

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 16.16-33



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 16.16-33
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Introduction to *John 16.16-33*

Sorrow and tribulation, joy and peace: You can't be a friend of Jesus and not expect some of each of these. We may joy and peace whatever our trials may be so long as we abide in Jesus, for He is our peace and joy.

In Jesus, moreover, we can ask the Father whatever we want, and He will grant it. When we're *in* Jesus, basking in peace and joy, what we'll want is *more* of Jesus. Be assured, the Father will be pleased for that to happen.

But we mustn't become self-assured or overconfident in our faith. We must always look to Jesus and trust in His Word, even when it's difficult to understand at times. Jesus has overcome the world and all its worries and woes. And in Jesus, we can overcome as well, and live in joy and peace at all times.

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1 An Important Faith Principle

Read and meditate on John 16.16-18.

Jesus spoke cryptically to His disciples on several occasions. Here again He told them something they would not be able to understand when He told it, but that would become clear before too long. His words contain an important faith principle.

¹⁶“But now, in just a little while, and you will not see Me; and yet you will again see Me in just a little while, for then I go unto the Father.” ¹⁷Some of His disciples wondered, saying, “What is this He says to us, ‘A little while and you will not see Me; a little while and you will see Me yet again, because I go unto the Father?’ ¹⁸For we do not know what He is saying.”

- John 16.16-18

Reflect

1. What do you think: Why did Jesus tell His disciples things He knew they would not be able to understand at the moment, but that would become clear to them later? He must have thought that doing this would strengthen their faith in Him. Why would He think that? Complete this prayer: *Lord, there’s plenty I don’t understand at present, but I know that...*
2. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 13.12. What did Paul mean by this? Why can’t we just see everything clearly? How does God’s speaking to us like this help us to grow in faith and obedience? *I only know in part, Lord, but the part I know, let me...*
3. Well, what was Jesus saying to them? First, what did He mean by “A little while, and you will not see Me...” Why not? He had told them this before (cf. Jn. 14.1-4, 28; 16.5-7). Why was it so important to Jesus that His disciples should be prepared for this? Why was it important to them? *Lord, these must have been hard words for the disciples to bear. Surely they were saddened and disappointed. But sadness and disappointment are part of being a disciple, as when I...*
4. Then, what did Jesus mean by “...and again, a little while, and you will see Me...”? To what was He referring. Why didn’t He just say *that*? Why the focus on “seeing” Jesus? Would the disciples have understood the idea of resurrection from the dead? Would they have understood seeing Him again? Why was it important to Jesus to emphasize their seeing Him again? Why would it have been important to them? Meditate on 1 John 3.1-3. *Lord, You have promised that I will see You one day just as You are, and then...*
5. This may seem like a small matter, but it’s not. Jesus never did or said anything that wasn’t significant. In essence, he was teaching this lesson to His disciples: You will know strife and sorrow, but joy and rejoicing lie beyond that. Accept the one, and look forward to the other. Live the joy you will have forever even in the hardships of the moment. This is an important principle of faith living. Meditate on Hebrews 12.1, 2. How can you see that Jesus was only counseling His disciples what He Himself was doing? Bring together into one

the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“But then, if one examines, these are words of consolation: ‘Because I go to the Father.’” For they show that his death was only a translation. And more consolation follows, for he does not say merely, ‘A little while and you will see me no longer’ but adds, ‘A little while and you shall see me.’ In this way he shows that he would return, that his departure would be for a brief time only and that his presence with them would be everlasting.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

What Jesus was saying *obliquely* to His disciples here, He said *clearly* in verse 33. We must prepare for trouble in this world – sorrow, disappointment, even suffering. But we must at all times look forward to the promise that we will see Jesus again, and when we do, we will be like Him. How can you apply this faith principle in your life today?

Closing Prayer

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom *is* the LORD’s,
And He rules over the nations.

Psalm 22.23-28

Psalm 22.23-28 (*Darwall: Rejoice, the Lord is King*)

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
Nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

The suffering King shall eat and praise with us the Lord.
Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.
Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;
All those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.
The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

2 Sorrow to Joy

Read and meditate on John 16.19-22.

Jesus' disciples will know sorrow in this world, but not even sorrow can rob us of our joy.

