

A Heart to Turn Grief to Joy - John **16:16-33**

Introduction

- Today we're looking at the end of the farewell discourse, this conversation that has been going on between Jesus and his disciples, which we have been reading for the past many weeks.
- We have seen so many beautiful things through looking at these chapters so far, seeing so much of Christ's heart and how he has made himself known to us, and there is so much that we still have to learn in the weeks to come, but today, we've come to the end of this particular conversation, and everything that Jesus has been warning his disciples about is about to take place.
- Ch. 17 is a prayer by Jesus right before everything that he's told his disciples about happens, and it's one of the most beautiful chapters in Scripture, and I'm so excited to hear Darryl talk about it next week, but this passage really wraps up the conversation that has been happening since Ch. 13 between Jesus and his disciples as he's been preparing them for what's about to happen.
- So what we're reading today is the conclusion of this conversation, and Jesus starts by telling his disciples again, as he has a number of times already, that the time has come when he is going to leave them.

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." - John 16:16 (ESV)

- So Jesus makes this promise yet again, that he is leaving his disciples, yet he tells them that this leaving will not last forever, and they will see him again, but in the next verses we see that the disciples are once again struggling to really understand what Jesus is telling them. Look at V. 17-18.

"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'?' So they were saying, 'What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about.'" - John 16:17-18 (ESV)

- So the disciples are still struggling so much with what is going on, they can't comprehend really what is about to happen. Read the emotion that's really in these verses. This is not just

a shrug of the shoulders kind of matter for the disciples, this is devastating. In their mind, Jesus is the Messiah, the one who was promised to come save them all the way back in Genesis 3, who is supposed to bring victory and make everything ok again for them, so for them to hear Jesus say that he's about to leave them, and worse, that he's about to die, would have been absolutely devastating! They couldn't fathom that this saviour they had been following for years now, was about to die.

- Have you ever felt that way? Like the disciples did in this moment? Like everything you thought, or hoped, or expected in your life seems like it's going off the rails? Like you're facing such a dark time and you don't know how things could ever get better? Maybe you're even feeling like God has let you down. You've given your life to him, your trying to follow him, but everything still seems to be going all wrong.
- Well if so, I have good news for you. Look at V. 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’?” - John 16:19 (ESV)

- So here Jesus begins to respond to their questions, but look at those first words: “Jesus knew”. He knew exactly what they were struggling with, how much grief and sorrow they were wrestling with, and how much worse it was about to get, and he's about to answer the questions that the disciples are asking and speak hope into their lives.
- This is also a passage that is full of promises. In Jesus' words to his disciples in this passage he uses the word “will” around 20 different times. “This will happen”. It's a passage in which Jesus is giving his disciples assurance about what is about to happen, and the fact that he has it all under control, that despite how dark and hopeless things seem, and how much they're struggling, that struggle won't last forever.
- And I want you to pay very close attention to what's happening here in these verses, because as Jesus is giving hope to his disciples, there is also such hope to be found for us. If you're struggling right now, wondering where God is, or how things in your life could ever get better, there is hope to be found for you in this passage, and ultimately, hope for all of us who follow Christ because we will all face times like this.
- But what Jesus is going to teach the disciples, and what he's going to teach us is this: Life is full of sorrows and struggles, but Christ turns our sorrow into joy through his victory on the cross.

Jesus' victory at the cross turns our grief into Joy

- So as we walk through this passage, remember that this is a passage full of promise. A passage of assurance and hope that Jesus is giving to his disciples and he begins to give this hope in V. 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.” - John 16:20 (ESV)

- This is the first promise that Jesus gives to his disciples here.
- He tells his disciples that there is sorrow now, but joy is coming.
- Jesus does not sugar coat the struggle, but offers hope. He acknowledges that over the next number of hours the disciples are going to experience more struggle than they ever have before, and all will seem to be lost as they watch him die on the cross. That sorrow is very real, and Jesus does not try to distract from it or diminish it. While the world will rejoice at his death, believing that they have won, the disciples will face the darkest moment that they have ever faced before.
- This again shows the amazing truth that Jesus understands what his disciples are going through, and what they are going to face. He knows that in the end he is going to be victorious over death, but he also understands the struggle and grief that his disciples will experience in his death.
- While Jesus doesn't avoid the difficult reality that the disciples are about to face, he does not leave them without hope, telling them that their sorrow, which they will feel over his death, will turn into Joy at his resurrection.
- And to illustrate V. 21 the point that he's making, he compares what the disciples are about to go through with a woman who is experiencing child birth. This is what he says:

