

Take Heart! I Have Overcome the World!

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[0 : 00] In the Gospel of John, we'll be in chapter 16, verse 16. So we've got 18 verses left in this chapter, and these verses give us the final words of Jesus with his disciples before he prays his high priestly prayer and then moves to the Garden of Gethsemane where he'll be arrested.

As usual in John's Gospel, there's a lot in these 18 verses. I had a difficult time breaking this up into pieces and finding clear divisions here.

There's kind of several themes or topics kind of woven through all of these 18 verses. So I'm going to focus not on all the verses in the chapter, but just on the main conversation arc of this passage.

And we'll save some of those other themes perhaps for another message. So we start here in verse 16 with Jesus making this statement to his disciples.

In a little while you will see me no more. And then after a little while you will see me. Now this is a statement that proved confusing to Jesus' disciples, as we'll see in a minute.

[1 : 14] What is Jesus talking about? All through this evening, Jesus has been telling his disciples about how he is leaving. And not only his disciples, but actually Jesus has been telling even the crowds this for some time now.

Is this what Jesus is talking about again here? How he's about to leave them? Let's just look quickly at some of the previous statements Jesus made. All the way back in John chapter 7, verse 33.

Jesus said this to the crowds. He said, I am with you for only a short time. And then I'm going to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me.

And where I am, you cannot come. And then again in John chapter 12, a while later, Jesus said this to the crowd in Jerusalem. You are going to have the light just a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you. And of course, Jesus was referring to himself as the light, which we see just a little ways down the page in verse 46 of chapter 12.

[2 : 26] And then in the upper room, this same night, where they ate the Passover meal, right after Judas left to get things ready to betray Jesus, Jesus said this to the 11 apostles who were with him.

My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me. And just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now, where I'm going, you cannot come.

And there was this little discussion about where Jesus was going. Peter asked the question, Lord, where are you going? And Jesus replied, where I'm going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

And then Jesus went on to talk about the father's house and how he was going away to prepare a place for them. And you know the way to the place where I am going, said Jesus.

And of course, Thomas asked the question, Lord, we don't know where you're going. So how can we know the way? And Jesus answered, I am the way. No one comes to the father except through me.

[3 : 32] And it just goes on from there. All through this evening, chapter 14, verse 18 and 19, Jesus says, I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. And down in verse 25, All this I have spoken while still with you, said Jesus.

And verse 27, Peace I leave with you. So Jesus has made it abundantly clear that he is going away.

In fact, just minutes ago, before the passage we're looking at today, he said, Very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. So he's made it clear that he is leaving.

But up until this moment, all of this has been really confusing for the disciples. They don't understand what he's talking about. And so Jesus, I think, states it one more time here in verse 16 to change the subject right to this.

[4 : 38] Let's talk about this. In a little while you will see me no more. And then after a little while, you will see me.

And John tells us what he and the other disciples were thinking about this. At this, some of his disciples said to one another, What does he mean? By saying, In a little while you will see me no more.

And then after a little while you will see me. And because I am going to the Father, they kept asking, What does he mean? By a little while. We don't understand what he is saying.

So picture this. Jesus is either standing or sitting with these 11 men all around him. And he's speaking to the whole group. And you can imagine them almost like students in the classroom. Kind of listening, but then whispering to each other.

What do you think he means by that? What is he saying? They didn't get it. They knew he was going away, but where to? What is this place where we can't follow him?

[5 : 47] What does he mean? I'm going to the Father. How long is a little while? When does it start? When will it end? Well, it was pretty obvious to Jesus that they were confused and didn't get it.

Verse 19, Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while, you will see me?

Let's just talk about it, says Jesus. And now Jesus begins to address their confusion and answer their questions. Verse 20, Very truly, says Jesus, I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices.

You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. Now this may not be quite the answer they were expecting.

If I'm one of those 11 disciples, I'm kind of hoping that Jesus is going to give me some dates, some numbers. Like, tell me, in hours or days, how long will this first little while be?

[7 : 06] And when does it start? And how long till we see you again? Jesus doesn't give them numbers to measure by. Instead, he gives them some emotional signposts.

First, Jesus says, you will weep. You will mourn while the world rejoices. But then, your grief will turn to joy.

This time that's about to come during which you will see me no more, it will be a time characterized by sorrow. But then, that sorrow will lift.

It will break. And there will be joy. Jesus gives them an illustration of what it will be like. He says, it will be like how things go with a woman as she gives birth to a child.

A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come. But when her baby is born, she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

[8 : 12] so with you. Now is your time of grief. But I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy.

