

See the Son. Believe for Life.

A+ Benefits – John 16:4b-33

The world effectively changed forever in 1945 when the US tested the first nuclear weapon in New Mexico. Of course, not terribly long after that we dropped two bombs on Japan and brought WW2 to an end. But the introduction of nuclear technology dramatically changed the shape of international politics for years to come in the cold war. One journalist, Walter Lippman, described the change brought about by Nuclear weapons like this in a 1962 article in The Atlantic:

*THE age we are living in is radically new in human experience. During the past fifteen years or so there has occurred a profound revolution in human affairs, and we are the first generation that has lived under these new conditions. There has taken place a development in the art of war, and this is causing a revolutionary change in the foreign relations of all the nations of the world. The radical development is, of course, the production of nuclear weapons.*

Notice his language that we have a radically new human experience, a profound revolution, and new conditions. This type of language isn't unique to the Nuclear Age. We have a tendency to view many moments like this. The "internet age" would be a similar idea.

I bring this up because in John 13-17 Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure, but it's not just about him leaving and them getting along without him. Jesus' departure through His death and resurrection inaugurates an entirely new era or age in human history. It's a dramatic shift. One author put it like this:

*"Jesus's entry into human history – his earthly life, his death, and his resurrection from the dead – marks the climax of the biblical story. Jesus reveals the coming kingdom by his way of life, his words, and his actions. At the cross he challenges and conquers evil itself. The new day of resurrection for all creation dawns when Jesus rises from the dead."* – Craig Bartholmew and Michael Goheen

And with this new day or new era there will come significant benefits for His disciples. Those who are connected to Him and who abide in Him will benefit greatly. Jesus has been talking about the changes throughout chapters 13-16 but in the rest of chapter 16 He will get very specific as to the wonderful advantages

coming to his followers because of the dawning of a new age. So, in John 16:4b – 33 we will see **5 Benefits Disciples Enjoy Because of the New Covenant Age.**

### **1. The Spirit's Work in the World (vv. 4b-11)**

Look with me at the second part of verse 4. **What things is he talking about?** Most likely he's referring to the persecution they will face from the world, which he described in chapter 15 and 16. He's been the lightning rod for hatred while he's on earth, but now he's going away from them, and He wants them to understand why he's going away. Look at verse 5. **So, when you first read this it's easy to think that Jesus is wrong here.** The disciples have asked him where he's going. Look at 13:36.

Jesus isn't confused here. He's making a different point, which is clarified by verse 6. **The focus of the disciples has been on their loss of Jesus and the sorrow they feel and not on the significance of WHY he's going to the Father.** They haven't asked about what His going away will accomplish and that's what Jesus is getting at here. And you can see Him explain this in verse 7.

The point here is not that Jesus and the Spirit can't exist in the same space, sort of like two Marty McFly's can't be in the same time period in Back to the Future. **The point is that unless Jesus dies, rises, and goes to the Father the Spirit won't come because the Spirit characterizes the messianic age or the age of the kingdom of God.** And the kingdom of God would only come through Christ's work on the cross.

Again, notice the language in verse 7 that it is to the disciple's advantage that the new era of the Spirit and the Messianic age come. **That idea drives the rest of the passage.** It's a good thing to enter this new era. Why? Look at our first benefit in verse 8.

**Jesus will send the disciples out into the world to bear witness, which we talked about last week, but the Spirit will do a massive work of conviction in the world in this new age.** This word convict means to expose or bring to light. It can give us the picture of courtroom proceedings with the Spirit acting as the lawyer and the world on trial. **Verse 8 gives us some specific areas where the Spirit will bring conviction and verses 9-11 spell these out.**

Sin is the charge brought against the world. **The fundamental problem of sin is moral autonomy.** Human beings think and act as if they are independent of God and able to decide for themselves what is right and wrong. This is sin and it drives sinful actions and the Spirit's role is to expose this harmful way of living. Righteousness is the standard to which humans are held and judgment is the reality that there will be a penalty to which sinful humans who lack righteousness are held.

Look, at the end of the day, apart from God, humans cannot have a basis for morality. **They can only observe what is in the world and can never explain what ought to be morally.** The Spirit's role is to point out the moral bankruptcy of life apart from God. And His work is a great blessing and benefit to Christ's followers. We speak the truth, and the Spirit does His work in those around us. Not only does the Spirit work in the world for our benefit, but He works in disciples as well.

## **2. The Spirit's Work in Us (vv. 12-15)**

Look at verse 12. **The full reality of Christ's death as well as the meaning of it were not something the disciples were ready for at this point.** But they will understand in the age of the Spirit. Look at verse 13.

Notice the name change. He's the Spirit of Truth and He will guide them into all truth. Why? **Because He's speaking and guiding into the truth of God and pointing toward Jesus Christ, who is the way the truth and the life.** Look at verses 14-15.

Now, I think this promise was given primarily to the disciples who were alive and listening to Jesus here. So, what does this mean for us? **Well, as the Spirit guided them into the truth and brought understanding concerning the purposes and plans of God and drew attention to Jesus Christ, these disciples recorded what they learned, didn't they?** And we have access to that in this book. Listen to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. **If you want the truth, open this book and read what the Spirit guided the disciples into and what they wrote down.** This is precisely how the Spirit continues His work in us today.

