

That Your Joy May Be Full – John 16:16-24

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John 16:16-24. We're continuing our study of the Gospel of John that we may believe and live. Believe and keep believing. The purpose of the entire book.

And we're in the middle of what's often called Jesus' "Farewell Discourse." His final conversation with the Disciples to prepare them for what's to come.

But it's not just a history lesson. Especially this passage; and this topic. It applies to us. It applies to me. It applies to you. *That your joy may be full*. The last six words of v24.

That's the point this morning. That our joy might be full and untouchable. Full and unalienable; an inseparable part of who we are. Like our unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the Declaration of Independence. Jesus is telling us that joy can be an inextricable part of who we are, in its fullness.

And yet many people have very little. Even Christians. Who of all people should have an abundance. But instead of joy characterizing their walk and life, pessimism does. Instead of happiness, sadness. Instead of delight, drudgery.

If that's you, or you're lacking joy in any way, listen carefully. Because it doesn't have to be that way. And it shouldn't.

Intro

[16] *"A little while* [Jesus says], *and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.*" Remember, it's the night before his crucifixion and burial when they wouldn't see him anymore, and then his resurrection 3 days later when they would.

So v16 should be understood to say – *"A little while* [about 18 hours], *and you will see me no longer* [I'll be in the grave.]; *and again a little while* [in three days], *and you will see me.*" (ESV) All of which we know with the benefit of hindsight. But they didn't.

[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'?"* [Which he just said a few minutes ago in v10. [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'?"* I imagine their heads were just about nodding off their shoulders. "Yes, yes, yes. That's exactly what we're asking."

But as he often does, that's not what he tells them. He goes deeper. He gets at the root issues. He gets at the heart. Because who cares about hours and days if you have no joy? Who cares about how much you know if Eeyore is your guy?

[20] *Truly, truly, I say to you*, [amen and amen; his go-to expression of emphasis] *you will weep and lament* [mourn and grieve], *but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful* [he reiterates what he just said], *but your sorrow will turn into joy.*

[21] *When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come* [her time to deliver; with all the pain and difficulty that go with it], *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.*

As a quick sidenote, the phrase, "*a human being has been born into the world*," implies that a baby is a person both after *and* before birth. A human being *in* the womb and a human being *out* of the womb. Because he doesn't say that a *fetus* has been born into the world, but a *human*. A person. With every right to life that you and I have.

But his point here, is to illustrate the coming sorrow and joy of the Disciples. And ours too. [21] *When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow*. But when the baby's born, joy.

[22] *So also you have sorrow now* [as they were starting to get it], *but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.* Let's stop there.

The first thought we can't afford to miss, is that . . .

Our sorrow is the world's joy (v20a)

V20 again. *Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.* Pretty straightforward. Our sorrow is the world's joy.

But why do I say "our" sorrow is the world's joy, instead of "their" sorrow? The Disciples.' Wasn't Jesus speaking to them? Wasn't he referring to his impending death?

Yes. Yes. But *their* sorrow took place 2000 years ago. And ceased shortly thereafter.

But for us it remains. And so does the world's *joy*, because the *situation* remains. In fact, I think Jesus was conveying a double meaning here. Intending his words to directly apply to the *Disciples*, in *that* day, and to *us*, in ours.

Because just like them, we no longer see him. *A little while* [Jesus said in v16], *and you will see me no longer*. It was true after his death, it was true after his ascension, 40 days later, and it's still true today. We still don't see him.

So it's not just *their* sorrow Jesus has in mind, but ours. And it wasn't just the world's joy in *that* day, but our day. Because while the cat's away, the mice play.

While we yearn for his *return*, the world celebrates his absence. "Eat, drink, and be merry" they say. While we *mourn* the lack of righteousness, the world whoops it up. Our sorrow is their joy.

What we think is terrible and grievous – like abortion, and homosexuality, and transgenderism – the world thinks is great. What we think is debauchery – like fornication, adultery, and porn – the world thinks is awesome. What we think is sinful – like looting and riots – the world thinks is cool.

In the absence of Jesus, our sorrow is their joy.