¹⁹Jesus knew that they desired to ask, so He began to say to them, "Are you inquiring about what I said, 'A little while and you will not see Me; again, a little while and you will see Me'? ²⁰I will tell you what is true: You will lament and weep; the world, though, will rejoice. And you will sorrow, but it will be turned to joy. ²¹A woman, when she is in labor, will know sorrow. Her hour has arrived. When she has given birth though, she remembers not her anguish, just to see with joy the child that she has brought into the world. ²²So you have sorrow now; but you will see Me yet again, and then your heart will have great joy, and none can take this part from you."

- John 16.19-22

Reflect

1. Jesus did not leave His disciples to guess about the meaning of what He told them in verses 16-18. He wanted to make sure they understood. He explained they would weep and lament, even as the world around them was rejoicing. Why does the unbelieving world rejoice to be done with Jesus? Is that still true? How should this affect our calling as Jesus' disciples? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I pray for the lost people I know, that they would...*
2. Jesus did not want His disciples to be overwhelmed by sorrow; rather, in the midst of sorrow, they should remember the joy which is theirs. The world is *happy* to be done with Jesus (so it supposes). Believers *rejoice* to know they'll never be done with Him. What's the difference between *happiness* and *joy*? *Thank You, Lord, for the joy I know from...*
3. Christians, Jesus explained, live in the *present* with a view to the *future*. We aren't trapped in our past, and we don't have to give in to our present circumstances. The *future* holds the key to our joy, and for the Christian, the *future* is always *now*. Explain. *I know a day is coming when I will see You face to face, Lord, and I know that today...*
4. What's the point of Jesus analogy with a woman giving birth (v. 21)? In what sense are we as His followers like that woman? *Today, Lord, I may have to experience disappointment, sorrow, or even worse. Help me to...*
5. Jesus said that no one can take our joy from us. Why is this so? What are the implications of this for our times of trial and sorrowing? How would you use this truth to counsel a fellow believer experiencing a time of sorrow? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

“Those who loved Christ lamented and wept when they saw him apprehended by his enemies, bound, led before the Sanhedrin, condemned [to death], scourged, exposed as an object of derision and finally crucified, his side pierced with a lance and buried. Those who loved the world ... rejoiced when they condemned to a shameful death one who was troubling for them even to look at. The disciples were sorrowful when their Lord was put to death, but when they acknowledged his resurrection, their sorrow was changed to joy. And when they saw the mighty power of his ascension, they were raised up to an even higher level of joy, praising and blessing God.” *The Venerable Bede (672-735 AD)*

The Lord is our joy – to know Him, see Him in glory, walk with Him, draw on His power, proclaim His love to the world. This is what we live for as His followers and friends. How can you know the joy of the Lord more consistently in your daily life?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel;
My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
I have set the LORD always before me;
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16.7-11

Psalm 16.7-11 (*All to Christ: Jesus Paid It All*)

I bless Your Name, O Lord; my mind instructs each night;
You teach me by Your Word and guide me in the right.
 Make me know life’s way! Pleasures fill Your hand;
 Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

You are ever with me, Lord; in You I shall not fall.
But rejoicing in Your Word, I abide within Your call.
 Make me know life’s way! Pleasures fill Your hand;
 Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

Soon Your glory I shall see, for as Jesus rose again,
You will come to gather me to my home with You in heav’n.
 Make me know life’s way! Pleasures fill Your hand;
 Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

3 More of Jesus

Read and meditate on John 16.23, 24.

This promise is so huge, so all-embracing, that we might not believe the Lord meant it literally. But He did. We need to make sure we understand the promise, so that we can claim it daily.

²³“And in that day you will ask Me for nothing. But I say assuredly, whatever you may ask the Father in My Name, He will give you. ²⁴Until now, in My Name you have asked nothing. Ask, and you will have it, and great joy will be unto you.”

- John 16.23, 24

Reflect

1. There’s nothing cryptic or equivocal about this promise. Jesus meant what He said. The challenge to us is to *understand* what He promised, and then to know how to claim that promise for ourselves. First, what is Jesus *not* promising here? Complete this prayer: *Lord, not infrequently, what I want does not line up with what You want for me, so it’s not surprising that...*

2. Notice how Jesus made a connection between the disciples and the Father in verse 23. He indicates that the majority (though not all, of course) of our prayers ought to be made directly to the Father, rather than to Him. Why? And how has Jesus made this possible? It’s not that the Father is more powerful, or more truly God than Jesus. It’s just that He’s the Father, *our* Father, and it only makes sense to come to Him with our requests. Why? *Father, thank You that in Jesus I can come to You, bring my requests to You, and know that...*

