

# The Source of True Joy

John 16:16-25

BI: There are two reasons why Christians should be joyful: Jesus is alive and His Father answers prayer.

This morning we are once again privileged to be back in the Gospel of John so turn with me in your Bibles to John 16 and we will begin by reading the text. As you are turning there let me remind you that beginning with chapter 13 Jesus and His disciples were meeting together in the “upper room” for a final Passover meal before Jesus was to be crucified. It was there that He washed his disciples feet and instituted the Lord’s supper. There He also predicts his betrayal. It was on this occasion also that Judas Iscariot left in the night to betray Jesus to His enemies.

The theme of chapter 14 is comfort because Jesus is concerned about how His disciples will respond to the news that He is leaving. It’s here that He begins teaching them about the H.S.. In chap. 15 He tells them of the importance of abiding in Him so that they would bear much fruit after He is gone. In fact, He promises them that they will do greater works than He when the Spirit of truth comes. At the end of 15 he warns them of how they will be severely persecuted. Then, in Chapter 16 He explains why they will be persecuted and how the H.S. will enable them to bear up under the pressure and empower them to bear much fruit. Now we pick up the flow in verse 16.

Read 16-24

Once again it’s important to note that Jesus’s goal in these chapters is the comfort of His disciples on their final evening together. In 14:1 He says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled...” In 14:27 He says, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you... Do not let your heart be troubled nor let it be fearful.” In 15:11 He says, “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full.” In 16:1 He says, “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.” In verse 7 He assures them that, “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.” And then in 16:33 He says, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.”

The point is that Jesus is telling His men all these things because He loves them and He wants them to be prepared to take courage and trust in God when the bottom falls out of their lives (which, unbeknownst to them, would happen in a few short hours).

So there is the context of the passage. Now let's talk about the text itself. For the sake of structure I want to divide these verses into three sections. 1) The problem of Separation, 2) The parable of sorrow, and 3) the promise of joy.

## **I. The Problem of Separation:**

1. In verse 16-19 Jesus is belaboring the point that He is about to leave them. He has already said it several times before, but now He phrases in terms of the the apostles either seeing Him or not seeing Him. Notice the repetition,

v. 16 “no longer see me,” and “you will see me.”

v. 17 “not see me,” and “will see me.”

v. 19 “Not see me,” and “will see me.”

v. 22 “but I will see you again.”

2. The question in the disciple's minds is, What does He mean when He says things like (13:33) “Where I am going you cannot come,” and (14:2) “I go to prepare a place for you,” and (14:18) “I will not leave you as orphans,” and (14:27) “Peace I leave with you,” and (14:28) “I go to the Father,” and (16:5) “Now I am going to Him who sent me.” What does He mean? Is he speaking figuratively or literally? So Jesus now speaks to them in the simplest terms possible: “In a little while (a few hours) and you will not see me.” Then “in a little while (a few days) you will see me. And this is going to happen very quickly. Six times in in the first 4 verses Jesus uses the phrase “a little while.”

3. To the disciples, this was incomprehensible. So they were asking (17) “What is this thing He is telling us?” We don't know what he means by “a little while and you will not see me” and we don't know what He means by “I go to the Father.” In verse 18 they simply say “We don't know what He is talking about.” Clearly Jesus was speaking about being separated from them, but they didn't even have a category in their minds that would help them interpret what He was saying! This was a problem. AND Jesus was determined NOT to give them a full explanation. He knew what was going to happen in the garden of Gethsemane in just a couple of hours. But it would not have been good for His disciples to know all of that.

4. Jesus, however, knew what they were talking about. They weren't coming to Him with their questions. They were questioning each other. But Jesus knew their questions. But rather than answering their questions directly He gives them what they need. In response to the Problem of Separation, Jesus offers them a Parable of Sorrow.

## **II. The Parable of Sorrow:**

Read 20-21

1. Jesus is telling them that when He leaves it is going to be very hard on them. Notice the key terms: "weep," "lament," "grieve," "pain," and "anguish." This was really going to be a difficult trial. But He wants them to know that the pain will be short lived. "In a little while you will NOT see me; and again a little while and you will see me." What's he talking about?

2. Actually, there is a lot of theological discussion on this question because there are number of plausible conclusions. But for the sake of time let me just tell you my view. Clearly, when He talks about leaving He is referring to His arrest, crucifixion and burial. Everyone agrees on that. But I think the second part is equally obvious. When they see Him again it will be at His resurrection.

