

The Deep Sorrow of Night; The Joy of Morning

I. We Need A Guide

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. **13** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. **14** He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. **15** All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you. (John 16)

We understand the value and the function of a guide. I knew a man who was a fishing guide. He was thoroughly familiar with the lake and could show visiting fishermen where the best fishing spots were, what time of day and what kind of weather the fishing was best, what kind of bait to use, and how to fish for particular species of fish.

I knew another man who was a bear-hunting guide. He knew the mountains like the back of his hand.

I knew a man who had a cabin in the wilderness Colorado and for about \$5000 per person, he would fly hunters out to the cabin and serve as their guide as they spent a week hunting bears, elk, or moose.

Or, lets look at a more Biblical example of a guide. Israel had just escaped Egypt and entered a barren wilderness. They were totally unequipped for the hard life of camping in the wild. Where would they find food? Water? How would they survive against the dangers of the wild? Desert marauders? Wild beasts? Poisonous creatures? Which direction should they go? How far is it to the next civilized development? There is no question they needed a guide. Moses led them out of Egypt, but how was he qualified to serve as their wilderness guide? What experience did he have? He didn't know the territory. They needed an experienced guide. God guided them every step of the way. He kept them safe from marauders. He led them to water. He fed them and protected them by day and night. The wilderness story is a perfect example of how God guides and provides.

But Jesus says the Holy Spirit will provide the same services to the New Testament people of God. This world is the wilderness. We are the sojourners. There are hidden dangers lurking in our path ahead. How do you expect to make the journey without the expert guide?

II. I Have Some Bad News

20 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

This is a very interesting passage. Notice the powerful contrasts.

The disciples will not only experience such deep sorrow as to cause weeping and lamenting, but it will come at a time when the world is celebrating and rejoicing. This powerfully illustrates just how out of sync Christ's disciples will be with the world.

There are two applications of this passage.

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A. The first and primary application is to the disciples.

Jesus told his disciples, “Therefore, you already have sorrow.” We have been aware of the anxiety, confusion, and sorrow of the disciples as we have studied the past two chapters. There seemed to be a dark cloud descend on the disciples from the moment Jesus ate the Passover meal with them and foreshadowed his impending death by designating the bread and cup as symbolic of his body and blood. Then Christ’s repeated references to leaving them and sending another Comforter to accompany them actually was no comfort at all. They were still stunned and alarmed trying to come to grips with the sudden revelation that their beloved mentor was leaving them. Their anxiety would turn to deep sorrow as the trial and crucifixion unfolded before their very eyes, culminating in the lifeless body being laid to rest in a borrowed tomb, and the tomb sealed with a large stone. The disciples would return to their homes with that nauseous feeling we all have after we have finished the funeral services for our closest loved ones. The official ceremony is over, but the pain of aloneness has just started.

B. The second application ministers to us.

Obviously, the occasion of the disciples anxiety and sorrow is unparalleled. We will never experience the same situation, but we all know sorrow. Some know sorrow at a deeper level than others. One of the most difficult areas of ministry is trying to minister to those who are in sorrow. The reason that is difficult, for me personally, is because I don’t like people to suffer. I want to make things better for them, but emotional pain heals slowly. I want them to be better now, but I can’t bring about improvement fast enough.

But there are two things found in this passage that minister most effectively to people in sorrow.

First, Jesus knows. He knew before you knew. He knew the depth of the sorrow before you knew there would be sorrow. The fact that He knows implies that He properly prepared you.

It is somehow wonderfully therapeutic to know someone understands what we are going through. Jesus not only knows as a matter of information, but He knows and understands as a matter of personal experience.