## **3. Indestructible Joy (vv. 16-22)**

The conversation in John 16 goes in an interesting direction here. Look at verse 16. **As I mentioned earlier, the disciples are not clear on all of this yet and we see that in verses 17-19.** So, what does Jesus mean by this? I think that becomes clear

in verse 20. Their weeping and lament will come because of his death and the world will rejoice at His death. **But there will be a dramatic change that will radically transform their sorrow into joy.** Of course, that event will be Jesus' resurrection. It's a promise that the disciples will see Jesus again after His resurrection. He gives them an illustration in verse 21.

Of course, we can all understand the transformation from sorrow to joy when a child is born, but this isn't a randomly chosen illustration for them. **Jesus has specifically chosen the wording here of "her hour coming" and he's chosen this picture because it's used in the OT to describe Israel's suffering for her sins.** Listen to Isaiah 26:16-18. Israel's sins and suffers God's judgment and cannot bring about her own deliverance. Look at verse 18 again. **But then notice the language of verse 19.** The expectation is that through suffering the dead will be raised and joy will come.

I think Jesus uses this image here regarding His death to pick up this OT image used of Israel. What's he saying then? **It's through his suffering and death on behalf of Israel and in her place that He will bring about the deliverance and resurrection of many.** And this will result in indestructible joy. Look at verse 22.

Here's the benefit for us. **The reality of Christ's resurrection enters us into a new age where nothing can take our joy away.** There are clearly times when life stinks and is hard. People are sinful and jerks. Bodies get old and things break, slow down, stop working, and get frustrating. **But you and I can always look through the suffering to the truth of resurrection life.** Bethany told me this week about a podcast she listened to where they were interviewing a blind woman who is a Christian. **She said that multiple times a day she says to herself, life is short, and heaven is long.** That's not an escapist's mindset that tries to check out on this life. It's a joy producing reality because of what Jesus has done. But there's more.

#### **4. A New Relationship with God (vv. 23-28)**

Notice the language that begins verse 23 and verse 26. **Again, Jesus is pointing to a new era which he calls "that day."** Jesus has spoken before about the life of prayer that will be possible for his followers in the new age, but He returns to it again because it's so vital to their ongoing spiritual lives. Look at verses 23-24.

Up to this point the disciples have not had to ask the Father anything in Jesus' name because He's been with them. Now they will pray to the Father in Jesus' name and receive clear answers to their prayers, and this will bring about great joy.

In addition to a new life of prayer, they will have great clarity on God's love and their understanding of God. Look at verses 25-28. Now, let's just be clear here that verse 27 is not saying that God only loves the disciples because they love Jesus. Over and over again John has explained the initiating love of God for His people. Love for Jesus is a result of God's love for us and works itself out in this new age of the Spirit. And of course, this new age comes because of Jesus' return to the Father, which verse 28 summarizes.

Now, what's wonderful about all of these benefits is that they do not come to us because we earn them or are so holy or wonderful. They come to us by God's grace despite our ignorance and sin. We are weak and slow to understand and sometimes we are even quick to turn away from the Lord. We've seen the slowness to understand with the disciples and we see it again in our last benefit.

### **5. Victory Over the World (vv. 29-33)**

Look at verses 29-30. They think they have it, but they can't have gotten it because the new era hasn't come yet. Jesus makes this clear in verse 31 with his question. And they will continue to struggle. Look at verse 32.

I hope as you read this passage you see yourself in the disciples. But recognizing our shortcomings in the disciples isn't meant to cause shame or overwhelming guilt. Instead, it's meant to direct our hope and our confidence to where it really should be. Look at verse 33. Notice two things. There's a promise of peace, but where can they access this peace? In Him. And He's overcome the world.

Now, let's talk about the language of overcoming the world. It means to win a victory. Jesus has already told them about the persecution and tribulation they would face in the world, but they can stand firm in the midst of that because Jesus will win the ultimate victory over the prince of this world and His system. How? This Greek word translated "overcome" is the same word that John used in Revelation 5:1-10. Listen to this passage as we are told exactly how Jesus wins the victory and conquers.

The beauty of this is that you and I, as we abide in Him, and are connected to Him, and trust in Him, are carried along in His victory. Some of us have forgotten the benefits we have of this new age. Go back and pull out your benefits package and remind yourself of what you have received by the grace of God and the work of Christ. Let's pray.

## Sermon Reflection Questions

12/4/22

- How is the “new era” Jesus brings about different from what has come before Him?
- Compare John 16:5 and 13:36. Is this a contradiction? Explain what Jesus means in 16:5.
- How is it a benefit for the disciples for Jesus to go away? Can you think of any OT passages that promise the coming of the Spirit with the New Covenant age? (Hint: I didn’t give these in the sermon. You are on your own!)
- What does it mean to “convict” in verse 8?
- We mentioned that the fundamental problem of sin is moral autonomy. What does this mean? How do you see this in the world around us today? How do you see this in your own life?
- If the promise in verse 13 is primarily meant for the disciples with Jesus in the upper room, in what ways does the Spirit guide us into truth?
- Why does Jesus choose the illustration of a woman and child birth in verse 21 to speak about his suffering and resurrection?
- How does the hope of resurrection provide consistent joy in our lives?
- What does Jesus mean by the phrase “in that day” in verses 23 and 26?
- How has Jesus overcome the world? What does this mean for us? How can this truth help you this week?