3. The parable of sorrow fits perfectly with this. When someone is in labor to have a baby there is a LOT of pain (I'm not speaking from personal experience, but others have told me :-). The pain is so great that sometimes it feels like it will never end. But then it does end and the result is a beautiful little infant. And the wonder of that little life that just came from her tummy is so amazing she soon forgets the anguish and travail she experienced just moments earlier. Jesus is telling his disciples, This is how it will be for you.

4. My leaving you is going to be a terrible trial. "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice"

5. The world hated Jesus and His followers and they Him and them even today. If they could come up with a way to remove Christianity from the earth they would rejoice. Why? Because Christianity declares that sinners are under judgment. No one likes to hear that. The world hates that message! And so they hate the messengers. But Jesus' point was not simply to warn them of the coming anguish, but to promise them joy!

6. So we have seen the Problem of Separation, The Parable of Sorrow, and Finally...

### III. The Promise of Joy.

1. When Jesus was hung on the cross, the world rejoiced and the disciples hearts were broken to the extreme. It was beyond difficult for them. It was almost unbearable. But their sorrow would not last long. In a few days they would go to the tomb and find it empty. And then Jesus began to appear to them one and two at a time, then to the whole group, and finally to Thomas, the resident skeptic. And when they realized he had really risen from the dead; when they saw Him with their own eyes, when they talked with Him and ate with Him, they no longer remembered their anguish because of the joy.

Joy. Jesus is promising them joy. Psalm 30:5 says, “Weeping lasts for a night but joy comes in the morning.” Where does the joy come from? I see two fountains of joy in this passage.

2. The first fountain of Joy is the resurrection. Jesus’ death and burial were like severe labor pains to the disciples. For nearly three days they were in anguish. But then, finally, when it seemed all hope was gone the grave burst asunder and Jesus rose from the dead!

3. It’s noteworthy to see how Jesus words things here. “Your grief shall be turned to joy.” Lit. “you sorrow shall become joy.” The thing that caused the sorrow is the very thing that will become your joy. The horror of the cross must have been beyond description, but now - after the resurrection - that same cross (and the tomb that followed), the whole experience of Jesus’ leaving, dying, and being buried became for them the very fountain of life-giving joy! Now He is risen! Now He who was gone forever had returned! Now their Lord, their Master, their dearest friend was alive! The Messianic promises that they thought had all been scrapped, were now restored and fulfilled in all their glory! The Prince of life was alive! Oh the joy! Oh the wonder! Oh the glory, that Jesus is alive!

4. Joy is something that should characterize the believer’s life. Paul says it is a fruit of the Spirit, or a manifestation of the Spirit’s indwelling presence in our lives. Some believers go through life with such a scow that it makes one wonder if they know anything of the joy that Jesus is speaking of. This is not an optional, temporary joy. Jesus is talking about a permanent joy. A joy (22) “that no one can take away.” The resurrection brings something to the believer that should leave us eternally joyful!

5. Are you a joyful person? Someone will say, Well, that’s just not my personality.” Well, when you came to Christ that part of your person should have begun to change. And that change begins when you grasp the significance of the resurrection. Since Jesus is alive, life is NOT meaningless, nor out of control. Hope is alive because Jesus is alive! And lives that are full of hope are full of joy. You say, Well you don’t understand how much I suffer. You’re right. I don’t. But Paul suffered probably more than any of us, and his perspective on his own attitude was (2

Cor. 6:10) “sorrowful yet always rejoicing!” Grasping the implications of the resurrection does not insulate us from sorrow, but it gives us a joy that is greater and will last for eternity.

6. Randall Harris writes, "They may tear the [Bible] to shreds but they can never rub off the light of God from the face of his people." A true Christian has a personal relationship with Lord that inevitably issues in personal joy. (“The Outcome of the Resurrection” by S. Lewis Johnson, Copyright © 2008 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas)

7. So the first fountain of Joy is the resurrection. The second fountain of joy Jesus mentions is a bit unexpected. Let’s read verses 23-24

Read 16:23-24

8. The second fountain of joy is answered prayer.

9. If you are reading from the ESV you will notice that the word “ask” is used twice in verse 23. The first use of “ask” is from a word that usually means “to ask a question.” While He was with them He met all their needs and answered all their questions. He was their teacher and they were His students. But all of that was about to change. Jesus is saying that his disciples will no longer come to Him with their questions because He will be gone. The Second use of “ask” in this verse is a word that usually means “to pray.” Jesus says, “If you ask (or pray to) the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.”

10. This is an important teaching from Jesus. In fact, it is the third time in three chapters - the third time in a single night - that He has taught on the subject.

Jn 14:13-14 “Whatever you ask in my name this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

John 15:7-8 “If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.”

Jn. 15:16 “So that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

Jn. 16:23-24 Whatever you ask the Father in my name will be given to you.”

