**John 16:23-33**

In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. **24** Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. **25** “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. **26** In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; **27**  for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. **28**  I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.” **29** His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! **30** Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” **31** Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? **32** Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. **33** I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

**“Christ Our Peace”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The Easter season carries a consistent theme that is most helpful for us in this discouraging world. It is nice to hear a variety of Scripture text each Sunday, but if you have paid attention, the gradual has stayed the same. “Christ has risen from the dead. God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor. He has given him dominion over the works of his hands; he has put all things under his feet.” Here is our steady theme that refuses to get lost in other details regardless their importance. Christ’s victory is the heartbeat of His Church with all encouragement in Him.

In a world where condemnation comes from all corners of life, people become immune to what they hear. It is vital then for us never to leave out what we are for and not merely what we are against. In other words, rather than just railing on abortion, we are for life. Rather than just being against homosexuality, cohabitation, and fornication, we are for marriage. Rather than just rejecting the falsity of other religions in this country, we are also for protecting the right of religious freedom. Much unsettling things Jesus said in the Upper Room, but His last words should get the attention. “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” Against all discouragement Christ encourages trust in Him who has overcome the world for us.

Now discouragement comes first from the dishonesty of our own flesh. When Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving, human pride got the best them again. They said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!” It was true Jesus told them plainly about leaving to go to the Father. Yet, their understanding denied what He said about the value of His cross. This same discouragement happens when our reason runs off into glory. The works of man maybe seem more useful than how God humbly works for our good by His Word. Maybe pride blinds us to a life based upon our own standards, while as sinners we have no clue. Worst of all, softening the Laws judgments only suppresses what Christ freely won for all by His sacrifice.

Discouragement also comes from whatever the world weighs down on us. The disciples had dealt with hard issues with Christ. From lack of food for five thousand or unforeseen waves on the Sea of Galilee, Christ still answered their cries for help. Yet, in a few hours the weight would become greater than ever before. Jesus told them, “Do you now believe?” His suffering and death would make it seem like the world was in charge and faith worthless. Likewise, when the cross rises up from conflict, illness, oppression, or disaster a giant gap appears between God and us. The world bring its hardship, burdens, and problems with a path to abandoning Jesus as the most natural thing to do. Our failure turns to self-made idols, rejection of suffering, and sees no answer from God.

Discouragement comes finally from the devil seeking to take away all comfort. Death showed how weak the disciples were and fear drove them away from Jesus. It left Him alone, but the fact is they were alone. He had told them, “…You will be scattered, each to his own home.” Greater than sin is death for it undoes our life. The Devil uses this power to put despair into all hearts regardless of age, health, or wealth. Some try to make peace with death, but it does not speak a kind word to anyone. Such a force makes us seem small and insignificant lined up in a battle where there is no chance against this enemy. There is much against us in terms of discouragement, but all we need is Jesus for He has overcome the world.

Christ honestly reveals the critical place for encouragement is to rests in His Word. He says, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.” The emphasis is on the “I and me” while the “you” of the disciples is not much of anything. He alone can do all things as He promised. Christ plainly spells out there is no other peace. Regardless whatever other peace or the people who utter them by their glory, they will turn out to be nothing. Only Christ speaks the truth for He alone has the sole purpose to save sinners. His flesh did not deny the way of the cross, but claimed its glory by His Word. Since He “said these things” not for Himself but us, everything about His life, death, and resurrection has value to give us peace.

Christ also knows the troubles of this world means encouragement to stand on His Word. For He said, “In the world you will have tribulation.” Therefore, where the peace of Christ rests, troubles of the world will follow. This is the tension at the present where the world calls such peace from God miserable, bothersome, and a curse. Yet, Christ calls it all the opposite to be joyful, easy, and a blessing. This peace threatens the world, because it has nothing to do with the works of man, but how God works all good for us. The gift Jesus gives is His faithfulness that cannot fail. His Word destroys your sin with forgiveness so that faith abounds in Him. The gap caused by disaster, pain, loss, or struggle Christ closes up by baptism proving God knows all suffering. Jesus turns with peace in Him and His means of grace give the answer the world cannot give.

Christ gives all comfort then to rely on His victory as encouragement to share His Word. He tells us, “But take heart; I have overcome the world.” To take heart is a command, since God has changed the mood no matter what we see, experience, or face in this life. It means we now call upon our Father in heaven by Jesus’ Name for He hears us without any hesitation. Even the Psalmist encourages us saying, “Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved” (Psalms 55:22). This comfort in Christ’s victory has undone the power of death. He has turned the devil into a desperate loser. If our battle is anything, it comes upon the victory that has already laid low the enemy. Whatever word or example we give to people, it must be the victory of Christ for what He has won and what He gives to us.

The last words of Jesus in the Upper Room stand out. They are for us to read, mark, and memorize. When anxiety, fear, doubt, despair leave us in the dark in this life. There is Christ our light who has the last say. “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” Against all discouragement Christ encourages trust in Him who has overcome the world for us. Amen. Now the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.