

## Sermon for Cantate Sunday - John 16:5-15

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

One of the most frustrating things about God is that He refuses to follow the plans that we make for Him. In fact, more often than not, He actually does the opposite of what we want or expect. We say left; He goes right. We point up; He moves down. We want black, He gives white. Nothing seems to go our way, and if it does, it never lasts long. Turns out the perfect job has its headaches. The dream marriage has its nightmares. Even innocent children are never above suspicion. Welcome to the world outside of Eden.

Life is a mixed bag of up and downs, highs and lows, pains and pleasures. The truth is, in God's plans, the lows are highs and the pains are pleasures. Failure in the eyes of man is God's reason for claiming success. Which is better: that a man have a six-figure income, a trophy wife, and the best things money can buy – and end up in hell; or that the same man go bankrupt, his wife leave him, and he end up in a homeless shelter – but finally through all this, repent and believe, die and go to heaven? The world gives standing ovation for the first man, and hides its face from the second man. But heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents. God's plans aren't man's plans.

So it was with the disciples. Jesus said, "Now I am going to Him who sent me ..." and "because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart." Christ's departure is certainly not the course of events the disciples wanted. Fear entered their hearts. They left all to follow Him. He did the miracles, He cast out demons, He healed the sick, He gave bread. Now Christ would leave.

Christ would not just leave, but die in bitter agony. This was the sermon that He preached to His disciples, not a few times. The Lord preached of Himself, "[God] will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you." The plans of God aren't the plans of man. What do you imagine when I say "glorify"? Bright and shining clothes? A golden crown for coronation? "Glorified" means none of these things to God. Glorified means being arrested, bound, and chained. Gloried means slapped, cursed, and mocked. Glory is found in nails, a spear, and death. The way of God is contrary to what we expect. In the bloody body of Jesus suspended upon the cross, we lay our eyes on the glory of God.

"Sorrow has filled your hearts." Christ knew that the outward spectacle of His suffering and death would cause sorrow. The outward appearance was failure. The eyes of faith see glory. The outward appearance was death. The eyes of faith see life eternal. The outward appearance shows injustice. The eyes of faith see righteousness. The glory and the suffering blend to paint the picture of salvation. The Lord enters glory by suffering and death.

This agony, this torture Christ calls simply "going to the Father." Outwardly, it was extreme pain, but He called it only, "going to the Father." But just as the Lord entered glory through suffering, "through many tribulations we must enter the

kingdom of God.” That is our earnest prayer in the hymn, “To God the Holy Spirit, Let us pray.” We ask that God would take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven. “That we may abide in the Lord who bought us, till to our true home He has brought us. Lord, have mercy!”

Asaph knew something about facing distress in life. Asaph was a choir master for King David and the author of several psalms. We know from the words of Psalm 73 that Asaph faced injustice. “And [the enemies of God] say, ‘How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” Asaph didn’t understand why the Lord would plague him each morning and press him under a cross daily by his enemies. Until he went into the sanctuary of God. Then, he understood. Asaph saw that those trials and crosses drew Him to God. He said, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” Nothing could separate this man from God’s strong grasp in mercy, not even death.

You have witnessed a death this morning. In Holy Baptism, Bretten has died to sin and is alive in Christ. The old man has drowned and the new man lives. The water and the Word of the Savior has freed him from death and marked him as one of the redeemed: our new brother in Christ.

God’s plans aren’t our plans. After the resurrection, the disciples stared in wonderment as their Lord was ascended into heaven. No doubt they felt sorrow, no doubt they felt grief. Christ reassured His disciples, “... it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.” What was the advantage that Jesus spoke of? As the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples they speak the Word of God. Now Christ has 12 voices instead of 1. Those 12 voices multiplied to fill the whole earth so that the forgiveness of sins won on the cross is preached in many places around the world by faithful servants. How important it was that Christ went away! In Holy Baptism and in His Body and Blood, He is present in His church today more than ever!

God’s plans aren’t our plans. We want peace of mind, He sends tribulation. But Dearly Beloved, if God sends you trials, discover His intention for you isn’t death and despair – He is preparing you to enter His Kingdom – a kingdom unlike this world. Through cross and trial, rely on Christ. He has prepared a mansion for you and is welcoming you into His Kingdom. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✨BJF✨