11. In the first passage (14:13-14) Jesus connects answered prayer with the glory of God. But the really interesting thing is that He does it on the basis of His role as Mediator between men. The phrase “In my name” speaks of Jesus as the Mediator of our prayers. He is saying, You can only come to God in My name. Now we come to God not through any human priesthood, but in Jesus’ name. Now that He has made the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins He stands as our great High Priest in heaven making intercession for us and serving as our advocate.

12. Jesus is the only hope that any prayer of ours will be heard. We come to God “In the name of” the one whose worth, whose righteousness, and sacrifice has made access to the Father possible. This is true not only for our salvation but our supplication as well. We can only ask for favor from God “In Jesus Christ.”

13. It’s important to note, however, that “In Jesus’ name” is not a magic formula as if merely mentioning the name of Jesus at the end of a prayer will accomplish anything. Rather to ask anything of the Father in the name of Jesus, means that we ask what Jesus would ask, what would please Him, and what would bring glory to the Father by furthering His work. Hendricksen explains, to pray in Jesus’ name means to ask on the basis of Christ’s merits and in harmony with his will... Anyone who asks... according to God’s will, for the furtherance of God’s glory, on the basis of Christ’s merits – will receive” what they have requested” (Hendrickson, 335).

14. And the truly amazing thing about Jesus’ teaching on prayer in these three chapters (14-16) is that Jesus connects the glory of God and our own Joy through the our prayers. Notice verse 24, Ask and you will receive so that your joy may be made full.”

15. This is truly amazing. Think about this. The cross with all it agonies is just around the corner. A few more hours, and Jesus will give his life as a ransom for many. He knows what is coming. Already he sees the nails that will pierce his hands and feet. He hears, as it were, the jeers and taunts of the leaders, their hellish laughter. Yet – O love divine and beyond all comprehension! – His ardent desire is this: “that your joy may be full” (Hendricksen,335)

16. You see beloved, the glory of God and your own joy are not mutually exclusive goals. Pursuing the glory of God is the highest goal of mankind in and of itself. But in the goodness of God He has ordained that we would experience great joy in the pursuit of the glory of God. And one of the primary means by which we do that is through prayer. When we pray according to His will; when we pray “in the Spirit;” when we pray “in Jesus’ name” and we discover later that He has given us what we requested, it fills us with joy!

- The Csoros family discovering and adopting David
- The text I received while writing this sermon Fri. morning.
- Phil Csoros wrote a text to a group of us praising God for allowing their new son, David, to get His passport - something we were all praying for. When I got this text I responded to Phil with these words: “Phil, this morning I am writing the past part of my sermon from John 16. The sentence I was writing when your text came in was as follows; “The second fountain of the believer’s joy is Answered Prayer.” How kind of

the Lord to tell me that by His word and then confirm it immediately by your text! What a great and living God we serve! And if He has answered these prayers for David's passport then surely He will answer all the other prayers (hundreds of them) for David's eternal good and your own joy."

- To this Phil responded: Wow! That is absolutely amazing! I sent you that text two hours before you received it. I guess I was out of range of the WiFi and it only got sent when I returned to the hotel. I love stories like this!
- Prayer journals full of answered prayer.

### **Application: Tips on prayer:**

1. Plan: Have a time and a place
2. Use the Bible as you pray: Read-pray, read-pray.
3. Pray in concentric circles: Pray about me (help me, guard me, humble me, forgive me). Then move to family. Then to staff and elders. Then to church body. Then God's mission in the world. Then political leaders.
4. Create a Prayer Journal
5. Regularly pray with 1 or a few others

### **Is prayer a Duty?** Listen to John Piper's response:

"It's a duty the way it's the duty of a scuba diver to put on his air tank before he goes underwater. It's a duty the way pilots listen to air traffic controllers. It's a duty the way soldiers in combat clean their rifles and load their guns. It's a duty the way hungry people eat food. It's a duty the way thirsty people drink water. It's a duty the way a deaf man puts in his hearing aid. It's a duty the way a diabetic takes his insulin. It's a duty the way Pooh Bear looks for honey. It's a duty the way pirates look for gold."

**Prayer is for the glory of God and your joy. So by all and every means, beloved, PRAY!**

Almost 500 years ago, John Calvin commented on Zechariah 13:9, and what he said then is more true today:

It is therefore necessary that we should be subject, from first to last, to the scourges of God, in order that we may from the heart call on him; for our hearts are enfeebled by prosperity, so that we cannot make the effort to pray. (Commentary on Zechariah 13:9 [Baker, 2003], 403, emphasis added)

Answered Prayer:

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Prayer journals full of answered prayer.