“When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, 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.” - John 16:21 (ESV)

- Now if you're a woman who has ever given birth, or a husband who's been with your wife during that process, you can appreciate a bit of the gravity of what Jesus is saying here.
- Child birth is referred to as one of, if not the most painful thing that a human being will experience, and that is the image that Jesus is using to explain what it is that the disciples are going to be feeling in the coming hours.
- Yet at the moment that a child is born, Jesus says that the pain that was felt during childbirth is forgotten, replaced by the joy of a new life that has just been brought into the world.
- Jesus then emphasizes this joy in V. 22, saying:

“So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” - John 16:22 (ESV)

- So this joy is promised to the disciples, and it is such a great joy, and a joy that lasts forever. As Christ says, *“no one will take your joy from you!”*
- This sorrow that they will feel is very real, but it is temporary, while the joy that comes from Christ will last forever. While all hope will seem lost to the disciples when they see Jesus put to death on the cross, when he returns to them after the resurrection, they will be filled with such an incomparable joy that will never be taken away, because they will see that Christ has done all that he promised to do.
- How wonderful is this? This joy that Christ will give to his disciples at his resurrection, which will never be taken away from them? And this is a joy that he offers to you and I as well.
- Because of what Christ has done on the cross, we are able to have that same kind of joy! And why is that? Why can we have this joy? Because the sorrow and the struggle that we face in this world, is very real. It is a struggle that is brought on by the fact that we live in a sinful and a fallen world, but as real as these struggles are, they are temporary. It will not last. But this joy? The joy that comes through the resurrection of Christ? That is a joy that lasts forever! That is a joy because of the fact that no matter what happens to us on earth, we have an eternal future prepared for us with Christ because of the love that he showed us at the cross, and there is nothing in this world that will ever be able to take that away from us.

Jesus’ victory at the cross gives us the promise of Relationship

- Jesus then moves from promising this joy to his disciples, that their sorrow will turn into joy, and he takes some time to expand a bit on what exactly he’s talking about.
- The next verse, V. 23 starts with these words, “In that day”. Jesus is about to describe to them what their life will be like “in that day”, when the disciples’ sorrow has been turned to joy because of the resurrection of Christ, and where this joy that he’s promised comes from. What it looks like.
- Look at what Jesus says in V. 23-24:

“In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” - John 16:23-24 (ESV)

- So here he begins to talk about prayer again, as he was in Ch. 15, in them being able to ask things of the Father, which is such an amazing thing.

- Because of what Jesus has done on the cross, he has opened the door for the disciples to have a relationship directly with the Father that was not possible before.
- Before Christ came, the priests were the only ones who were able to be directly in the presence of God, and would speak to God on behalf of the people, but because of Christ's death and resurrection, the disciples will be able to have a relationship with God themselves. They won't need a priest to speak to God on their behalf, but rather they will be able to speak to him directly, in Jesus' name.
- And this relationship connects right back to what Jesus has already been saying to his disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Look at V. 25-26.

"I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;" - John 16:25-26 (ESV)

- This connects with the misunderstanding issue that the disciples have been dealing with throughout the entire time they have been with Jesus. Up until now, they have not been able to fully understand what Jesus has taught them. They have constantly misunderstood, and so Jesus has taught them with parables, and as he says, "figures of speech" to help them understand what he has been trying to teach them.
- When the Holy Spirit comes, however, those "figures of speech" will no longer be needed because the Spirit will help them to understand the things that Jesus has been teaching them. V. 13 in Ch. 16 says that the Spirit will guide the disciples into all the truth, helping them to understand what Jesus has been teaching, making things clear to them.
- And again in V. 26 he emphasizes the new access that the disciples will have directly to the Father, saying that he will not ask the Father for them, or on their behalf, but they will be able to bring their concerns and their questions directly to the Father because of the relationship that is able to exist through Christ's work on the cross.
- Jesus then says this in V. 27-28.

