

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

From Sorrow to Joy

Scripture: John 16:16–22

Code: 43-91

We all understand that the Bible presents our Lord Jesus Christ in many different ways. He is presented as Messiah-King. He is presented as a prophet. He is presented as the great High Priest. And when the Scripture speaks of Him as a great High Priest, the One who intercedes for us, it says that He sympathizes with us, that He feels our weaknesses, that He identifies with our infirmities, that He having been “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” is a merciful and sympathetic High Priest.

Another way to say that is it is His desire and His purpose and His ministry to comfort us. And even when He sent the Holy Spirit, He sent the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter, the Comforter. God is the God of all comfort; the Holy Spirit is the Comforter; and Christ is our sympathetic, compassionate High Priest. We know that because the Bible says that. We understand that theologically and doctrinally. But every once in awhile in the text of the gospel record, where we follow the life of Christ, we have an opportunity to see one of His characteristics in a rather bold and dramatic way.

Such is the case of the text ahead of us, starting in John 16:16. Here we see our sympathetic, compassionate High Priest; the One who carries our cares, who feels our burdens and our infirmities; the One who seeks our comfort, and our peace, and our joy. And this is not just some duty to Him; it is an actual passion in His divine heart. The Lord seeks the joy of His people, and that’s what flows out of this rather amazing text.

You know, lack of hope is the ultimate agony in suffering. We all suffer. We all go through disappointments, distress. We have disturbances, things that are completely unlike what we had hoped for, planned for. We live with challenges that are seemingly insurmountable. We’re always looking for some light at the end of the tunnel. People can actually endure almost any trial if they could see an end that is good. If they can’t see an end that is good, life becomes overwhelmingly bleak.

The book of Proverbs puts it this way: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” Lack of hope is the ultimate agony in suffering. Lack of hope eliminates joy. Our Lord, however, seeks our joy, and so always gives to us hope.

You look back in the book of Job, for example, and you see Job suffering severely, as severely as anyone could even imagine. And in the middle of his suffering he laments and he says things like this: “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle and come to an end without hope. Where is now my hope, and who has regard for my hope?” Speaking of God, Job says, “He breaks me down on every side and I am gone, and He has uprooted my hope like a tree.”

The psalmist, in severe turmoil, challenges his own heart with these words in Psalm 42: “Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.” The psalmist, in the midst of severe suffering,

reaches out toward God and to find in Him his hope.

We all know that Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet. Jeremiah, God's chosen prophet - great preacher, faithful servant of God - was rejected by his people who did not hear his message, who had nothing but scorn for him, and eventually threw him in a pit and left him to die. It was Jeremiah who was suffering the horrors of all that was going wrong in Israel on the brink of the Babylonian captivity, and the people were not listening to him. The Lord comes to him in his sorrow, and in his tears in chapter 29, and verse 11, the Lord says, "I know the plans that I have for you...plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope."

In Lamentations, which is basically the book of weeping, the weeping of Jeremiah, Jeremiah says this, chapter 3, verse 21: "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I have hope.'"

We all live in bleak times of disappointment, disillusionment, where we can't seem to find the light at the end of the tunnel, or we don't know if there's a way out, where everything looks bleak and continues to get worse. This is part of living in a fallen world. This section of Scripture that we're going to look at this morning should be for us a source of hope because here we find the Lord Jesus Christ desiring with all His heart to give to His disciples a hope, and even joy, in the midst of a horrific trial. And what is so amazing about our Lord's concern here, so unique about this concern, is that He knows the eleven disciples are distraught. They cannot see light at the end of the tunnel.

He has been talking now for a very long time about dying. They can go all the way back over a year in His ministry to when they were in Galilee in Mark 9, when Jesus said He was going to die, and He was going to rise. "And even then, they did not understand," Mark 9 says, "and they did not want to ask about it." They did not want more information. They didn't even want that information.

You have to understand that their whole lives had been front-loaded with massive amounts of Messianic expectation of what the Messiah would do when He came. It was part of their whole culture, their whole life. And then they were chosen to be with the One who was Messiah, which only intensified and heightened their expectation that He would establish His kingdom, reign in Jerusalem, destroy their enemies, bring salvation to Israel, and set up the kingdom. But He began talking about *dying*, about death. And in detail, He told them He would be arrested, and He would be beaten, and He would be spit on, and even lifted up, crucified. And He also told them He would rise again. But it was against the grain of such forceful, powerful expectations, that they didn't understand, that they couldn't receive it. And they didn't want to ask any more questions because they didn't want any more information.

