

The Fourth Sunday of Easter – Pr. Faugstad sermon  
St. John 16:16-23: “No One Will Take Your Joy from You.”  
April 26, 2026 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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O blessed Lord, who promised Your disciples that through Your Easter victory their sorrow should be turned to joy, and their joy no man should take from them: Grant us, we pray You, so to know You in the power of Your resurrection, that we may be partakers of that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory; for Your holy name’s sake. Amen. (*Parish Prayers*, ed. Frank Colquhoun, p. 88)

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

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*The sermon text for today is written in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:*

[Jesus said:] “A little while, and you will see Me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see Me.” / 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’?” So they were saying, “What does He mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what He is talking about.” / 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’? 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. In that day you will ask nothing of Me.” (ESV)

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

In Christ Jesus, “*who for the joy that was set before him – the joy of saving you – endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God*” – from which He dispenses His gift of joy to you (Heb. 12:2), dear fellow redeemed:

The chief priests had the apostles arrested for their public preaching and teaching. They and the Jewish Council strictly charged the apostles to stop teaching in the name of Jesus. They threatened them in every way. They physically attacked them and beat them up. But instead of going silent or going into hiding, the apostles went right back to their work, “*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name*” (Act. 5:41).

Paul and Silas received the same rough treatment when they proclaimed the Gospel in Philippi. They were beaten with rods and sent bruised and bleeding to prison where their feet were fastened in the stocks. How did they respond to this unjust treatment? They passed the night by “*praying and singing hymns to God*” (Act. 16:25).

Not just the apostles have responded in this way. We hear rejoicing from the lips of people who have lost all their earthly possessions, people who have been attacked for speaking the truth in love, people who experience weakness and pain from a terminal illness, people standing at the graves of their loved ones. How can people in these circumstances rejoice? How is this possible?

Unbelievers do not understand. When Christians are in some sort of crisis, they are quick to ask, "Where is the God that you say loves you and cares for you? If He loves you, why would He let you go through these difficulties?" They think that believing in God is only worth it if it makes your life better on earth. "What good is a God who doesn't keep you from pain and suffering?" Thoughts like these have crossed our own minds as well. We wonder why God lets certain trials come our way, or why He doesn't bring us immediate healing and help.

Jesus does not promise His followers a care-free and happy life on earth. In today's reading, He told His disciples, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.*" He shared these words with them the same night He was betrayed and arrested before He was nailed to the cross on the following day. His suffering and death would cause them great sorrow, while many others would rejoice. But their sorrow would last only "*a little while.*" They would see Him again, and their sorrow would turn into joy.

Those were comforting words, but the sorrow and pain were still out in front of them. They heard the promise, but they couldn't understand what blessings would come of it. We also hear God's promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5), that He is with us always (Mat. 28:20). And yet, it's easy to forget that when we are preparing for a challenging life event. Maybe it's a hard treatment plan or a complicated surgery, and we don't know if it will fix the problem. Or we know we should speak to someone about his wrongdoing, but we are afraid of the anger or repercussions that could come from it. Or we know we should admit our own sins, but we don't want anyone to think less of us.

Jesus used the example of a woman going into labor and delivery. She is thankful that God has blessed her with a baby and given her strength to carry it for nine months. She is eager to meet her little one. But the pain is real. In the midst of that pain, she might feel that no one understands the suffering, and that it may never come to an end. But then it does, and "*she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.*"

Jesus said to His disciples that in a similar way, they had sorrow now. They were worried about the enemies of Jesus who wanted to kill Him, and Jesus' words about His departure caused them great grief. Jesus could see the worry and sadness on their faces. He knew that while He suffered in the coming hours, they would suffer too. Part of their suffering would be their guilt at having deserted Him, their shame at all their courageous talk being so cheap. But after this anguish, Jesus promised them, "*I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice.*"

He kept that promise. For "*a little while*" after His death and burial, the disciples wept and mourned as though He were never coming back. They went into hiding with the windows shuttered and the doors locked. But on the third day, Jesus saw them again. Rising from the dead as He said He would, He came to them bringing His message of peace and forgiveness. And just as He predicted, the disciples' hearts rejoiced; they "*were glad when they saw the Lord*" (Joh. 20:20).

