leaders to be brought out to them as we saw last week. God created this world to be beautiful, and to supply our needs, and to be tended by us. "The World" as the bible sometimes uses it and as Jesus used it here is the sinful, corrupted relationships we have with each other. And as part of those relationships, as part of our society, as part of "this world", we will have trouble. That's what sin does – it makes trouble. But our God is a God of redemption. He is the God who has taken sin's power – eternal separation from Him – away. On the cross, Jesus defeated sin, and offered us eternal life with Him. So whatever may happen in "this world", whatever trouble we may face, whatever 2021 might bring, none of it can separate us from God. THAT is our hope – not that things will go back to normal ("normal" wasn't that great for most people anyway), not that we will win and take power, not that any force we've created will make everything better, but that we are God's, and He is with us, and we are with Him, forever.

Can you do me a favor? Can you tell someone this today? Thanks.