As a result of this, the closer they got to the actual cross, the deeper their sorrow grew. By the time we get to Thursday night, where we are in John 16, Thursday night of our Lord's final week in Jerusalem - Friday He will be crucified. We are now a couple of hours at the most from His arrest in the garden. And immediately after that, the mock trial in the darkness of the morning, and then His crucifixion on Friday, their sorrow has reached highly elevated proportions. They know what is shaping up, and our Lord continues to talk about the fact that He's going to die, and that that death is imminent.

Several times in that upper room, which takes up John 13-16, several times He says to them, “Stop being troubled.” “Stop being troubled.” He says it a couple of times – it’s recorded in chapter 14. Another time He says, “I want you to be at peace.” He knows their profound sorrow is related to the fears and the anxieties of His death and departure. Not only has He said He’s going to die, but He has said He’s going to rise, and they don’t necessarily understand how that can be. And then He also adds, “And I am leaving you.” It all looks so very bleak. It’s all summed up in chapter 16, verse 6, where our Lord says about them that because He has said these things about His death and leaving, “sorrow has filled your heart.”

Now, the word “filled” is a very rich word. It literally means sorrow had pushed out every other emotion; sorrow dominated. Usually in life, we can sort of make it through if we can have a little bit of sorrow mingled with a little joy, a little bit of sorrow with a little bit of hope. But sorrow had taken over. It dominated them in spite of our Lord’s promise that He would rise, in spite of the promise that He would send His Spirit to take His place, and that that would be to their advantage because it was better to have the Spirit of God in them than the Spirit of God with them in Him.

They heard His repeated promises. They heard Him talk about death. They heard Him talk about resurrection. They heard Him talk about the coming of the Holy Spirit. All that should have been hopeful, but they are literally completely engulfed in personal sorrow. They’re so wrapped up in their own sorrow that when our Lord talks to them about, “I go to the Father,” which is His own glory, leaving this sin-cursed earth, they couldn’t even respond by saying, “We’re really happy for you.” They couldn’t get beyond their own grief.

So as that night draws to a close, in the last couple of hours, our Lord has a burden in His heart. He has told them everything they need to know. They can’t process it, so they’re engulfed in sorrow. And here we see a most amazing illustration of the sympathy and compassion of our Lord, who wants to give joy to these men in the midst of their sorrow. And keep this in mind: this is in the middle of the night; midnight has passed. This is deep into the darkness of Friday morning.

By Sunday night, their joy will be returned. By Sunday night, He will show up in the upper room, some room somewhere. He will come through the door, and they will explode in joy. So you might think that our Lord could wait and say, “Hang on until Sunday night.” But such is the sympathy of Christ for His own beloved children that even a few hours of sorrow He desires to eliminate.

It’s a marvelous insight into the character of Christ as a merciful, sympathetic High Priest. He could have scolded them. He could have told them to hang on, things were going to change. But even a few hours of their sorrow is a burden that He carries. And so the text is intended for the moment to alleviate their sorrow and give them hope and give them joy. Let’s start in verse 16.

“‘A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.’ Some of His disciples then said to one another, ‘What is this thing He’s telling 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”?’ So they were saying, ‘What is this that He says, “A little while”? We do not know what He is talking about.’”

“Jesus knew they wished to question Him, and he said to them, ‘Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, “A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me”? Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but

your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now, you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.”

The whole point of these amazing words is to turn their sorrow into joy - a joy that is a full, complete, dominating joy. They were full of sorrow. He wanted them to be full of joy, to exchange the dominating sorrow for a dominating joy. And He's concerned about that just in the immediate hours, because all of that sorrow will be dispelled by Sunday night. Amazing sympathy for just a brief time for those He loved so profoundly.

He makes a prediction then in verse 16 – we'll start with that: “A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.” Here is our blessed, sympathetic Lord introducing the opportunity to give a hope and joy to these sorrowful disciples. He is so utterly selfless.