The source of our joy is not a feeling that everything is going our way.  
It is not being successful at our jobs and having a lot of money and a nice house.  
It is not having the respect of everyone around us.  
It is not staying healthy and active till we reach a good old age.  
It is not avoiding death or never having to experience the death of a loved one.  
Having good things in this life and honor and a long life are blessings from God, but they are not the source of our joy. They might bring us joy for a little while, but they do not last.

The joy that God gives is not a feeling. It is a gift won for us by a Person. Our joy is the same joy the disciples had. It is the joy of a holy Man who had shown Himself to be God in the flesh, dying on the cross and then coming to life again. Beforehand, the disciples could not understand how Jesus' death would benefit anyone. But after His resurrection, they learned that His death was the necessary atonement for all sin, and that it meant salvation for mankind. His resurrection showed the entire world that sin is forgiven, and the whole world is reconciled to God.

This is the source of our joy.  
Jesus' death and resurrection means that He is not against me; He is for me.  
He is not ashamed of me; He loves me.  
He is not far away from me; He is with me always.  
He does nothing to harm me, but works everything for my good.  
Like He promised His disciples, He also promises us that He will see us again, and we will see Him, when He comes again in glory on the last day.

Until that great day of rejoicing comes, while you remain here in this world, it could be that your troubles and struggles are not likely to change or improve. You might carry the heavy burden of sorrow over loss. Your physical pain might linger and get worse. You might not regain the abilities you have lost. You might not feel happy. But you can still have joy. If the apostles could limp away with fresh bruises and injuries rejoicing, if Paul and Silas could sing hymns while their feet were in the stocks, we can rejoice in the midst of our troubles as well.

We always have cause for rejoicing because Jesus is our Savior – every minute, every hour, every day, for a lifetime. St. Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi after he had experienced that beating and imprisonment in their hometown: *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice”* (Phi. 4:4). The key to our rejoicing is *“in the Lord,”* in what He has done for us and what He continues to do for us.

When He meets us in the Divine Service, He brings joy with Him. We express this joy after the Absolution, the forgiveness of our sins, by joining the angels in their Christmas song, *“Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”* We sing for joy after hearing Jesus' words in the Holy Gospel, *“God be praised for His glad tidings.”* We greet Him with joy in the Communion liturgy like the people did on Palm Sunday, *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”* And after we receive His body and blood for the remission of our sins, we sing in the hymn of thanksgiving, *“Break forth, my soul, for joy and say: What wealth is come to me this day!”* (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #325, v. 2).

Our Sunday gatherings are filled with joy. Even the fact that we worship on Sunday is an expression of joy because Sunday is the day of our Lord's resurrection. But you might not always

or even very often feel the joy when you come to church. That doesn't mean there is something wrong with you or your faith. You might come here carrying very heavy burdens, invisible to everyone else, and you don't feel very joyful.

There is joy here, but it doesn't always come through feelings. It does come through Jesus' Word and Sacraments. These holy means are how the Holy Spirit works joy in our hearts, even when we are suffering. Joy is second on the list of the fruit granted by the Spirit: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy"* (Gal. 5:22). The Holy Spirit brings you joy as a gift through the message of Christ's death and resurrection.

No matter how much suffering you have to endure, how much sorrow, how much injustice, how much pain, how much affliction, no one can take away from you what Jesus has done for you. No one can take away His perfect life that counts for your righteousness before God. No one can take away His holy blood that washes you clean from all sin. No one can take away His victory over death that assures you of your resurrection on the last day and eternal life with Him.

And if no one can take away your Jesus, what He has done for your salvation, then no one can take away your joy. Jesus' promise long ago to His disciples is just as much a promise to you: *"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.**"*

*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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