So first, you will weep. You will mourn. You will grieve. There will be pain. There will be anguish. But then, all of that will melt away and give way to joy and to rejoicing.

Now what is Jesus referring to by all this? I believe Jesus is referring to his imminent suffering and death followed by his resurrection from the dead and appearing again to his disciples.

It's the suffering and death of Jesus that will cause them to weep and to mourn and to grieve, to feel that anguish and sorrow.

When will this happen? In a little while you will see me no more. If we follow along and keep reading the story, we find out that this first little while is less than 24 hours.

[9 : 33] In a little while Jesus will be crucified. He will be dead. His body taken down off the cross, buried in the tomb. They won't see him anymore.

In fact, this time is so close that in verse 22 Jesus says, now is your time of grief. It's just, it's right here. It's hours away.

It's all this starts. By this, by tomorrow afternoon, the disciples will be plunged into the deepest grief and sorrow they have ever known as they watch this happen to Jesus.

But Jesus wants them to know in advance as difficult, as painful as that time will feel, that pain and sorrow and anguish will break and it will be replaced with joy.

Rejoicing. And I love the illustration that Jesus gives. I'll admit up front, being a man, I will never know the full extent of what it's like to go through labor and to deliver a baby, what that feels like.

[10 : 50] But I'll never forget the birth of our first child, Callie. Nine months we waited and the anticipation just kept building.

What will this child be like? Is it a boy? Is it a girl? What will she look like? And then Jen went into labor and it was a long labor.

I forget the exact number of hours which proves Jesus' point. But something like 20 plus hours from the time that the contraction started until the time that it came for Jen to push.

I was tired. I was feeling weary. It was intense. And I even got some sleep the night before all this. But Jen didn't.

She had contractions through the night and she was up through the night. I can't imagine how difficult it was for her or what it felt like. But I do remember those last hours before Callie was born.

[11 : 55] I remember how long they felt. I remember seeing how worn out Jen looked. How tired. And then eventually it started to get really intense.

And the pain went through the roof for Jen. And I just remember thinking, this is so grueling. This is so hard. How are we going to get through this?

But I'll never forget the moment that Callie was born and we laid eyes on her for the first time and she was brought right up into our arms.

All of that just melted away. And we were so happy. It was one of the happiest moments of my life. There she was with all her sweet little baby features.

and all that stuff before was just gone. This is the illustration Jesus uses for how it's going to be for these men.

[12 : 56] It's going to be hard. It's going to be painful. There will be anguish but all of that will melt away rather quickly. In an instant.

You'll forget the anguish. It'll be gone. You will rejoice. And notice the quality of this joy that will come. Verse 22. You will rejoice and no one will take away your joy.

Says Jesus. This isn't going to be a brief glimmer of happiness in the midst of an ever sorrowful life. It's going to be a deep lasting joy that doesn't fade and that nobody can steal from them or take away from them.

And what will be the cause of this joy? Jesus tells them there in verse 22. Now is your time of grief but I will see you again and you will rejoice.

It is seeing Jesus again alive after his death that will bring this flood of joy and push away all the sorrow.

[14 : 20] So we know from the story which follows here in John and the other gospels that this second little while is the three days between Jesus' death and resurrection on Sunday morning.

So what is Jesus doing? He's preparing these men for what's about to happen in less than 24 hours. He will be taken from them.

He will suffer and die. And how will they get through this? By clinging to Jesus' words of promise that in just a little while they will see him again.

and all that grief will give way to joy. To deep abiding joy. Now at this point Jesus has answered their question.

The first one anyway. And it's easy for us to see that because we kind of can look back and we know how the story goes. But remember the disciples I mean Jesus has already told them a few times he's going to die, he's going to rise from the dead three days later.

[15 : 32] They probably still aren't connecting the dots between Jesus' death and their grief and Jesus rising from the dead and their joy, their rejoicing.

We know this because even after Jesus rises from the dead and the women see the empty tomb and the angels and Jesus and then go tell the disciples they don't believe the women at first.

And then there's this bit about Jesus going to the father. When will that happen? Does Jesus go to the father when he dies? Or is that later?

So now Jesus is going to answer that second question. We're going to skip over verses 23 to 27 because in the midst there Jesus weaves in some stuff about prayer and about asking and about their relationship with the father.

We're going to go right down to verse 28. 28. Jesus makes another statement very direct similar to the one he just made and he answers that second question of what he means when he says because I am going to the father.

