

Sorrow Turned to Joy
John 16:16-24
Part Two

When we mention the word “joy” what comes to our minds? Isn’t it the positive feeling associated with some kind of good fortune, such as an unexpected promotion at work, or the birth of a child?

And this kind of joy is a wonderful thing. It’s exhilarating but unfortunately there is not a whole lot of it in most people’s lives.

But it does not have to be that way. In fact, joy can be the constant companion of every disciple of Christ. But how can this be? This question brings us back to our study of the Gospel of John and more specifically **John 16**.

So what has Jesus been talking to them about in **John 16**? Jesus has been talking to them about expectations. And what were those expectations? First of all, Christ told His disciples in John 16:5-11 that after He left them and the Holy Spirit came to them that they could expect the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

And what else had He told His disciples that they could expect? Christ also told His disciples in John 16:12-15 that they could expect that after He left them and the Holy Spirit came to them that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth. But this was not all.

There was still another expectation that Jesus began to spell out for His disciples in **John 16:16** and which would continue all the way down to **John 16:24**. And it is this passage that we began to examine just prior to my vacation. So what was this particular expectation that we have already begun to examine? It was this:

Christ told His disciples in John 16:16-24 that they could expect that the sorrow that was about to come upon them because of the cross would be transformed into an enduring and abounding source of joy.

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This is what Jesus told His disciples in **John 16:16-24**. So how have we begun to break this passage down? We began with the perplexity (John 16:16-19).

In review let me read for you **John 16:16**. “**A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.**” So what did Jesus mean by this?

When Jesus told His disciples that they in a little while would no longer behold Him, He was referring to His death.

When Jesus told His disciples that again in a little while they would see Him, He was referring to His resurrection.

Was this clear to His disciples? No! Christ’s statement about “**a little while**” this and “**a little while**” that had confused His disciples which was clear in **John 16:17-19**. So how did Jesus respond to their confusion? The answer to this question led us to the second part of our text, which I have entitled: The promise (John 16:20-21).

So let me read for you **John 16:20**. “**Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy.**”

Jesus not only promised His disciples that they would suffer sorrow after His departure but that the sorrow they would suffer would be turned into joy. And was this promise fulfilled? Absolutely! This promise was fulfilled when the pain created by the cross of Christ was transformed into joy at His resurrection when Jesus came forth from the grave very much like the sorrow associated with childbirth is transformed into joy when a baby comes forth from the womb into the light of day, which is Jesus’ point in **John 16:21**.

So was the promise Christ made to His disciples in **John 16:20** fulfilled? Absolutely! The sorrow created by the cross of Christ was transformed into joy at the resurrection. But let me ask you this question. How long would Christ disciples be in possession of this joy?

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Let me read for you **John 16:22**. “**Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.**” How long would they be in possession of the joy that Christ spoke of in **John 16:22**. The answer is forever.

But how could this be? The answer is very simple. When Christ was crucified it appeared to His disciples to be a crushing defeat? But when Christ was resurrected the cross suddenly became for them, not a symbol of defeat, but rather of a victory. And it was a victory whose benefits would be forever with them, which explains to us why their joy could never be taken.

And the same thing is true for us as well. We, like Christ’s disciples, are still enjoying the benefits of the victory that He won for us at His cross and therefore we can, like His disciples in **John 16** if we so choose, at any time enter into the joy of that victory. And how can we do this? We can do this by simply tying the victory that He won for us at the cross to the present benefits that we are enjoying because of it.

How are we doing? Are we doing that? If we are, not only can the joy that Christ is speaking about in **John 16:22** be enduring but also abounding, which leads us from the perplexity in John 16:16-19, and from the promise in John 16:20-22, to the power (John 16:23-24).

My hope as we consider these verses this morning is to understand not only how we can have an enduring joy but an abounding joy. Now isn’t this something that we would want to have if it were possible? And of course the answer should be yes! And if the answer were yes then I would hope and pray that the Spirit would make this message come alive for us this morning and apply it to our lives.

So let us begin to look at the text and more specifically at **verse 23**. Jesus begins with these words to His disciples, “**And in that day you will ask Me no question.**” So what did Jesus mean by this? Let us begin with the phrase, “**And in that day.**”

When Jesus said, “And in that day,” He was referring to no special day but to that period of time that would begin with the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 16:23).

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And what was the significance of that particular period of time? The significance of that particular period of time that Christ referred to as “in that day” was that His disciples would no longer feel the need to ask Him questions (John 16:23). Let me read for you **John 16:23**. “**And in that day** [in the dispensation of the Spirit] **you will ask me no question.**”

And why would this be? Why would the disciples of Christ no longer feel the need to ask Him any further questions? You should know the answer to this based on what we already have studied. But just in case the answer to this question is not quickly popping into your head let me read for you **John 16:13**. “**But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes** [who we know to be the Holy Spirit], **He will guide you into all the truth.**”

There it is. There is the answer. After the Spirit came, Christ’s disciples would no longer feel the need to ask Jesus any further questions because the Spirit Himself would lead them into all the truth; or in other words, into all they needed to know about the person and work of Christ as well as all they needed to know about the things pertaining to life and godliness. In short, when the Spirit came they would be provided the answers they needed.

Perhaps another way of saying what I have just shared with you would be this. After the Spirit came “in that day” Peter would no longer have to ask, “Where are you going” as he had done in **John 13:36**; nor would Thomas have had to ask, “How can I know the way” as he had done in **John 14:5**; nor would James also known as “Judas not Iscariot” would no longer have to ask, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world” as he had done in **John 14:22**. Nor would His disciples any longer have to ponder among themselves what Jesus meant by “a little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you see Me” as they had done in **John 16:18**.

