

Today we're going to be talking about "having faith to overcome"...

By faith, you and I can be overcomers in every situation we find ourselves in. (There is absolutely no doubt about that).

But, what we understand this to mean, can depend a whole lot on whether I'm trapped in the mindset of this temporary world, or whether I have **escaped** the limitations of the temporary, and been set free to eternity...

Some theologians like talk about "God's economy" or "the divine economy", to describe God's plan of the ages – to describe God's plan and purpose for salvation, and everything that flows on from this, for Christian living (God's economy)...

Let me explain that:

Every election, the two major political parties battle it out. And one of the key battle-grounds, is over who has the best credentials to manage the economy. And we have to listen to them telling us how they are the best ones to manage the economy – they're telling us that they are the responsible savers out one side of their mouth, while out of the other side of their mouth, they're making big-spending promises to try and buy our vote... And so, we end up with the government we deserve...

But the national economy **is** a very important issue. The economy (the way that money transfers from hand to hand

- from business

- to employee
 - to retailer
 - to taxation
 - to social benefits
 - to infrastructure spending
 - to healthcare
-
- they way it's all cycling through,,,

And, what that looks like, is very much shaped and formed by the policy of the ruling party of the day... They manage the economy, according to their policy/values. There **has** to be a plan, right?..... (It doesn't always seem so)

And for us, to consider **God's** plan and purpose, and to even use the term "God's economy", is a concept that opens our eyes to how radically different **everything** is (by God's values). And when we're talking "God's economy", it's not just a financial sense...

You see, with the worldly economy – the way **most** would personally manage their affairs (and not just financial affairs – everything we value), is diametrically opposed, to what Disciples of Jesus do. Why? Because we are living in God's economy.

We are living according to:

- God's plan and purpose;
- God's plan of salvation; and
- what He has saved us **to**,

This changes everything.

The things:

- we value;
 - we strive for;
 - we protect;

 - that take precedence;
 - that really matter;
 - that we would give our lives for,
- are dramatically different...

And I don't know if this is the way theologians intended this phrase to be used, but I'm going to use "God's economy", to distinguish between "the ways of the world", as opposed to "living for eternity"...

And our understanding of being an **overcomer**, is radically different, when we are living in God's economy.

Today's the 4th week we're spending in Hebrews 11 (that magnificent chapter on faith). And for some, this may be the week that raises some very big questions.

So: Faith is:

- believing in God;
- trusting in God;

- following Him and obeying Him, even when we cannot see him with our eyes
 - even when it doesn't make sense...

And in the early part of our reading, God really comes through for the faithful, as He provides for them in their hour of need.

So, e.g.:

The People of Israel are fleeing the land of Egypt. And they find themselves fenced in by the Red Sea. BTW, if they were working to the World's economy, they never would have let that happen. When you're fleeing from an army, you don't let yourself get boxed into a corner. But they were working to God's economy, and they let The Lord lead them to what seemed like a dead-end.

And, when we work to God's economy, He comes through. He parted the waters of the sea, and they crossed over on dry land. And when Pharaoh's armies in their arrogance, try to pursue them, God just lets the water dump back on top of them, and they're drowned.

Wow! God has come through for them. He's defeated their enemy in one foul swoop...

Here's another e.g.:

When the People of Israel entered the promised land, and they came to Jericho, its walls were impregnable – it was like a fortress...

And God said to Joshua, "It's going to be a 7 day process. For the first 6 days, each day, you are to quietly march the army around the city (The priests will be blowing their trumpets, but the people say **nothing** (No chit-chat; No joking about –

Nothing)). On the 7th day, you'll do it again, only this time, when the 7 priests blow their trumpets, everybody give a loud shout, and the wall of the city is going to collapse.

Now, I'm pretty sure that military manoeuvre is not one that's taught at Duntroon.... It doesn't make sense – that is **not** the normal way to breach a fortified city. But in God's economy, everything is different. And so, by faith, they did what didn't make sense... (In God's economy, it **does** make sense. In the world's economy, no sense at all.)

I wonder if they felt a bit silly: Getting the whole army out, marching around the city with a few trumpets blowing, and then going back to the camp again. I wonder if they felt a little bit silly, doing that for six days in a row. But on day number 7, their faith was justified..

They marched around the city; The trumpets blew; They gave a loud shout; and the fortress collapsed.

That's God's economy. God came through.

And there's more examples. We talked about these ones last week.

- Moses was saved as a child;
- Rahab was saved when the walls of Jericho fell;
- Daniel was rescued from the lion's den;
- Shadrach; Meshach; and Abednego were saved from the fiery furnace;

And there's more examples of where God came through:

- Gideon. By faith, he cut his troop numbers down, before going into battle. And God routed their enemies.
- Samson, let his hair grow back, and his strength returned;
- Jephthah was an outcast, but by faith, he became a mighty warrior of God;
- The shepherd boy David, took out Goliath;
- Samuel and the prophets spoke forth the word of God.
- A widow's child was raised from the dead by Elijah, and another little boy was raised from the dead by Elisha.

You see, this is God's economy – God doing the unexpected, and God came through.

And even **outside** of God's economy, one can understand the benefits of this (God comes through for His faithful, and provides for them in their hour of need).