[16 : 41] What does that mean? I am going to the father. Verse 28 Jesus says I came from the father and entered the world. Now I am leaving the world and going back to the father.

father. Jesus just says it point blank as direct as can be. He answers that question of where he is going again and we could have probably come to this if we were listening closely and following closely all along through everything Jesus has said.

Notice the difference though between this statement and the previous statement. The first one was explaining how he would leave for a short time and they wouldn't see him referring to his death but then after a little while they would see him referring to his rising from the dead and appearing to them.

But with this statement Jesus is explaining how things will go in the longer term. He's telling him the time has come for me to leave this world and go back to heaven to the father.

just as I came down from heaven and entered the world the same way I'm going out of the world now back to the father.

[18 : 09] Then Jesus' disciples said now you're speaking clearly and without figures of speech. speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions.

This makes us believe that you came from God. So the quarter finally drops. The disciples finally get it. At least this part of it. They understand Jesus is not leaving them to go some other place here on earth.

This is why they cannot follow him. He came from heaven from the father down to earth and now he's going back to the father. back to heaven. And he will be with them no longer.

This is what we call Jesus' ascension. Jesus is foretelling the day when he will be taken up to heaven and as the story goes you can read about it in Acts chapter 1.

These same men are there and right before their eyes Jesus starts lifting off the ground and goes right up into the sky through the clouds and disappears into heaven.

[19 : 22] Now we understand they say we know what you mean when you say that you're going and I love this little other part that they say now we can see that you know all things will be crucified.

I think that's worth some meditation and some thought there. That's quite the statement. But let's reflect back on this whole conversation this evening.

Jesus has been telling these 11 men about how things are going to go in the next several months. All of it. He's been telling them about how he will be crucified.

How they won't see him anymore. How he will rise from the dead and they will see him again and rejoice. How he will leave them and go to the father. How the spirit will come down to them and guide them into all truth and speak to them.

And on and on. All of it will happen exactly like Jesus is telling them it will happen. Disciples haven't even lived through all of this yet and they're already realizing now we get it.

[20 : 33] you know all things. I mean you're the one who has come from heaven down to earth and now you're going back to heaven. You don't even need us to ask you questions or anybody to question you.

It's like they're acknowledging you're the ultimate authority here on everything. You know all things. peace. Well now Jesus says a little bit more.

We're going to skip past some of it and we're going to go to the very end and hear Jesus closing words of comfort. Verse 33 Jesus says I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

In this world you will have trouble but take heart I have overcome the world.

I love these words. This is the purpose of this whole conversation that Jesus has been having with them.

[21 : 44] Everything he's been saying and telling them it's for this. It's to put their hearts at ease. It's to still the fears. It's to take away the anxious thoughts and feelings and replace them with peace.

That peace that comes from trusting in him. In this world he says you will have trouble. These words we should consider carefully.

First we zero in on that word trouble. Most translations say in this world you will have tribulation. A little bit of an older less used word.

Others render it suffering. In this world you will have suffering. The word used there in the original language it doesn't usually mean trouble like I had trouble starting my car this morning.

It usually refers to more serious trouble. Some synonyms would be distress, oppression, affliction, tribulation, suffering.

[22 : 50] And of course these words point back to what Jesus has been saying earlier in this chapter about how they'll be hated by the world and persecuted.

excommunicated from the synagogue and even killed. That's the kind of trouble that this conversation has been focused on. Jesus says mark my words while you live in this world you will have this kind of trouble.

But then the sweetest words take heart I have overcome the world. I have overcome the world says Jesus.

The world's going to hate you persecute you treat you badly because of me says Jesus. They will put you out of the synagogue they will rejoice at my death while you weep.

But take heart I have overcome the world. Isn't this something? Before Jesus is even arrested he declares his own victory over his opponents.

[24 : 04] They will not defeat me says Jesus. I have overcome them. He states it like it's in the past tense like it's a thing of the past.

it's so certain that it's like a done deal. I have overcome the world. In this showdown with the world that Jesus is coming to the climax of he wins.

He will not be beaten. He's staring at the next hours of his life looking them right in the face knowing full well what will happen to him that he will be arrested falsely accused slandered beaten handed over and at the end of it all put to death.

He's staring all that in the face and he says take heart I have overcome the world. I've won this battle. There's no doubt in the mind of Jesus that whatever is about to unfold three days later he will rise up from the dead from that tomb in glory and triumph over his enemies.

Look now at how Jesus comes to say this. The flow of logic here is awesome. I have overcome the world so you my disciples take heart.

[25 : 39] don't despair. Don't let your hearts be troubled when this great trouble and sorrow and grief come. What does Jesus want his disciples to do in the midst of their trouble?