"for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." - John 16:27-28 (ESV)

- It is because of this love that the Father has for them, and for us that this relationship is possible for all those who love Christ and put their trust in him. This is the joy that Jesus talks about when he tells the disciples that their sorrow will turn into joy. A more intimate relationship with God through the work of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

- For the disciples, this relationship with God, through the Holy Spirit was not yet possible because Christ's death and resurrection had not yet taken place. They didn't have the Holy Spirit, they weren't able to understand what Jesus was saying to them, but can I tell you something?
- If you are a follower of Christ, he promises joy, knowing that our struggles are temporary and we have an eternal future secured with Christ and access to a more intimate relationship with God, and this is a joy that we can experience right now. Because of Christ's work on the cross we can have this personal and intimate relationship with God. If you follow Christ you have the Holy Spirit inside of you, and Christ tells his disciples that this is the source of the joy that he has promised. And if you are a follower of Christ, this is a joy that is available to you right now because of your love for Christ, and what he's done for us. We're not waiting for this to happen, it is already available to us right now.

Jesus' victory at the cross gives us the promise of endurance

- Now as we've seen these promises that Jesus has given we come to V. 29-30 where Jesus' disciples respond. Look at what the verse says:

"His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God." - John 16:29-30 (ESV)

- Now it would seem from looking at these verses that the disciples have finally gotten it right, that Jesus has finally gotten through to them, and everything is going to be alright! But that's not quite the case. John MacArthur in his commentary makes such a good comment on this verse, saying:
 - *"No misunderstanding is more pathetic than that which thinks it no longer exists."*
- So it's as if the disciples have now heard these promises from Jesus, and think that now that they've heard it, things will be all good. Almost like they believe that they're no longer going to have to face the sorrow that Jesus told them they would experience because they've heard that this joy, and intimate relationship with Jesus is coming, but look how Jesus responds to them in V. 31-32.

"Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." - John 16:31-32 (ESV)

- So Jesus assures them here that even though they know that there is joy coming, they will still experience the sorrow that Jesus has already spoken of. The promises that he's given them doesn't mean that those things will just disappear, and the difficulties that they are going to face are still very real, and he makes that all the more clear when he tells them that in the events that are about to take place, they will all flee and abandon him. He's already warned Peter that he will deny Jesus three times, and now the same is true for the rest. They will abandon their Lord. The promise of Joy does not mean that the struggles won't exist, or that we won't have to face them, but look at what Jesus says in V. 33, which is such a wonderful verse.

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." - John 16:33 (ESV)

- He has not told them these things so that they won't have to face trials, but rather, so that they may have peace in him in the midst of trials, remembering the promises that he's made. His promises, the promise of joy and a more intimate relationship with God, give them what they need to endure the struggles that they will face, and that is the third promise that he gives, the promise of endurance.
- He reminds them that they will face struggles and trials "In the world you will have tribulation". Even after Jesus' resurrection, those struggles don't end. The disciples face nearly endless persecution, and many of them are killed for their faith.
- But again Jesus reminds them of hope, that they have what it takes to endure those struggles as he says *"take heart; I have overcome the world."*
- These last words are the culmination of all of the promises that Jesus has made, *"I have overcome the world"*.
- This connects back to what we saw at the beginning of this passage, that the struggles his disciples are going to face are very real, but they can have hope, and they can have joy in the midst of struggles because of Christ's victory at the cross.
- If you are a follower of Christ, and you feel like life is going off the rails. Like you're facing a difficult time that you don't know how to face, and you're wondering how God could let this happen to you, remember Jesus' words in this passage. We should not assume that our lives will be easy, or free of struggles, and we should not be surprised when those hard times come, but we can be encouraged knowing that Jesus has promised that our struggles are temporary. That he will turn our sorrow into joy, and that we can have joy right now because we are able to have a personal and intimate relationship with God.
- And so this passage gives us hope and joy for both our present and our future. Joy for right now because, no matter what struggle we're facing, we can bring it before the Father. He

loves us because of Christ, and we have the Holy Spirit working in our lives allowing us to have a personal and intimate relationship with God. And Joy for our future because we know that our struggles in this world will not last, Christ has overcome the world, and we have an eternal future secured for us in him because of the sacrifice that he made for us.