3. In this promise, “in My name” qualifies “whatever.” Explain. What would be some examples of asking in Jesus’ Name? *Lord, the better I know You, and what You are seeking, the more my prayers...*

4. Meditate on Matthew 7.7, 8, and Luke 18.1. In the light of these passages, how should we understand what is involved in “asking” the Father in Jesus’ Name? *I confess, Father, that in my prayers I often...*

5. The real promise here is the promise of joy. According to Psalm 16.11, where do we find such joy? If what we’re seeking is *joy*, how do this qualify what we ask for in prayer? Is it possible that what we should be asking the Father in prayer is simply more of Jesus? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

“So what should we pray for? ‘Ask in my name.’ And he did not say what for, but in his words we can understand what we ought to ask for. ‘Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.’ Ask, and you will receive, in my name. But what? Not nothing. What though? ‘That your joy may be full,’ which means, ask for what can finally satisfy you. Because sometimes you ask for nothing. ‘Whoever drinks of this water will be thirsty again.’ You lower the bucket of greed into the well, you pull up something to drink, and you will again be thirsty. ‘Ask, so that your joy may be full,’ that is, so that you may be permanently satisfied, not just so as to enjoy yourselves for a time. Ask for what can satisfy you. Utter Philip’s words, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and that suffices us.’ The Lord says to you, ‘Have I been with you such a long time, and you do not know me? Philip, whoever sees me also sees the Father.’ So give thanks to Christ who took our humanity to himself

for you in your weakness. And get your stomachs ready to be satisfied with Christ's divinity." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Think of all that Jesus is and does. What more could we want than Jesus? If we are filled with Jesus, and overflowing with Jesus, do we not have everything we need? What does it mean for you to seek more of Jesus in your prayers?

Closing Prayer

Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens;
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
Your righteousness is like the great mountains;
Your judgments are a great deep;
O Lord, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.
They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.
Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,
And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

Psalm 36.5-10

Psalm 36.5-9 (*Landas: My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

Your lovingkindness, Lord, is great, it reaches heav'n above;
Your faithfulness mounts to the skies, and keeps us in Your love.
Your righteousness like mountains high and judgment like the deep
Preserve Your creatures one and all and in Your mercy keep.

How precious is Your love, O Lord; we shelter in Your wings.
We drink refreshment to the full from Your abundant springs.
You give us freely of Your grace, we drink it with delight;
Life's fountain is with You, O Lord, in Your light we see light.

4 Loved and Loving

Read and meditate on John 16.25-28.

Jesus wanted His disciples to know that He loved them (Jn. 13). But this was so that they would know that the Father loves them as well. Resting in the Father's love for us is the key to bearing fruit in Jesus' Name.

25 "These things I have spoken unto you in figures; but the time is coming soon when I will speak about the Father to you plainly. 26 And when that day comes, then you will ask in My Name, and I do not say that I will to the Father for you pray, 27 because the Father loves you, since you love Me, and since you believe in Me, that of the Father I have come forth. 28 I indeed have come forth from the Father; now I leave the world to go to Him again."

- John 16.25-28

Reflect

1. Jesus promised to speak to His disciples plainly about the Father at some point in the future (v. 25). The only record we have of Jesus teaching His disciples after the resurrection and before His ascension is Acts 1.1-3. How can we reconcile Jesus' promise to teach His disciples about the Father with what Luke records as the subject matter of His 40 days of teaching? Complete the following prayer: *Lord Jesus, You have said it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom (Lk. 12.32; 22.29). Surely as I seek first the Kingdom of God, I will...*

2. Jesus taught His disciples in both *figurative* language and *plain* speech. Give some examples of each. Why was each of these ways of teaching important? Are they important still? Explain. *I want to understand Your Word, Lord, so speak it to me...*

3. We have access to the Father in prayer for one reason only: We love Jesus (v. 26). How are we able to love Jesus (1 Jn. 4.7-11)? How can you tell someone who loves Jesus? Should we expect to *grow* in our love for Jesus? If so, how? *Teach me to love You more and more each day, Lord, so that...*

4. Jesus continued to emphasize that He had "come forth" from the Father. The Father sent Him to the world (Jn. 3.16), and the beginning point of loving Jesus is to believe this. Why is it so difficult for people in our day to embrace this fact? How does this fact work into your witness for Christ? *You came to this world, Lord Jesus, from the eternal realm of heaven. Now You have returned to heaven, and You are working to...*

5. Jesus was leaving the world to return to the Father Who sent Him. But just because He is no longer *in* this world, does that mean He is not *working* in this world still? Explain. And what is our place in that work? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"For the Father himself,' he says, 'loves you because you have loved me.' Is it the case, then, that he loves because we love or, rather, that we love because he loves? Let this same Evangelist give us the answer out of his own epistle: 'We love him,' he says, 'because he first loved us.' This, then, was the efficient cause of our loving, that we were loved. And certainly to love God is the gift of God. He is the one who gave us the grace to love him, who loved while still unloved. Even when we displeased him, we were loved so that there might

be that in us whereby we should become pleasing in his sight. For we could not love the Son unless we also loved the Father. The Father loves us because we love the Son, seeing it is of the Father and Son we have received the power to love both the Father and the Son: for love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit of both, by which Spirit we love both the Father and the Son and whom we love along with the Father and the Son." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

The Father loved us and sent the Son to redeem us. We believe in Him, and this ignites in us love for both the Father and Son. This love is the work of the Spirit in us, for apart from God at work in us, we can do nothing. Knowing the we only love because we are loved, what can we do to increase in love for God, and for our neighbors?

Closing Prayer

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.
Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;
According to Your mercy remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.
Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

Psalm 25.4-10

Psalm 25.4-10 (*Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day;
According to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way;
The humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

5 Not So Fast

Read and meditate on John 16.29-32.

The disciples sound very sure of themselves. But Jesus cautions them that their faith is not yet what it needs to be. It's good for us to maintain such a mindset, lest we disappoint ourselves – and the Lord.

²⁹They said,
“Now You are speaking plainly, Lord, instead
of using figures.”³⁰And we know now and
are sure You know all things. We understand
You have no need for anyone to come
and question You. By this we know that from
God you have come.”³¹So Jesus answered, “Do
you now believe?”³²The hour is coming to
you, and has now come, when you all will be
dispersed, each to his own, and will leave Me
alone. Yet I am not alone; you see,
the Father Who has sent Me is with Me.”

- John 16.29-32

Reflect

1. Verse 29 rubs me wrong. It sounds like the disciples were saying, “Finally! You’re speaking language we can understand. It’s about time!” They didn’t want Jesus to speak to them figuratively, but in plain language only. They didn’t like having to figure out what Jesus was saying. They only wanted Him to tell them what they could readily understand. Forget about all that figurative, mind-stretching, hard stuff. Are we like this sometimes, where the Word of God is concerned? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Father, let me not despise anything You want to say to me, no matter how difficult, and no matter...*
2. In verse 30, the disciples asserted that they “got it.” They used a form of the verb *to know* which indicates they thought they’d arrived at all the truth they needed, and that they really and fully believed in Jesus. Jesus knew everything, and they knew Jesus. Good to go, yes sir. Is this a good place to be? Explain. The overconfidence of this statement is punctuated by their saying Jesus didn’t need anyone – including them – to ask Him anything. What did this suggest about their sense of where they’d arrived in faith and understanding? *Lord, guard me against hubris of any sort, but especially where it concerns...*
3. Jesus picked up on their hubris, saying in effect “Oh really?” (v. 31) There is no mistaking His point. He intended to dismantle their confidence in themselves (“Now we are sure...”) and refocus them on trusting in Him, *without thinking they had it all figured out*. How do you suppose Jesus’ question in verse 31 affected the disciples? Do we need Jesus to ask that question to us from time to time? Explain. *Father, let Your Spirit convict me whenever I turn from trusting and waiting on You to...*
4. Jesus “spoke plainly” in verse 32. They wanted plain speech, no figures or tropes or types, He would give it to them. Is this the kind of “plain speech” the disciples had in mind? But why did they need to hear this? Do we need to be confronted like this by Jesus, plain-speaking from His Word? Why?
5. Consider what Jesus was facing over the next 24-72 hours. Meditate on Psalm 88. Do you sense the aloneness of the sufferer here? How terrible that must have been! We’ll never experience anything this fearful and agonizing, although we all feel alone and friendless at times. What was Jesus’ comfort as He looked ahead to the next few days? How was that a comfort to Him? How can we tap into that comfort when we are feeling all alone? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“But how can they say, ‘Now you speak plainly and do not utter proverbs’? Had the hour, indeed, already come—the hour when he had promised that he would no longer speak to them with proverbs? Certainly such an hour had not yet come, as is shown by how he continues speaking to them. . . . They say this then because, although our Lord’s communications to them still continue as proverbs to them, they are so far from understanding them that they do not even understand their own lack of understanding his words. They were still infants who had no spiritual discernment concerning what they heard.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Our experience of the Christian life is never as good as it gets, and we never know Jesus well enough to cease from pressing on to know Him more (Phil. 3.7-11). How should knowing this translate into your daily walk with and work for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men.
From the place of His dwelling He looks
On all the inhabitants of the earth;
He fashions their hearts individually;
He considers all their works.
No king *is* saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver *any* by its great strength.
Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy,
To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.
Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.