He wants them to trust in the fact that he has that he will overcome the world. Even though in the next hours it's going to look like everything's going off the rails and like the world is winning Jesus says trust me believe no they aren't winning I have won already so what does God have for us in these words today?

I hope that your heart has been able to enter into the story with the disciples and Jesus in this conversation but let's now draw some lines of application to our lives this was a unique time and situation for the disciples and for Jesus mainly these words are there to prepare them so that they can endure Jesus' death and make it through to that moment when he rises again the trouble that they will face has already been specifically defined by Jesus as that hatred that persecution at the hands of the world because of their association with Jesus and I can't help but think there isn't it wonderful how Jesus offers them such timely and relevant comfort he prepares them for exactly what they're about to go through and he gives them exactly what they need to face this to suffer through it this is the kind of good shepherd that Jesus is to his sheep he is so deeply in tune with us he knows what's going to happen in our lives he knows just what we need and when we need it and he provides it and while

Jesus speaks first and foremost of the days that are just ahead for the disciples there does seem to be a sort of principle here let me say it this way in this world you will have trouble but take heart I have overcome the world is Jesus only saying this to help the disciples make it through to Sunday morning when he rises or are these words of Jesus meant to carry the disciples through all the trouble they will face in the days ahead and for the rest of their lives there is a sort of timelessness to these words in this world you will have trouble but take heart I have overcome the world I think Jesus is setting their expectations this is how it will go not just in the next couple days but for the rest of your lives there will be trouble difficulty even suffering and he's giving them something solid and sure to anchor themselves by in the midst of all that the fact the truth that he has overcome the world so so so what would he have us do

Jesus what would he have us do today in the midst of our unique trials the challenges that we face the difficulties what would Jesus say to us if he were here today and this was us he was with I can't help but think wouldn't he point us to the same things these same wonderful abiding realities calling us like he did to the disciples to trust in him would he not encourage us to hold fast to the truth of everything that he has told us in advance about how things will go think about it just as Jesus is telling his disciples right now what's about to come in a similar way Jesus has told all his people about how things will go at the very end just as the disciples would have to trust during those days when they would not see

[30 : 23] Jesus looking forward to the day when he would rise when they would see him again aren't we in a similar sort of situation today we don't see Jesus because he has gone back to the father but he has promised that he will return and we will see him again just as Jesus encouraged his disciples to trust in his triumph over the world even before it happened is the Lord not calling us to trust the same as we live in our world today I believe these words were for them that day but also for us today to show us how to persevere in a world full of trouble that causes us trouble and this is how we do it we trust we hold firmly to the promise that Jesus made he is coming back

I am coming soon said Jesus we will see him even though now we do not we are to trust that there is coming a day when all our grief all our sorrow all our pain all our anguish will break and melt away and be replaced with joy deep lasting permanent joy when we see Jesus the risen king at his coming I don't know whatever you are going through in your life today even if it is really hard trusting this will carry you through finally Jesus pointed them to the day when he would rise as the proof that he has overcome the world we live on this side of that and so we look back at the resurrection of Jesus and we take heart it is there in that moment that we see most clearly that yes

Jesus has overcome the world and all the trouble that it caused him and since it was so certain and solid the day that he rose can we not trust that he will overcome what remains of the world and the troubles that it will cause to us in our day to day he will do it when he comes again in glory and in power the apostles later went on to speak to write letters John himself the one who captured this story went on to write a letter and this is what he had to say in his letter 1st John chapter 4 verse 4 a wonderful word of encouragement he said you dear children are from God and have overcome them because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world just a few verses after that in 5 verse 4 he wrote for everyone born of

God overcomes the world this is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith who is who is it that overcomes the world only the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God this is a tremendous encouragement to those of us who believe that and so with my last words this morning I just want to I want to speak to any of you who may not be settled about that in your own heart whether or not you believe in Jesus do you hear these words from Christ who else claims these things he says I have overcome the world and then he dies rises from the dead do you believe that Jesus is the son of God do you know that you can have a personal relationship with this conquering king and that you can be brought into this victory and triumph that Jesus has and be one who overcomes the world this is the good news and so

I want to encourage you believe in Jesus the son of God let's pray father in heaven thank you so much for your word thank you that you speak again and again into our lives through it and you know the challenges that face each one of us this week and we want to just commit ourselves and our challenges for this week ahead to you and we ask that you would help us to fix our eyes and our attention on you the one who has overcome and to be able to meet those challenges and difficulties with joy and hope and peace we ask this in Christ's name amen