Philippians 2, He is the model selflessness: “Look not on your own things, but the things of others. Consider others better than yourselves. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

He's the model of selfless humility. He was going to be glorified in the presence of the Father. He was going to rise from the dead and be exalted to the right hand of God, back to where He came from. They had no interest in that because all they could see was reality from their own selfish perspective. We see His selfless love, His humility for very selfish disciples. He gives them a hope and joy.

Now what does He mean, “A little while and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while and you will see Me”? Some people say He's talking about the resurrection. He's talking about the fact that, in a few hours from then, He'll be taken to trial, He'll go out of their presence. They actually flee. Only Peter hangs around to see things, and John is at the cross.

So does He mean that they're not going to see Him until the resurrection? Well, John saw Him, Peter saw Him, so that doesn't really apply to all of them. Some others think maybe He doesn't mean the resurrection; maybe He means the second coming.

Now there's a whole case made for the fact that our Lord is saying, “You're going to see Me when I come back in glory.” But that's not really “a little while.” When He says, “A little while and you won't see Me,” He means “a little while.” But if He says, “A little while and you will see Me,” then that “little while” has to be very different than the first one. That makes it very strange, and they actually aren't going to be around at the second coming. What is He referring to when He says, “A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me”?

And by the way, He had spoken like that very frequently. Back in chapter 7, He said, “I'm with you a little while longer.” Back in chapter 12, “I'm with you a little while.” Back in chapter 13, “I'm with you a little while.” It was a brief time, His presence there. It was three years. It was months, it was

weeks, it was days, and now it's just hours. But what is He talking about that "you will then see Me"? The answer comes in verse 17.

The disciples recite in their own minds – this is a soliloquy or private conversation. They're kind of whispering to one another, "What is this thing he's telling 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'?" which means He said that also. So that's the key: "You will see Me because I go to the Father; not because I rise from the dead; not because I return from heaven. But you will see Me because I go to the Father."

"But when You go to the Father, You're going to be invisible. When You go to the Father, that's Your ascension." That's forty days after the resurrection when the Lord, according to Acts 1, ascended into heaven. "What do You mean, we will see You when You go to the Father?" Go back to chapter 16, verse 5, and you have the answer.

Earlier He said, "Now I'm going to Him who sent Me. I'm going to the Father." Just stop at that point: "I'm going." And then go down to verse 7: "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper" – the Holy Spirit, the Comforter – "will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." Are you following that? "If I go, I will send the Holy Spirit to you."

So what He means here is, "A little while and you will no longer see Me, because I will ascend to My Father. And a little while after that you will see Me, because I will come in the form of the Holy Spirit." That is the only possible interpretation, because of His words at the end of verse 17, "because I go to the Father."

Back in chapter 14, verse 17, the same statement: "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it doesn't see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." Then this in verse 18: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also."

What does He mean, "I will come to you"? He means, "I will come to you in the form of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. I will not leave you as orphans." It is the very same thing. He says, "I'll be back. I will be back, and I will be with you, and I will stay with you in the form of the Holy Spirit." This is a great trinitarian statement: the Son, the Father, and the Spirit - three in one. That is the whole point of our Lord in that section.

Look again to chapter 16, verse 13. When the Spirit of truth comes, what is He going to do? Verse 14: "Glorify Me; take all that is Mine and disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." So what our Lord means is "a little while" - looking even into that night – "you won't see Me; then you will see Me." What He means by that is, "You will see Me in a way you have not seen Me before in the coming of the Holy Spirit."

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to make Christ present and resident in the life of every believer. Why He's called the Spirit of Christ. Romans 8 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He's none of His." So Jesus is talking about the dispensation of the Holy Spirit during which the Spirit of Christ displays the promises and glories of Christ, fulfills all the pledges and gifts that Christ pledged to His people in their lives and in the church. Gives to us as well, as we saw, the Scripture.

So He shows us Christ, not only spiritually and internally, but He shows us Christ externally through the written Word. The Spirit says, “I come to reveal Christ.” “I come to reveal Christ.” So our Lord is saying in verse 16, “It’s a little while and I’m going to leave.”