And that understanding is so attractive, that for some, it forms the basis of their evangelism... And so, the message gets preached, that you too, can be "an overcomer"... By faith, God will come through for you. By faith, God will deliver you from all of your troubles...

But what about when he doesn't???

When I was a teenager, a friend of mine (part of a very godly family), his mum got cancer. And their whole church fervently believed that God would heal her. And there was a culture of prayer/faith/belief that she would be healed...

But she got sicker and sicker, and eventually she died...

Since then, I've known other families, where a person has gotten sick (and diagnosed with cancer), but they would not let anyone say that they had cancer, because they'd been taught about the power of words, you see... And someone had taught them that "If you even say that they've got it, then that's a curse that's going to get them."

And sometimes for months; Sometimes for years, they have lived a lie. I'm well; Nothing to see here,, as they wasted away, and eventually died.

Where is God? Why didn't He come through for them?

Where was God:

- *when a child of a Christian family was run over on the driveway?*
- *when Geoff (a young Christian from a godly family) was killed in a mustering accident near Glen Morgan?*

- *when Alan tragically died on his farm?*
I've had non-Christians say to me, "He was the best man I knew. I don't understand why this could happen to him?; and
- *when the Islamic State decapitated any Christian who refused to deny Jesus and convert to Islam...*

You see, even a short-term worldly perspective can make sense of having a life of blessed protection, (Where because we love God, nothing's going to go wrong).

And for some, the limit of their faith, is having faith for health; wealth; a happy family; and a long life... But God's economy is much bigger than that. And if that's the sort of faith you have, I'm going to be really blunt and say "You have not yet understood God's economy"...

You see, there's a style of prayer around today, that says, "I'm believing for"... In other words, I'm believing that God is going to do something for me:

- He's going to give me this;
- He's going to provide me with that;

I'm believing for:

- a miracle;
- a healing;
- a blessing;
- a breakthrough;
- a salvation...

But genuine faith isn't believing "for" something. Faith is believing "**in**" someone...

I believe in Jesus... Do you?

The Apostles creed has been around since the early 400's.

And it is about believing **in**.

I believe **in** God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe **in** Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died and was buried;

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;

He ascended into heaven,

He is seated at the right hand of the father,

and He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe **in** the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting.

Will you say "amen" to that? Amen.

As Disciples of Jesus, we believe "**in**". This is God's economy...

And when we believe in things like the communion of the saints; (Those who have died in Christ, commune – they haven't just ceased to be).

When:

We believe in

the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

God's economy, does not have the limitations of this temporary life...

And we see this in the faithful of Hebrews 11. When we get to v35, this is where the faith of those who live in God's economy, really shines through.

You see, a shallow faith can only see things from the temporary worldly perspective (having a life of blessed protection). Woohoo

Here's a picture of God's economy:

Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not

worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

The greatest faith isn't about believing for something – it is believing **in**. God is faithful. We believe it. And if God gives healing in this life, well, praise be to God. And when God does do something miraculous, let's be witnesses for Him...

But the greater attestation of faith, is when (in His sovereignty), He decides **not** to heal/provide relief... And in the eyes of the world, they might think, "Their God has deserted them." By faith, we know better...

By faith, we know that He is the one who journeys with us through the pain. By faith, we know that even if our lives are taken, we have something infinitely more valuable.

And so, in the suffering/pain, we give witness to Jesus. In the place of devastation and grief, we continue to proclaim the goodness of God and the mercy of our saviour, because we have a **better** hope (We will rise to a **better** life).

On 13th February this year, in Mayba (a village in the Democratic Republic of Congo) 70 Christians were herded into a church, where they were beaten and hacked to death with hammers and machetes.

Why would they continue to be faithful for Jesus, when for them, it means suffering and death? You see, that doesn't

make sense in the world's economy, but in God's economy, it makes perfect sense.

We believe in:

- the God who is with us and suffers with us;
- the God who has saved us from sin and death;
- the resurrection of the dead; and
- life eternal...

This is God's economy. And God's economy, takes us through to perfection (completeness).

On the day of the resurrection, all the faithful who have died, will be raised to eternal life.

Because we're living in God's economy, everything is different.

Let me touch on the first 2 verses of chapter 12.

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Being a Disciple of Jesus, means walking **with** Jesus – following Jesus. The normal Christian life **will** involve suffering. If the Author and perfecter of our faith suffered, why won't we? He suffered for the joy set before Him (what joy?)

- The joy of the resurrection
- the joy of fulfilling God's plan and purpose.
- the joy that He would see **us** living in God's economy

For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross (a torturous, painful death). He put up with the shame. He was stripped naked and nailed to the cross, for everyone to gawk at Him and laugh at Him...

But He put up with all of that. And now He is raised to the highest heaven, **and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

In God's economy, we endure.

You see, we are indeed "overcomers"... And in the economy of God, being "an overcomer" isn't about health, wealth and a long life. Being an overcomer is about being faithful to Jesus, in every circumstance, living for Him every day, dying for Him, if we must,, for He has overcome death. And by faith we believe.

The challenge for us this day, is "Do I really believe?" If I really believe, will I embrace God's economy? , because this life is short, and His Kingdom is eternal. Would I leave everything to follow Him?

Let's finish with the Apostles Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the father,
and He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen.