**John 16:12-22**

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15  All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 16  “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” 17 So some of his disciples said to one another, “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 am going to the Father’?” 18 So they were saying, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” 19  Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’? 20 Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. 21  When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. 22  So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

**“A Little While?!?!”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be with all joy unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Early in the Easter season, we received stability that witnessed to the fact of Jesus’ resurrection. The blessing for those first witnesses to see and touch the crucified Jesus was glorious, but it was not going to last. Now in this second half of Easter, a shift takes place to see how God already had plans for a far better stability. The Holy Spirit sent by the Father and the Son would do the work of uncovering God’s truth in the Gospel. This fullness is what the apostles sought to share with all future generation. St. John made it clear, “And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” (1 John 1:3-4).

Of course, we live in a world where the joy of stability is constantly shifting beneath our feet. Consider what happened this past week. Those who enjoyed Andrew Jackson on the twenty-dollar bill will now in the future see the new face of “Harriet Tubman.” Likewise, where retirement is a goal about kicking back and enjoying life, a new study released challenges this view showing how, “adverse effects increase the longer retirement goes on.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Again, even among a circuit meeting of pastors the tone changed when a smartphone beeped and someone said, “The rock star, Prince, just died.” Instability shrouds life, but many still find ways to enjoy it. What then, is the joy Jesus gives to us by saying, “In a little while?”

Certainly, much of what Jesus said in the Upper Room set a tone apart from other words in His life. This is especially true when the disciples heard him say, “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” To us it is simple, Jesus was addressing that in a few hours He would die and later in a few days, He would rise from the dead. Yet, such a clear picture for us was not so much for the disciples. Their minds were set upon worldly ways of this life. At best, they figured Jesus was maybe going to leave for a bit and return from wherever he needed to go. Their reason could not make sense of both the suddenness of His death and the less likely hope of His resurrection.

“In a little while” is a joyous truth Christ alone speaks for our life. Even if His death and resurrection are now easy to understand, human reason is no better off. Our sinful man, even as the baptized, struggles to bear with “a little while”, but wants to make what God says captive to how we see life. Regardless of who says it, the stamp of authority, how it makes you feel, or any other measuring stick. This joy uses man’s reason based on the flesh and not the Spirit. It leads into many deceptions, false teachings, and finally snuffs out faith in Christ. Yet, the Bible is the work of the Spirit, a gift of joy from God that gives us Jesus. As St. Peter says, “you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:23).

How perceptive was Jesus to see the confusion mulling around in the hearts of His disciples. First, He told them what was going to happen to Him, but now He reveals to them what this, “little while” was going to do to them. They heard Him say, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.” The impending death of Christ would cause great grief over their life. Those three days would seem like an eternity. The enemies of Jesus would rejoice, laugh, and bring distress to His disciples. Yet, the key of such suffering and temptation was to know how these things would change, “In a little while.” This is what Christ proved by His resurrection turning the sorrow of His disciples into joy, but even doing the reverse to the world where that joy ended up being short-lived.

“In a little while” is a distinction Christ joyful makes and we must learn to see it. The Wisdom of King Solomon points out, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven…” (Eccl 3:1). At the present, the world welcomes any to rejoice in its mocking, vanities, and enjoyments. Christ and His Church appear to be off to the side, even insignificant. To leave this rock and a hard place and snuggle up to the world is no way of out. It is to exchange one kind of suffering for a more severe judgment. Christ put this division between the world and His Church to show His glory. Glory He now brings that forgives the shame of our sin, anxieties over life, and doubts that deny Him. Grief from the darkness of today is to remember the light of those words, “a little while.” Sorrow will turn into joy at the proper of time. This trade-off is far more precious in Christ than a world left in its sadness.

The concluding example by Jesus on childbirth was to take one of the greatest joys in this life and reveal the greater joy of life in Him that has no end. A woman bears with the pain of it all only because she awaits the life of her child. Yet, how much greater is the distress of this old creation than the new one risen up by Christ! At the present, the great joy of childbirth still suffers great agony. Some women never know this joy of bringing forth a child, while others sadly have this joy only to lose their child by miscarriage. Yet, women still ignore the suffering to bring life into this world, even when the Lord told the daughters of Eve, “in pain you shall bring forth children” (Gen 3:16).

A fallen creation groans over childbirth, but has reason to rejoice at the birth of any child. How much more value is there with the life God gives by way of baptism that none need fear! “In a little while” is comfort from Christ promising our joy will never perish or falter. This restored creation comes not by what man does by recycling life, but Christ having redeemed life by His sacrifice. It is what He brings in all newness on the Last Day. We rejoice in this comfort admits all trials and pains even now for Christ dwells with us at the Lord’s Supper. As Luther asserts, “… so let’s not dwell too long on our suffering, how much we hurt and how unfair those are who cause the hurt, but instead nurture that happy outlook which depends on Christ’s pledge, ‘I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.’” (House Postils 94-95).

What then, is the joy Jesus gives to us by saying, “In a little while?” Stability not subject to change, but able to keep us forgiven and free. It comes from Christ who speaks so that by faith alone all comfort is in Him. It remains to be a gift worked by the Spirit, a Word of life making us distinct in this world. It endures the test of time, because this newness is part of a new creation. As the first disciples had their sorrow turned to joy by seeing Christ risen. So too, “a little while” can seem like forever for the grieving, but Christ gives a new perspective by His cross. God can turn sorrow into joy for a time, but the eternal treasure is what none can take away for you have Christ. Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. http://www.bbc.com/news/health-22553577 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)