Looking past the cross, past the resurrection, “I’m going to leave. But a little while after that, a little while after that - the Day of Pentecost - I’m coming back, and I’m coming back in the form of the Spirit.” “It’s to your advantage,” chapter 16, verse 7, “that I go away so that can happen.” So that is the pledge and that is the promise.

Now, we understand that because we have the whole of the text here. We’re listening to it thoughtfully and carefully, and we aren’t front-loaded with some of the misconceptions of the disciples. But they didn’t understand it. He is saying, “Crucifixion, yes; resurrection, yes. But more importantly, I’m pushing you all the way to the coming of the Holy Spirit, which happens when I go back to the Father. If I don’t go to the Father, the Spirit can’t come. If I do, He will. I’ll be taken from you. You will not see me, but I will return in the very form of the Holy Spirit, who will live in you.” Incredible prediction, prophecy - fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts chapter 2.

Now, they’re left confused. There’s perplexity in their minds. Let’s look at it in verse 17. So they began to say to one another, “‘What is this thing He’s telling us, “A little while, you will not see Me again; a little while and you will see Me?”’” And all of this is related to Him going to the Father. What are they to think about this? They can’t put it all together. So they were saying, not only thinking and mumbling to each other, but having a conversation about what this all meant. “‘What is this little while? We don’t know what He is talking about.’”

Now, this is kind of a quiet, in-the-darkness, hidden conversation among these men. They don’t want to ask Him because they don’t want unwelcomed information, okay? They don’t want it. So verse 19 says, “Jesus knew that they wished to question Him.” That’s an interesting statement, isn’t it? He knew what they wished. He knew their minds. He knows what’s in men. He knows your thoughts.

For the first time since chapter 14, verse 22, the silence of the sorrowing disciples is broken, and they begin to talk. They’ve been listening for a long time that evening. We don’t have any record they said anything, not since chapter 14, verse 22. Now they begin to mumble and talk because they can’t figure out what this “little while” means. Confused, perplexed, and not wanting to ask - the same as way back in Galilee in Mark 9; they didn’t want information that they didn’t want, and so they are deeply, profoundly fearful and confused.

And, again, I just remind you, by Sunday night they’re going to be full of joy when they meet the risen Christ, and then they’re going to have forty days of instruction about the kingdom with Him before He ascends into heaven and the Spirit comes. It seems like such a brief time until Sunday night when they’ll have joy. But as I said, even this brief time of sadness and sorrow our Lord sees as a burden that He doesn’t want to bear, and so He wants to give them reason for hope, and hope produces joy. He is omniscient - He knows their mind; He knows their pain. And even though their joy will come on Sunday night, their sadness in that moment is a burden in His loving heart.

Yes, He’s concerned about their theological knowledge. Yes, He’s concerned about their willingness to believe the things He says. But He also is concerned about their sorrow. That is divine compassion. That is divine compassion. You will not find that kind of divine compassion associated

with any other deity in the panoply of religions of the entire world through all of human history.

They had decided essentially that they were losing Him, and they were trying to hang on to some kind of last hope. So our Lord says to them in verse 19, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’?” “I know what you’re thinking. I know what you’re saying, even if I can’t hear it.”

Were they saying, “How can you go away and come back? How can you die and rise? Well, Lazarus did. Maybe it’s like Lazarus; you can die for a little while. And there were other people that Jesus raised who died for a little while. What is He talking about?” So He moves to comfort them. So you go from a prediction of His leaving, and yet they’ll see Him, referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit, to the perplexity of these men trying to sort this out against the grain of their own expectations.

And then our Lord offers an illustration, or a parable, to help them, in verse 20: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.”

This is very important, folks; very important that He say this, because it’s absolutely true. If He just said, “Guys, you’re going to rejoice. Guys, there’s going to be a glorious ending to this whole thing; it’s all going to work out wonderfully,” and never said anything about their grief and sorrow, they might have assumed that He was wrong, that He didn’t understand reality, that He maybe wasn’t as omniscient as they thought He was.

So He tells them that they’re going to weep and lament while the world rejoices, because that’s exactly what is going to happen. That is exactly what will take place in a matter of a few hours. When He is arrested, they run, they flee, and they flee at the highest level of their sorrows and fears. They do weep; they do lament. Even Mary, John 20:11, even at the tomb is weeping the same tears that the disciples of our Lord had been shedding. The sadness is palpable in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus, when our Lord runs into a couple of disciples who are just literally shattered in sorrow and grief because they thought Jesus was the Messiah before He was crucified.