• But it's not all sorrow

The life we live in Christ while he's away is not *all* mourning and weeping. Just like the cross was a mixture of "sorrow and *love* mingled down," our life is a mixture of sorrow and *joy* mingled down. Joy in the Lord. Joy in fellowship. Joy in worship and loving, serving and blessing.

Abide in me and I in you, Jesus said, *that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (John 15:11) Right now. So it's not all sorrow, but a mix.

Which is just like a woman in labor. The very illustration Jesus used in v21.

I'll never forget Becky's first delivery. The pain started at home with some discomfort, but by the time we got to the hospital it was nearly debilitating. So they gave her some drugs to "take the edge off" they said. But she soon found out, that was like exchanging knife for a sledgehammer. The pain was still there and the sorrow still present.

But in between the contractions there were sweet moments of peace, and bliss, and even joy. Like the time near the end of one break, when she said, "Wow. I was just walking with Batman and Robin in a flower garden."

Was her labor *all* suffering? No. But neither was it all joy. There was an uncomfortable mixture. Back-and-forth. Back and forth.

Which is just like our lives, is it not? Times of great joy and fellowship and love, mixed with times of great sorrow and suffering and heartache.

But someday, when Jesus returns, it's gonna be all Batman and flowers. *All* joy. Which is the very next point that Jesus makes.

Our joy will be the world's sorrow (v20b)

Will be. [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.* Implying that the opposite is also true. That the *world's* joy, will turn into sorrow. And indeed it did.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the rulers and authorities were nervous and concerned. Both the religious *and* secular authorities. Not to mention the demonic ones. The rulers and authorities of this present darkness. Who undoubtedly wept and gnashed their teeth at his resurrection. It was sorrow all around.

And the same will be true someday in the future. When we're in heaven and the world's in hell. When we stand before the Great White Throne Judgment with *confidence*, and they cower in fear. When our name is *found* in the book of life, and theirs isn't. When we plead the blood of Jesus, and they can't. When we enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and they don't. Someday, our joy will be the world's sorrow.

And I'm not talking about a *surface*-level joy, a skin-deep happiness. I'm talking about . .

• **A supernatural delight in the person of God, the people of God, and the work of God**
That kind of joy. A Spirit-given delight in who God is and what he's doing. A supernatural giddiness over his plan and his work; and the people he's gathering to do it. Our joy in that respect, will be the world's sorrow.

In fact, it already is. Like so *many* spiritual realities, it's both already and not yet. As we rejoice over God's forgiveness, right now, the world is *miserable*; due to their conviction. Our joy is *already* the world's sorrow.

When we're *happy* in Jesus, they're sad in sin. When we're *full* of hope, the world is hopeless. When we're at peace, they're in turmoil.

Our joy will not only *be* the world's sorrow, it already is. But the *fullness* of both is still to come.

And thank God it *is* coming.

Thank God our sorrow is momentary (v21-22a)

That's the third thought Jesus conveys. Our sorrow is the world's joy, but thank God it's momentary. Thank God the dark night of this world doesn't last forever. Thank God joy comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:5)

After saying that a *woman's* sorrow is short-lived, he says in v22 – *So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice.* Your sorrow will cease.

Just like the sorrow of a woman in *labor* is momentary, so our sorrow in life is momentary; while we wait for the return of Christ to make all things new. To come again and receive us unto himself. And change us from one degree of glory to another.

Thank God for that! Thank God our sorrow is momentary. Even though it doesn't seem like it. I know. I know.

But the day is coming. Dawn is breaking. When our mourning will turn to dancing and death shall be no more. No more crying and no more pain. No more disappointment and no more loss. For the former things will pass away, God says. (Rev 21:4) And on the timeline of eternity they'll be but a microscopic speck.

[22] *You have sorrow now* [Jesus said], *but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice.* Your sorrow will cease.

During another labor for Becky, our second, the baby started showing signs of distress. She was caught in the birth canal, and they couldn't figure out why. And as you might imagine, the situation occupied all our attention.

But right in the middle of it all, Becky pulled off her oxygen mask and said, "Somebody pay attention to *me*, I'm going to throw up!" And without a hitch, a nurse handed her a bedpan and went right back to the baby.

