

Easter 4 (Jubilate) – Vicar Anderson sermon
St. John 16:16-23 “Your Sorrow Will Turn into Joy.”
April 30, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Merciful God, faithful Father, You chasten all whom You love, that they may not be condemned with the wicked, we humbly ask You, comfort us in our afflictions with Your Word and Spirit, so that by patience we may overcome the miseries of this present world, in the firm and joyful hope that You will speedily turn our sorrow into joy and glory everlasting; for the sake of Your dear Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (The Lutheran Liturgy, companion altar book for The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 121)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the 16th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

“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. 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. 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.”

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, even though we live in a world with sorrows, trials, and tribulations, we are able to rejoice in our risen Lord, who promises no one will take away your joy, dear fellow redeemed:

Change is in the air. We have watched all the snow melt away. The flowers are starting to bloom. I have noticed the green starting to appear in the grey trees as the new leaves begin to grow. I think it is safe to say that most people enjoy spring. It is a season of growth and warmth. We are transitioning from a season that is kind of dark and dreary. Those winter months can be long. We have also finished a few holiday seasons, and as we acknowledge those seasons, for some maybe those seasons aren't as joyous as we think. During those dreary months, it is a time where people tend to pass away. The holidays that we love so much can sometimes become a time of mourning and sorrow. As the spring brings us out of those dreary months into warmth and sunshine, Jesus is telling His disciples that He will bring them joy. It won't start out like that. He says they will first weep and lament. Jesus' comfort for His disciples comes to you as well, your sorrow will be turned into joy!

Jesus in His discourse is telling the disciples this great message. He has told them on more than one occasion that He is going to be arrested and He will die and will rise again. Jesus tells His disciples that what He is saying, they are not going to like it or want to bear it. It will look like their lives are going to be extremely hard. Jesus assures them that they will have clarity and He

will explain more to them. The Holy Spirit will guide them. Everything that Jesus is telling His disciples is so that they can be strengthened. When Jesus ends with saying that He is going to leave them, the disciples hold onto that sentence. They are having a hard time understanding what is happening. The disciples will still have their doubts, or they will not believe it.

Even after our text for today and Jesus continues to tell the disciples what is about to happen. The disciples respond, *"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"* (John 16:30). The disciples think that they understand what is happening and they put their trust in their own belief. Jesus tells them what will happen. *"Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone"* (John 16:31-32).

Jesus wants the disciples to realize they are going to have sorrow and will lament because Jesus is going to be arrested, tried, and executed. He is telling them this so that they are aware of what is happening and so that they will be strengthened. The disciples see what is happening and they fall into despair. Like the disciples, we can have a lack of understanding with what God tells us. His commands are clear to us. Most of the time, we like to pick and choose which commands that we want to follow. The world will question the truths that we believe, and they will put us on the spot. The world wants us to cave to its demands. The devil helps the world out by getting us to question what God says. And when we cave and question God's authority, we can fall into despair.

When battles happen on these different fronts, we can look to our own strength. We can think that our belief is our own. We forget that it is by the work of the Holy Spirit that we believe. When we tell the Holy Spirit "I got it from here," this is usually the time that our lives start to fall apart. The disciples soon found their lives falling apart at the seams.

There are two time periods that Jesus is referring to when He says, "a little while." Our "little while" here on this earth does come with suffering and trials and our lives can start to fall apart. We are plagued with sicknesses. We live and watch as those whom we love pass away. We watch as many, maybe someone close to us fall from faith. The world rejoices and ridicules us. Like the author of Lamentations, we can sometimes say, *"My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD"* (Lamentations 3:18). The world tells us to "just toughen up". However, there are some trials where there might not be a toughening up to bear it. As the pain and suffering can continue to weigh us down, we can forget about the cross that won us salvation and instead fixate on our own cross.

The third commandment can bring us strength. We come to church to receive comfort. Many think that church is only filled with those who have everything going well in their lives. The world doesn't realize that we are coming here to receive help and medicine from the loving doctor. When we neglect coming to worship. Instead of putting off our burdens on Jesus who says, "I will carry them", we can continue to carry them ourselves and they will drag us down.

Jesus was not lying when He said that the disciple's sorrows would turn to joy. They saw their risen Savior. He was not a ghost, but He was God in the flesh. They were comforted when they saw their teachers' hands and his feet. They saw the spear mark in His side. The disciples witnessed Jesus fulfilling what He said He would do. The Son of man would suffer and die on

the cross for the sins of the world. Like the turning from dreary winter to beautiful spring, three days later Jesus rose from the dead.

Jesus illustrates this sorrow and joy. A woman ready to give birth has pain as her child is coming into the world. Once her baby is born, the mother is filled with joy as her child has arrived. She forgets all about the pain. The sorrow of Jesus being dead doesn't compare to the glorious joy of Him risen from the grave! The disciples would watch their Savior leave again. Like the disciples after Jesus' ascension, we are living in a "little while." There is sorrow now, but there will be great joy when Christ returns for the Resurrection of the Dead!

As you wait for that glorious day, Jesus does see all your struggles and hardships. He hears your cries. There are many accounts where you see the compassion that your Savior has for people. St. Matthew records, *"he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"* (Matthew 9:36). He had compassion for those who lived while He was visibly on earth, and He has compassion for you right now. He carried your burdens and sins on His shoulders and took them to the cross. As He turns the disciples' lament into joy on that Easter day, that same day He turns your sorrows into joy!

Your comfort and joy are not in the things of this world, but in Jesus' death and resurrection. The things of this world will pass away. Your laments turn to joy because even though there are struggles and trials in this life, you have been saved from eternal suffering. Jesus glorious resurrection assures you that God accepts Jesus' sacrifice for your redemption. You are redeemed children of God and you will leave this world of sorrow and strife to your blessed inheritance of Heaven.

Every day we get closer to the hour that this life will pass away. We also see every day how people attempt to cope on their own with all the world's pains. Many feel that there is no way out of this. That there is no comfort. As many despair, we hear Jesus' Words to proclaim the Gospel. It is the power of the Gospel that turns sorrow into joy. We can share with others the comfort that we have in Christ. He is our strength. He is the One who carries us through this life because we don't have the strength on our own. And when we need that reminder ourselves, we come to worship, repent of our sins, and again receive the comfort and strength that comes to us through the Word and sacraments. We then continue waiting and confessing, *"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end"* (Lamentations 3:22).

As we rejoice in all the blessings that God has given us in this life, we can also rejoice that God keeps track of time way different than we do. We find the joys in spring, but we know that those dreary months will come back. Our lives will continue to have hardships and trials. But Jesus says, *"A little while, and you will see me no longer, and again a little while, and you will see me."* Our time here on earth is only a little while. Every day is a blessing, but we know that soon our rooms will be prepared. Christ will call us to our heavenly home where our sorrows will cease. We will have constant joy because we have not been forgotten. Jesus has risen from the dead, and in a little while, we will see Him. Amen.

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

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