So what did Jesus mean when He said, “you will ask me no question?” He meant that His disciples in the future, in contrast to what they were presently doing and had just done in **John 16:18-19**, would no longer feel the need to ask Him questions because all the questions that they might have wanted to ask would already have been answered by the Spirit after the Spirit came to them and guided them into all the truth.

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But just because Christ's disciples would have their questions answered did not mean that they would have all their needs met therefore Christ directs His disciples to ask His Father for help (John 16:23).

Let us continue to read the verse. **“And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.”**

The reason why Jesus directed His disciples to ask His Father for help was because His father would give them as much help as they needed if they asked “in Jesus’ name.” This promise should sound familiar to us.

This is not a new promise. This promise has been shared with His disciples earlier in **John 14:13-14** and **John 15:16**. So what does it mean to pray “in Jesus’ name”?

To pray “in Jesus’ name” means that our prayers are based on all that Christ is, has done, is doing, and will do. Or in other words, praying in Jesus’ name means that we are praying according to His will.

We need to understand this. Our prayers must not be about us but rather our prayers must rather be about Him. If they are, we are in fact praying in His name and if our prayers are in His name what will happen? If we pray prayers in Christ’s name rather than in our name, Christ’s Father will do truly amazing things in our lives, in the lives of our families, in the life of this church and in this world. So is it important that we are praying in Jesus’ name rather than our name? Absolutely!

So let me ask you this question: How can we be relatively assured that we are praying prayers in Christ’s name rather than our name? It is not really all that difficult.

If we are seeking to pray in Jesus’ name we will be making a conscious effort to pray prayers that we believe that Christ Himself would be praying if He were in our circumstances. And how can we know how Christ might pray if He were in our circumstances? It is by becoming familiar with His word. This is where we will come to know the heart and mind of Christ. Therefore those who are actively seeking to pray in Jesus’ name will be

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individuals who are actively seeking to know the mind and heart of Christ through studying and contemplating His word.

Are you committed to tapping into the power of prayer? If you are then you certainly will be committed to understanding the mind and heart of Christ by better understanding His word so that when you pray that you are not praying in your name but rather in the name of Christ.

So let me challenge you to do this. Look at your life and your circumstances and isolate a few of the things that are now pressing in upon you whatever that might be and search the Scriptures to see how God might want you to pray in respect to that particular circumstance.

So let us say that you finding yourself struggling financially. You don't seem to have nearly enough money to do all that you want? How might someone in this situation pray in the name of Jesus? First of all, let us consider what it does not mean. It does not mean that we ask the Lord to provide for us the financial means so that we might get everything that we want. This kind of praying is praying in our name.

So if this is not what it means to pray in the name of Jesus when we are struggling financially, what does it mean? It means rather that we pray something like this: "Lord give me the grace to be content with what you have provided me. Why would this be more consistent with praying in Jesus' name? It would be more consistent with praying in Jesus' name because this is a prayer based on the Word of God that Jesus Himself would pray if He were in the same circumstance.

And what can we expect when we pray in this way, or in other words, if we pray in Jesus name? We can expect answers and not just answers but life changing answers, or in other words, answers that will really make a positive difference in our lives, in the lives of our families, in the life of this church and in this world.

But Jesus is not done talking about prayer. Let us now go on down to the next verse and begin to read. And what does it say? It begins with these words, **"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name."** So what did Christ mean by this statement?

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Up until this time in the upper room the disciples had not prayed “in Jesus’ name” for the simple reason they couldn’t have. They knew too little about Christ and His purposes (John 16:24). They would not truly be able to pray even as Jesus would pray until the coming of the Spirit. This is why Jesus told His disciples, **“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name.”**

But obviously this was about to change. Very shortly after the coming of the Spirit and after His disciples better understood the mind and heart of Christ they would be able to pray in the name of Jesus, or in other words, according to His will and would receive everything that they asked for and more than they asked for.

So what do I mean by this? What do I mean that they will receive even more than they asked for? Let us once again go back to **John 16:24** but this time let me read for you the entire verse. **“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.”** Jesus was not only telling His disciples that His Father would answer prayers prayed in His name but that when His Father in fact did this, they, in addition to the answered prayer, would find their joy made full. What joy is Jesus speaking of?

When Jesus in John 16:24 spoke to His disciples of their joy being made full, He was speaking of the joy of the cross that He had alluded to in John 16:20. So now let me ask you this question: Why would Christ’s Father, answering the prayers of Christ’s disciples prayed in His name, make their joy, the joy of the cross, full? It is really a very simple answer.

Every answered prayer prayed in the name of Jesus should make our joy full because it was Christ’s victory at the cross that opened up God’s throne of grace and made this all possible.

In other words, when Christ’s Father answers the prayers that we pray in the name of Jesus it should cause us to once again enter into the joy of the cross which made this outpouring of grace possible, and how often should this be happening to us? It should be happening to us continually as we unceasingly come to God’s throne of grace in the name of Jesus to receive grace to help in the time of our need.

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Joy is a very infrequent visitor for most people. In fact, for some people joy never visits them. But for us, as the disciples of Christ, this should not be our expectation. In fact, our expectation should be that not only should our lives be characterized by an enduring joy but also an abounding joy.

May God give us the grace to pray in the name of Jesus and when He answers those requests may it cause our joy, the joy of the cross, to be made full.