Needless to say, they were a bit concerned. And we were too. But thank God it was momentary. Thank God the baby recovered, and Becky delivered a healthy little girl.

And when she did, do you think there was any thought of the former concern? Any lingering sorrow?

Not at all. It was the *furthest* thing from our mind. The only thing we felt was joy; and relief. Elation and gladness. Wonder and delight.

[22] *So also you have sorrow now [Jesus said], but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice.*

So we do not lose heart. That's what Paul said. **2 Corinthians 4:16–18** – [16] *So we do not lose heart.* [No matter what the situation.] *Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* [17] *For this light momentary affliction [of sorrow, and concern, and anguish, and loss] is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,* [18] *as we look not to the things that are seen [the things of this world] but to the things that are unseen [things above; the things of God]. For the things that are seen are transient [passing away], but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

Thank God our sorrow is momentary. Thank God this isn't it, and we need not lose heart.

And . . .

Praise God our joy is forever (v22b)

Thank God our sorrow is momentary, and praise God our joy is forever. V22 again – *You have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.* No one. Not the powers of darkness, not the results of elections, not the thoughts of radicals, no one. Our joy is forever.

It was true of the Disciples when Jesus rose again, and it's true for us when Jesus *comes* again. *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.* (2 Cor 4:17) Eternal. Praise God.

Eternal and forever. Because the *reason* for our joy is eternal and forever. Christ crucified and risen. Christ in us and for us. Christ with us in heaven. And us with him for all eternity. Our joy is forever because Jesus is. Praise God.

And the key to it all, stunningly so, stunningly simple, is our prayer.

Our prayers make all the difference (v23-24)

It wasn't just the appearance of *Jesus* that would bring joy to the Disciples, but their prayers that followed. And ours too.

[23] *In that day* [the day of his resurrection for them, and the day of his return for us] *you will ask nothing of me.* Because in his presence we *have* all we want.

In the meantime – *Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.* [While we wait for his return.] [24] *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

In other words, our prayers make all the difference in our joy. *Ask* [v24b; pray; petition], *and you will receive, that your joy may be full.* That.

Which means our prayers make all the difference in our joy. All the difference between full joy and partial joy. Great joy and piddly joy. Unspeakable or unremarkable. Full of glory or full of nothing. Our prayers make all the difference.

It's not the *only* factor. It's not the only means of joy in our lives. Abiding in Christ, and obeying Christ, and loving Christ are too.

But even then, prayer is the catalyst. Prayer is the *path* to abiding. Prayer is the *nudge* to obey. Prayer is the *conduit* of love. Just like talking with your spouse is the conduit of love in marriage. No talk, no love.

So too with God. The fullness of our joy depends on the fullness of our prayer.

And if we pray in *Jesus' name*, it's doubly true.

• In Jesus' name

Because according to v23b – *whatever you ask of the Father in my name [Jesus said], he will give it to you. . . . Ask, and you will receive.* (24b)

Does that mean if I pray “in Jesus' name” for a parking spot, he's obligated to give it? No. We've talked about this. Back in chapter 14. (13-14)

To “pray in Jesus' name” means 5 things:

According to his will

Consistent with his character

Submissive to his authority

With his support

For his glory

If all five of those things are true, he will answer. He will give it. *Including* a parking spot.

And why? Why does he answer? *That your joy may be full.* (24b) Stunning. Our joy is not only dependent on the *presence* of Jesus, and our *hope* in Jesus; but our *prayers* in the *name* of Jesus.

One of the reasons God answers, is to fill us up with a supernatural delight that can't be taken or shaken.

Summary

So how about we get on our knees this week and repent of our *prayerless* lives, and start practicing prayerful ones. Why wouldn't you? Joy awaits. Even in the midst of sorrow.

Prayer – Father, forgive us for being prayerless. Forgive us for asking little; asking nothing. Forgive us for not talking to you like we should. Forgive us, and restore unto us the joy of our salvation. Joy in the morning and joy in the evening. It's why we pray, God. For your glory and our joy. In Jesus' name, amen.

You Are Loved