

Sermon – John 16.16-23 (Easter 4 – 2024)

Joy for This Little While

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, of Your fatherly goodness You allow Your children to come under Your chastening rod here on earth, that we might be like Your only-begotten Son in suffering and hereafter in glory: We beseech You, comfort us by Your Holy Spirit in all temptations and afflictions, that we may not fall into despair, but that we may continually trust in Your Son's promise, that our trials will endure but a little while, and will then be followed by eternal joy; that we thus, in patient hope, may overcome all evil, and at last obtain eternal salvation; through the same, Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

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

<sup>16</sup> "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."

<sup>17</sup> Then *some* of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father '?"

<sup>18</sup> They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while '? We do not know what He is saying."

<sup>19</sup> Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me '?"

<sup>20</sup> "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

<sup>21</sup> "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

<sup>22</sup> "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

<sup>23</sup> "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

These are Your Words heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

On a podcast I was listening to, the hosts read an email sent in by a woman who listens to the show. It was a difficulty that she and her family was experiencing. Her husband's income wasn't sufficient to support the family. Their savings were dwindling away. So she was looking for jobs. She interviewed for jobs in the medical field, and what she found was that if she were to be a candidate for a job in her area, she had to be willing to encourage people dealing with gender dysphoria to harm and mutilate their bodies. She would not agree to this. And so she was wondering, what she should do? Should she just put her head down and go along with it, even if it were only lip-service so that she could help her husband support her family? Or should she refuse to go along with it even as their savings disappear.

One of the hosts rightly commended her for taking a stand against it. He said, there are things that are worth more than money, and what she is giving her family, her children, by being steadfast to the truth, is more valuable than the money she could have earned by the well paying jobs in the medical field.

The world will happily go along with such demonic demands that the interviewers were making, and will do so with rejoicing.

And such is the sorrow Christians will endure in our little times. But there is reason to rejoice. This is what we will consider today.

Jesus, shortly before His betrayal, warned His disciples that they will have sorrow for the little while that they will not see Jesus.

What does Jesus mean here when He says, "a little while" and "I go to the Father"? Well, most immediately, Jesus was referring to His suffering and death. Jesus was going to the Father to present the sacrifice of His life for the salvation of the world. What the disciples will see is His tortuous suffering and death. And the world will be rejoicing. They are getting what they want. But the disciples will be in great sorrow.

The little while will also be Jesus' ascension into heaven. He, ascends into heaven to go to His Father, to sit at His right hand. And so Jesus would no longer be with them visibly.

And we are in this little while, experiencing a time where there is trouble and sorrow. You might be placed in a situation like the woman I spoke of earlier. You find yourself in a

position where you must confess Christ, make a stand for truth, be obedient to God, but it may cost you financial hardships, loss of relationships, or the comfort and ease of life which you currently live.

The trouble and sorrow include the increasing hostility to Christianity in our world and culture. It includes the shrinking number of confessing Christians, and the shrinking churches.

It includes our experience of the drudgery of daily life, of pain, of heartbreak, of physical and mental illness, and of death. And yes, these are troubles common to all people. But for the Christian, the devil comes and uses these opportunities to attack our faith. He tempts us to fear, to doubt, to despair, to think false things about God.

It is our nature to avoid sorrow and trouble. And so perhaps we decide that money is more important than the truth. Maybe we think that it is better to sacrifice the truth for the sake of a relationship. Maybe we have doubted God's goodness. Maybe we have wondered that if God would allow such trouble, He must not exist, or must not be loving, or maybe He's gone for good, and you're on your own.

Perhaps, the devil has successfully caused fear, despair, doubt in your hearts. Maybe, instead of going to your heavenly Father in prayer, you look to temporal, earthly things as your escape, your comfort, and your help, as though Jesus never spoke about the joy that He would give you when He comes to you. Maybe you are like Peter walking on the tumultuous water, taking our eyes off of Jesus, as though He is not there to help, and all we see are the terrifying waves, and our faith falters.

But there is joy for you because of Jesus, and it begins with this: Jesus has answered for your sins. That unfaithfulness, that doubt, that failure to stand for the truth when, these sins have all been put away by your dear Savior. Your running to other god's when it appears as though He isn't present to be your help, He has also removed that idolatry. You are free of your sins. The baptismal waters has cleansed you of your sins, thus you are made God's dear child, even as you live during this little while.

And there remains more joy for you in this little while of trial and sorrow! The joy that Jesus said the disciples will have is when they will see Jesus again. Most immediately, that meant His resurrection from the dead. But it is also when the Holy Spirit comes to them with the precious gospel of Christ. As you hear the Word of Christ by faith, are baptized in His name,

and receive His body and blood, you behold Christ, who is with you in love, who forgives you your sins, upholds you with His grace, and encourages you with the promise of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting! While you live in the furnace of this world, Christ is in the midst of it with you, as He was with Shadrach, Mishach, and Abednego. **“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”**, He says. Keep your eyes trained upon His precious Word, and you will see that He is with you even in the midst of the storm and waves.

Also, find joy that the sorrows and trouble will be only a little while. When you are going through a difficult time, it is good to have something to look forward to. One recommendation given to mothers about to give birth is to bring along a onesie, to help her look forward to the joy of the child that is coming who will soon be wearing that onesie. You have something to look forward to! You have the joys of eternal bliss with Christ to look forward to! There’s nothing better! And at that time, the sorrow will be forgotten. And Paul says, **“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”**

Furthermore, Jesus said that the world will rejoice as you weep and lament. But do you know who will not be rejoicing in your sorrow? Christ and His body, the Church. Christ has compassion upon you in your sorrow. And Paul urged believers to **“rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”** The Church will lament with you the trouble, the difficulty, the hostility, the persecution, the loss of the things we enjoy in the world. These things are hard. But we encourage one another in the truth of God’s Word, we rejoice in Christ’s faithfulness to us and also in the fact that He is coming in glory. Then every tear will be wiped away.

Yes, we have trouble and sorrow in this little while, but we also have reason to rejoice in the midst of it. Jesus Christ, our Savior, is risen! He is with us now and will come again in glory to bring us to Himself into life eternal. Jesus is our joy, and no one will take this joy from us. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.