So our Lord, fortifying them for the moments of their grief so that they’re not a surprise that makes them think that He doesn’t know what’s happening, says, “Truly, truly.” Twenty-five times in the gospel of John you have in the Greek “amen, amen” translated “verily, verily”; “truly, truly”; or, “It is so, it is so.” “For sure, for sure” would be another vernacular way - “This is going to happen.”

And John uses “truly, truly” so many times because John is teaching truth against the grain of what they had been taught. And so he emphasizes, “This is true; this is true.” It is over against the grain of the errors of apostate Judaism. “This is solemn; this is serious. I’m telling you, you’re going to cry; you’re going to weep; you’re going to be in sorrow. The world is going to rejoice. The world’s going to throw a party when I am on the cross.”

They’re going to be in sorrow. The body of Jesus will lie dead, a bloody corpse. The world has wreaked its murderous will on Him and rejoices in unholy glee. And the disciples are weeping and shattered and devastated and heartbroken, and our Lord knows it’s going to happen. “But,” He says, “your grief” – end of verse 20 – “will be turned into joy,” “into joy.” Joy is the goal; joy is the objective.

In fact, I am convinced that that is how every Christian should live every day of life. Joy should mark our lives. It's a marvelous statement. The very thing that plunged them into grief will cause them to rejoice. It's not that one event gives you grief and another event gives you joy. It is that the very event that brought the grief will be the very event that brings the joy; and that will be true, going forward, in all of redemptive history - the event, the cross, which brought the grief. In retrospect, after the resurrection, they look back, and it is the source of joy.

You know, we have no hymns in our hymnal of blind, hopeless, dead-end grief; but we have endless hymns of joy that go back to the cross. That which was the cause of the greatest grief to the disciples became the source of highest joy. In the light of the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of the Father in the ascension - ascending of the Holy Spirit - the cross becomes the focal point of Christian joy. Joy that began at the resurrection, of course. When Jesus was raised from the dead, they were overwhelmed with joy, obviously. They were rejoicing. But when the Spirit of God came, that joy became a permanent joy, because the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy - joy. It is a kind of joy that is unassailable.

First Thessalonians 1:6 says, "You received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit." "You received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit comes to bring us joy. The fruit of the Spirit again is joy. "The kingdom of God is joy in the Holy Spirit," Romans 14 - a wonderful verse.

So our Lord is saying, "Look, you're going to go through a brief time of sorrow and pain, and you're going to come out the other side, and your grief will be turned into joy." That's His promise. They're perplexed about how that all works.

To clarify it, He tells them a kind of a parable, an illustration, an analogy in verse 21. "Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come." And that, of course, was part of the curse. Remember back in Genesis 3 for the sin of Eve? Women were cursed and having to suffer pain in childbearing to remember the agony of sin. "When a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world." That's the best illustration. Our Lord chooses always the best illustration.

Women suffer greatly in childbirth, I guess. They certainly suffer in ways that men don't, that is for certain. I've been there to see the suffering firsthand; and you would wonder why in the world they would anticipate that and go through that, except for the fact that the result of that suffering is the greatest human joy possible: the birth of a child. Sorrow, pain, anguish produces abundant joy.

The same event that brings the pain, brings the joy; that's the illustration. So our Lord is saying, "The very event that will cause you the deepest grief will become the event that brings you the greatest joy; for out of that event will be birthed your salvation." Verse 22, "Therefore you too have grief *now*; but I will see you again." That is so wonderful.

Back earlier, He said in verse 19, "You will see Me again in the Holy Spirit." But here He says, "I will see you again," which is to say that the Spirit of Christ who comes in us has a communion with us. We receive His presence; He receives our presence. It's another reality in the age of the Spirit - the dispensation of the Spirit that we are, in a sense, indivisible from Christ: "He that is joined to the Lord

is one spirit, that we are one with Christ"; that Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

Christ says, "I'll come back. You'll see Me in the Spirit, in the work of the Spirit in your life subjectively, in the work of the Spirit in Scripture objectively. The Scripture will reveal Me, and the Spirit will reveal Me internally." The Scripture is the external, objective revelation of Christ that the Spirit brings; and the Spirit in us becomes the teacher and interpreter of Scripture, the anointing from God, who teaches us what the Scripture means. And that is the subjective ministry of the Spirit in us, and that is Christ in us.