Psalm 33.13-21

Psalm 33.13.22 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.
Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

6 We May Have Peace

Read and meditate on John 16.33

The world can be a scary and dangerous place, as the disciples would shortly learn. But it doesn't matter, because we have a source of peace nothing in this world can defeat or deter.

³³“These things I say to you, that in Me you may dwell in peace. In this world, you will know great tribulation. Be of good cheer, though, for I have overcome the world.”

- John 16.33

Reflect

1. What did Jesus mean by saying that in Him we have peace? What kind of peace? How do we experience that peace? Why does it matter? That is, what's so precious about peace? Complete this prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for Your peace, because in Your peace, I...*
2. In what sense is that wonderful peace *in Jesus*? That is, why is *Jesus* our source of peace, and not agreeable circumstances or conditions? How do we lay hold on that peace that is *in Jesus*? *Nothing can keep me from You and Your peace, Lord, except...*
3. English translations are a little misleading when it comes to the word rendered *be of good cheer* in this verse. What it really means is “to have confidence and firmness of purpose in the face of danger or testing – to be courageous, to have courage, to be bold” (Louw & Nida), or “to be of good courage, be of good cheer...to be confident, hopeful; to be bold, maintain a bold bearing” (Mounce). When we are facing situations that threaten our peace, what does Jesus command us to do? How can we do that? How does this relate to being at peace in Jesus? *Father, help me always to have courage and to keep on...*
4. Jesus says plainly (not figuratively) that as long as we are in this world we can expect to know tribulation. Such as? Why? Shouldn't our Christian life be all ease and happiness? Explain. *Prepare me, Father, to face times of testing and trial by...*
5. In what sense has Jesus *overcome* the world? Since Jesus has overcome the world like this, does it make sense for us to continue trying to live in *this* world, on its terms, rather than in the Kingdom as it is coming? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“When he says, ‘These things have I spoken to you, that in me you might have peace,’ he refers not only to what he has just said but also to what he had said all along, either from the time that he first had disciples, or since the supper, when he began this long and wonderful discourse.... He declares this to be the object of his whole discourse, that is, that in him they might have peace. And this peace will have no end but is itself the end of every godly action and intention.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Peace is the Kingdom condition that accompanies living out the Kingdom character, which is *righteousness*. As we live that character and know that condition, *joy* is the abiding consequence of Kingdom life (Rom. 14.17, 18). We can only know such peace joy when we are *in Jesus*. But when we are *in Jesus*, nothing in the world can deprive us of our peace and joy. How can believers encourage one another with this promise?

Closing Prayer

The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.
The voice of rejoicing and salvation
Is in the tents of the righteous;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.

Psalm 118.14-17

Psalm 118.14-18 (*St. George's Windsor: Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*)

In the Savior we are strong! He is all our strength and song!
To His grace now raise your voice; in His righteousness rejoice!
For the Lord does valiantly; we shall live eternally.
Praise His works with all your breath, you whom He redeems from death.

7 Sorrow and Tribulation, Joy and Peace

Read and meditate on John 16.16-33.

Jesus is realistic about life as one of His friends and followers. It's not an easy road, but it leads to joy and peace and overcoming the world.