Isaiah described Christ as “a Man of sorrows acquainted with grief.” (Is 53:3)

Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon on man of sorrows and pointed out that it does not say “a sorrowful man”, but “man of sorrows”. That means more than just a man who tasted of sorrow, but a man in whom sorrow had become a vitally integrated part, a man so thoroughly acquainted with grief it became a part of his identity. Spurgeon says some men are men of pleasure or men of wealth, but Jesus was a man of sorrows. Spurgeon says, Jesus and sorrow might well have changed names. Spurgeon said, we might call him a man of eloquence for never a man spoke like he did. We might call him a man of love for there was never a love like His. We might call him a man of holiness for there was no fault in him. We might call him a man of labors for he was always about his Father’s business. “Still, as conspicuous as all these, yet had we gazed upon Christ, and been asked

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afterwards what was the most striking peculiarity in Him, we should have said His sorrows.” He was not only a Man of sorrows, but he was pre-eminently the Man of Sorrows. No one knew sorrow more than Christ. He was acquainted with grief.

When we suffer, we want to talk to someone who has suffered like us. We want someone who understands what we are thinking, how we are feeling, and what we are going to say before we say it. We find no peace in trying to describe our feelings to clueless friends who stare blankly and can't possibly understand. We want to talk to someone who knows and understands.

Second, it's going to get better, which leads us to the next point.

III. But I Also Have Some Good News– “Your sorrow will be turned into joy”

Jesus employs an interesting example of sorrow turning to joy – that of childbirth.

21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. **22** Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

Men can only know this superficial information. Women fully understand what Jesus said.

Jesus said, the woman experiences sorrow when she suddenly realizes the hour has come. There is no stopping this now. Everything has been set in motion and in the hours that lie ahead there will be indescribable pain. The focus at this point is not the joy of a bouncing baby. The focus is the excruciating pain she has to first endure. But the astounding miracle is how quickly the entire countenance of the birthing mother can change from the deepest throes of anguish to immediate joy at the sight of her baby – from screaming in agony to, moments later, awash in unspeakable joy – laughing and crying at the same time. It is that moment when they realize the worst is over and nothing is left but the presence of a beautiful baby. Out of utter chaos and near death came a beautiful miracle.

The odds are incalculable that I will never give birth to a baby. But I have tasted sorrow. You have too. I have been in what seemed to be the deepest, darkest pit, drowning in despair, wondering if I would ever see the light of day again, finding it almost impossible to believe I could ever return to any semblance of normalcy in my life. Many of you have been in the pit. Broken relationships, death of a loved one, loss of a career, financial disaster, or a lawsuit against you that threatens to take everything you have.

I have counseled many people who sat across from my desk and found it impossible to see any hope, any future. It looked as dark and hopeless as one could possibly imagine.

Without fail, one truth I consistently try to get to settle into their spirit is this: The sun is going to shine again one of these days. Just hold on.

The Psalmist said it so perfectly:

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Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning. (Ps 30:5)

There it is in a nutshell. So simple, so short, but so powerful and true.

Now there are many different reasons people are in deep sorrow. Some will pass with a little time, and some may carry their sorrow through their entire life ; and never find release until they finally enter into that eternal rest. But the kind of sorrow and anguish we experience as a result of trying to love God and serve Him' the kind of sorrow we feel as we battle Hell for the very lives and souls of our own children; the kind of sorrow and anguish we feel because this hostile world turns against Christ and Christians and Christianity; for that sorrow born purely as a result of our faith in Christ, I can tell you that sorrow will dissipate like the morning fog when we finally realize what good God is bringing out of our suffering. When we see the spiritual victories we have labored so hard for, when we see God's will birthed out of the travail of our prayers and labors, then we will know the miracle of sorrow turning to joy.

Just like the birth of a baby turns sorrow into joy;

Just like the tomb giving birth to the risen Savior would turn the disciple's sorrow into joy;

Just like that we know that whatever sorrow we face in the work of the Lord and in living for Him and serving Him will turn to joy. No matter how great the struggle to continue to be his disciples and to faithfully do his work, do not be discouraged. Your family may fight you because of your faith in God. Your friends may desert you because of your faith in God. Your boss may fire you because you stood for the right. But when you see what God birthed out of your struggles, the joy of realizing God's purpose for leading you the way he has will bring fountains of joy into your life.

Just hold on. Your trials and tribulations are but for a night. But morning is coming and joy comes in the morning!