This is the mystery of the Trinity, and when He comes He says, "Not only will you see Me in the Word; not only will you see Me subjectively alive in you, empowering you, enabling you, illuminating you, but I will see you," as if to say, "I will be in charge of your life, watching you, as it were, from the inside." Amazing. And when that happens – "when I come back and take up residence, your heart will rejoice."

That is the key characteristic of Christian salvation: joy. "Your heart will rejoice with a joy that no one will take from you." No one can take your salvation from you, right? - no one. You're secure in Christ and the Father, John 10: "No man can pluck you out of My Father's hand. No one can take your salvation." Listen: "Therefore, no one can take your joy, because your joy is connected to the hope that you have in that final promise of eternal life."

This joy is permanent joy. That's why the apostle Paul says in Philippians 4, "Rejoice...again I say, rejoice!" Rejoice all the time. This is the will of God: rejoice, rejoice, rejoice.

Well, obviously, I can't rejoice in everything that goes on around me. I can't rejoice in everything in my life. But I can rejoice in my eternal salvation that will never be taken away. I can rejoice in the presence of Christ who will *never* leave me or forsake me. There's no reason, then, in this brief passing through this temporal world that I should live a joyless life when what is most precious to me can never be taken away. Joy has little to do with my circumstances - nothing really to do with my physical circumstances, and everything to do with my spiritual circumstances, which are unchanging and everlasting.

Our Lord, again, is concerned with their joy. It's their joy that's on His mind. "I want you to rejoice. I want your grief turned to joy."

So here is our Lord saying to them, "You're going to have a time of grief. I'm going to come in the form of the Spirit; and when I come, I'm going to do two things: I'm going to reveal Myself to you externally in the Word" - we saw that in the last section of 16 – "and then I'm going to reveal Myself internally, inside of you, dwelling there. Subjectively, I will be in your life, moving in your life. Objectively, I will be revealed on the pages of Scripture. You go to the Word of God, and you will see Me revealed there, and the Spirit of God who is in you will conform you to My image as you gaze at My glory revealed in Scripture." The subjective and the objective come together.

So from this prediction and the perplexity to the promise that "I will come and your grief will be turned to joy," illustrated by a parable, we get all the way down to the last two verses. "And in that day" - What day? - the day the Spirit comes. "That day, the day that I will see you again." Verse 22:

the day that “your heart will rejoice; the day that you will be given eternal joy that no one can ever take away from you; the day the Spirit of God comes.”

For them, it was the Day of Pentecost. For us, of course, as a believer at the moment of our salvation, the Spirit of Christ comes to live in us. “In that day, you will not question Me about anything.” That’s an interesting statement. Here comes a final promise: “In that day” - the day spoken of in verse 22, when the Lord will see them again as He comes in the Spirit – “you will ask Me nothing.”

Let me tell you what that means. Up to now and up to that day - up to the day of the coming of the Spirit after His ascension - they had asked Him everything. He was their personal Wikipedia, if you will. He was their resource for everything. They asked Him everything. They asked Him every question, every issue. They came to Him for every need, every desire. They needed explanations; they came to Him.

“When I come back in the Spirit, in that day, you will not question Me about anything.” Why? “I’m not going to be there. From then on you will, in that era of the Spirit, no longer address your questions, your needs, your desires to Me in the flesh. You have done that until then, and you will continue to do that until then. But after that, you will no longer ask your questions to Me.” The answers will come from the Spirit of truth, who’s referred to all through this. “The answers will come because you will have an anointing from God who will teach you all things, and you will have the revealed Scripture written down.”

But more than that, more than that, here’s the amazing promise: “Truly, truly” - this is so unique – “I say to you, if you ask the Father for *anything* in My name, He will give it to you.” That is a stunning promise. They could go directly to God in the name of Jesus and ask for anything. His promise is that “all of heaven’s riches, all of heaven’s treasures, all of divine purposes and God’s will will be available to you if you ask in My name.”