¹⁶“But now, in just a little while, and you will not see Me; and yet you will again see Me in just a little while, for then I go unto the Father.” ¹⁷Some of His disciples wondered, saying, “What is this He says to us, ‘A little while and you will not see Me; a little while and you will see Me yet again, because I go unto the Father?’ ¹⁸For we do not know what He is saying.” ¹⁹Jesus knew that they desired to ask, so He began to say to them, “Are you inquiring about what I said, ‘A little while and you will not see Me; again, a little while and you will see Me?’ ²⁰I will tell you what is true: You will lament and weep; the world, though, will rejoice. And you will sorrow, but it will be turned to joy. ²¹A woman, when she is in labor, will know sorrow. Her hour has arrived. When she has given birth though, she remembers not her anguish, just to see with joy the child that she has brought into the world. ²²So you have sorrow now; but you will see Me yet again, and then your heart will have great joy, and none can take this part from you. ²³And in that day you will ask Me for nothing. But I say assuredly, whatever you may ask the Father in My Name, He will give you. ²⁴Until now, in My Name you have asked nothing. Ask, and you will have it, and great joy will be unto you. ²⁵These things I have spoken unto you in figures; but the time is coming soon when I will speak about the Father to you plainly. ²⁶And when that day comes, then you will ask in My Name, and I do not say that I will to the Father for you pray, ²⁷because the Father loves you, since you love Me, and since you believe in Me, that of the Father I have come forth. ²⁸I indeed have come forth from the Father; now I leave the world to go to Him again.” ²⁹They said, “Now You are speaking plainly, Lord, instead of using figures. ³⁰And we know now and

are sure You know all things. We understand You have no need for anyone to come and question You. By this we know that from God you have come.”³¹ So Jesus answered, “Do you now believe? ³²The hour is coming to you, and has now come, when you all will be dispersed, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone; you see, the Father Who has sent Me is with Me. ³³These things I say to you, that in Me you may dwell in peace. In this world, you will know great tribulation. Be of good cheer, though, for I have overcome the world.”

- John 16.16-33

Reflect

1. Jesus considered that some things were best left as mysteries for His disciples. He did not always speak plainly, and the figures He used at times were difficult to understand. How should we regard those passages of Scripture that are difficult to understand or to reconcile with other passages? Should we not *believe* them, simply because we can't fully *understand* them? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Teach me to trust Your Word always, Father, even when...*
2. Jesus spoke of sorrow at the beginning of this passage and tribulation at the end. How should this shape our expectations as followers of Christ? How should knowing this factor into our proclamation of the Gospel? *Help me to be always prepared, Lord, for whatever trials You may be pleased to bring my way, so that...*
3. The focus of this passage is on joy and peace, and knowing these is bound up in Jesus Himself (vv. 22, 33). How would you counsel a new believer to know peace and joy in the midst of sorrow or tribulation? *Help me, Lord, to look to You and cling to You in times of trial, and I will...*
4. Again, Jesus reiterated His promise that the disciples could expect to receive from the Father whatever they asked for in His Name (vv. 23-26). How should this promise guide your prayer life? Given this promise, do you think it's a good idea to have our prayers line up, as much as possible, with what Jesus has revealed in His Word? How might you do this? *Thank You, Lord Jesus, for giving me access to the Father in prayer, and for promising that...*
5. This passage also contains a sobering lesson on faith. The disciples were a bit overconfident here (vv. 29, 30), but Jesus, ever the realist, set them straight (vv. 31, 32). How can we avoid being too confident about our faith, and too sure of ourselves as disciples? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“We are persecuted when God allows the tempter the power to persecute us. But when God does not want us to suffer this, even in the world that hates us, we wondrously have peace and are of good cheer because of him who said, ‘Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.’ And truly he has overcome the world, because the world is strong only insofar as its Victor wants it to be. He has received from the Father the victory over the world. And because of his victory we can indeed be of good cheer.” *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

Christians are brothers and sisters in the tribulation and Kingdom (righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, Rom. 14.17, 18), as John reminds us in Revelation 1.9. Being a friend and follower of Jesus, John says there, requires *patience*. What kind of patience? How should we practice that patience, in the light of what Jesus has

taught in John 13-16?

Closing Prayer

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom is the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.
All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done this.

Psalm 22.23-31

Psalm 22.29-31 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

All the prosperous of the earth shall before His mercy fall;
Bending low before His worth, hear them humbly on Him call.
Even those low in the grave He will by His mercy save.

Let the generations all witness to His saving grace;
Let them to all nations call, "Bow before His holy face!"
Let the children of the earth hear of Jesus' saving worth!

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why do you suppose it has pleased our heavenly Father that we should have sorrow and tribulation in this world?
2. What's the key to not being overwhelmed by sorrow or tribulation? How can believers help each other during times of trial?
3. As followers of Christ, we should be confident, yet cautious. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 10.13. How can we recognize when we are in temptation, and how can we find a way of escape through it?
4. What does it mean to pray in Jesus' Name, and what can we expect when we do? Having prayed thus, how should we go forth from prayer?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 16.16-33? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

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Thank you.