“What do you mean, ‘In My name’?” “Consistent with who I am, and My will.” I’m asking in the place of Jesus because I know this is what would honor Him and glorify Him. And Philippians 4:19 says, “My God will supply all [all] your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” That’s what it means, “in His name.”

“Until now,” again, verse 24, “you asked nothing in My name.” “You asked Me. You didn’t go to God in My name, you came to Me.” That’s the way it’s been, and that’s right, that’s the way it needed to be. “Now, keep on asking; keep on asking; keep on asking, and you will keep on receiving when you ask in My name.” Why? “So that your joy may be made full.” Just striking concern of the Lord Jesus about our joy.

I don’t know what outsiders think about Christianity, and I’m sure there are times when Christians don’t give a good representation of what it should be. But what our Lord expects our lives to be is simply expressions of unending joy, no matter what. No matter what the temporal circumstances, the eternal circumstances never change. That is why we are commanded to rejoice, “And again I say rejoice.”

And the Lord says, “I want your joy to be as full as your sorrow has been, as dominating as your

sorrow has been. A joy related to the fact that I'm there; I'm with you; I'm living in you; I'm revealed on the pages of Scripture externally; and I dwell in you internally; and I have a place for you in heaven; and you will be there; and nothing can ever change that. And what is heaven? It is eternal joy."

So summing up He says, "Look, separation is going to be very brief. I'll be back. I won't leave you. I'll come back in the form of the Holy Spirit. And the very event that brought you all this sorrow, you'll look back on and realize that the cross was the point of your salvation, and the resurrection sealed your redemption, and your sorrow will be turned to joy, and your joy will be a forever joy that no one will ever take from you, and that joy will be eternal. But even now, that joy should dominate your life because you have access to God for all your needs in My name, in My name."

What a glorious Savior. The cross and all of its agonies is just hours away. He's going to give His life a ransom; He's going to bear the wrath of God. He can already begin to anticipate the nails in His flesh, the thorns puncturing His brow, the spear driven into His internal organs. He can hear the jeers and the taunts of the haters. He can feel the spit, the hellish laughter of His killers.

But what's on His mind? What's on His mind in these hours is the sorrow of His disciples. This is indeed a wonder of wonders. "I want your joy to be full, and I want you to have it now. I don't want you to go even a few more hours without joy." Jesus, when He went to the cross, went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him. His joy is our joy; our joy is His joy.

You should rejoice – I don't care what your circumstances are; I don't care what's going on in your life – that Christ lives in you, subjectively. And you know Him subjectively because He dwells in you. And you know Him objectively because He's revealed on the pages of Scripture, and this is the work of His Spirit. God forgive us if we are not overwhelmed with joy all the time, no matter what the circumstances around us.

Lord, we thank You that Your Word penetrates beyond the superficial in our thinking and our lives. Thank You for the encouragement of this particular passage. Thank You for loving us so much that You desire our joy, and that You will give us eternal joy beyond comprehension. But even now, You desire our joy – joy because you dwell in us and we know you; joy because You are revealed outside of us on the pages of Scripture - New Testament, Old Testament.

We have You; we're not without You. We have the full, heavenly-inspired record of Your person and work, and we also have You living in us. We can go now, O God, directly to You and ask *anything* - anything consistent with Christ's desire - and know that You will hear and we will receive.

Lord, what an open door. What a throne of mercy to which we can come boldly in the name of Christ. Christ has opened the door and given us access. No priest stands between us, no religious dignitary, no ritual. We only need to ask. And, Lord, we could certainly say, "Give us joy; increase our joy."

No matter what this life looks like, no matter what the circumstances, may we find our joy in You, O God, in Christ and in the blessed Spirit of Christ who dwells in us, and who has given us the Scripture. Make us joyful. May it be that the world is literally amazed at our joy, particularly as we live out our Christian lives in dark and troubled times, when people are marked by fear and doubt and questions and anxieties.

This is a very disturbed world in which we live, O God. You know that; we see it. It's plunging into hell at rapid speed. May we live, Lord, in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation with joy, joy that is born of an eternal hope and a present Christ, who is both in us and revealed to us in Scripture. We pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

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