

# John 16:16-33

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[0:00] Pray with me as we stand. Heavenly Father, we thank you for these great promises that we have in the Lord Jesus. And we pray now that you would help us to understand these promises so that we might lay hold of them in our lives.

So that our lives would be more fully reflective of your glory. And that we would be transformed more fully into the image of Christ. Help us now by your spirit, we pray.

Amen. Amen. Folks, be seated. If I have not met you, my name is Jacob. I'm one of the ministers here at St. John's. It is good to see you here tonight.

We're going to be looking at the passage from John chapter 16, which is on page 902. So turn back there with me if you've already closed your Bible.

It's John 16, beginning in verse 16, page 902. And if you're joining us for the first time tonight, we're in a sermon series looking at the upper room discourse in John's gospel.

[1:04] And this is Jesus' final night with his disciples before he goes to the cross. He's telling them everything that they need to know about how to be his disciples after he's gone.

And so we're hearing these scriptures. And we, here in 2026 at St. John's, we're learning how we can be formed by Christ as we follow him today.

And in this passage, we hear Jesus' final words to his apostles before he goes to the cross. Chapter 17 of this chapter is a prayer from Jesus to the Father.

So this is the last thing that he's going to say to them. So we really should lean in and listen close.

And what we hear is that Jesus gives two life-changing promises to these disciples and for anyone who believes in him through their testimony.

Two life-changing promises. Now, Jesus is giving these promises in response to the disciples' confusion. Did you see this in the reading?

[2:14] What are they confused about? Look with me, verse 16. Jesus says, a little while and you'll see me no longer. And again, a little while and you'll see me.

And the disciples don't get it. Look at verse 18. It's one of the most clear passages in scripture. So they were saying, what does he mean by a little while? We do not know what he's talking about. Have you ever felt that way when reading the Bible? They've got no category. For a Messiah who's going to leave for a little while and come back.

They're expecting that he's going to be this great political Messiah. That he'll usher in a new kingdom. That he'll set them in places of power. And that he'll renew the country of Israel.

And they expect it to happen immediately. What they don't get is that Jesus is pointing to his death and his resurrection. His death and his resurrection.

[3:16] That's what the little while is about. And it's totally unexpected. They've got no category for this. When Jesus says, you'll see me no longer.

He's referring to his death on the cross. He's going to go to the cross for them. He's going to pay for the penalty. The penalty for the sins of the whole world. He's going to take on the punishment for sin of all mankind.

And he's going to reconcile us to the Father. And when he says, you'll see me again. He's referring to his resurrection three days later. He's going to rise up in victory from death.

Death will not be able to keep a hold on him. In fact, death itself will be swallowed up. As he, who is the author of life, comes into contact with it.

So that nobody will have to suffer death again. This is what he means by a little while. It's the little while between his death on the cross.

[4:19] And his resurrection three days later. And the disciples just don't get it. And who could blame them? They've got no category for this kind of thing. It never happened before.

And he knows that they don't understand. And so what's his response? He gives them these two promises that reveal and explain how his death and his resurrection is going to transform their lives. And what he promises here will also transform our lives. Our day-to-day experience as Christians. And our relationship with the living God.

So this is the two points of the sermon. The cross and the resurrection transforms our sorrow into joy. And the cross and the resurrection transforms our relationship with God.

It brings us from alienation to access. So sorrow to joy. Alienation to access. That will be the two points. And it's actually the two truly, truly statements in this passage.

[5:29] It's 20 and 23. And so for just the rest of our time together, I want to consider what these things mean. And think about the implications for our lives today. So let's start with verse 20.

Look with me. Truly, truly, truly, Jesus says, I say to you, you will weep and lament. But the world will rejoice.

But you will be sorrowful. But your sorrow will turn into joy. Do you see the change here? The cross and the resurrection transforms their sorrow into joy.

And this was certainly true for the disciples in Jesus' time. Over the next 12 hours of their time with Jesus, they are going to experience immense, immense sorrow.

They are going to see their friend arrested, falsely condemned, beaten and murdered before their eyes. This is incredible sorrow.

[6:34] But even more than that, they are not just losing their friend. They are losing their master. This person who over the past three years of their lives has filled them with a sense of purpose.

Has given them a vocation. Their teacher who has called them to be their disciples. And as far as they know, when Jesus goes up on the cross, their entire vocation vanishes in a matter of breaths. And even worse than that, as Jesus is betrayed, not one of them will stand with him. They're all going to be scattered. And they're going to commit what is the most spectacular moral failure of their entire lives.

They're going to abandon their master and their friend at his most desperate moment. The apostles are going to experience real, real sorrow.

And Jesus says it's going to be transformed into joy. What? How? How? Well, he gives us this metaphor, this image of the woman in labor.

[7:45] Look with me. Verse 21. 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 brought into the world.

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.

We have a few folks here in the congregation who have recently had babies. Could probably attest to this. But back in these days, the pain management wasn't so great.

And so the pain of childbirth was intense and overwhelming. And yet, and yet, that real pain that a mother feels is transformed as soon as she sees the face of her new baby.

Maybe you've experienced that. Maybe you've been in the room with a mother who's experienced that. And here's the point that Jesus is making. The sorrow of the apostles won't last forever.

[9:05] Why? Because eternal life is being born into the world. Their pain is like birth pains. And when they see the Lord Jesus risen from the dead, their pain is going to get swept up into his purpose.

And their misery is going to get infused with meaning as they see the Lord Jesus and realize what he's accomplished. And that new joy that they're going to feel, it doesn't mean that the sorrow was pointless.

But it transforms it. And maybe you've had an experience like this where your suffering is transformed when it's infused with meaning.

When the apostles see Jesus risen from the dead. And it dawns on them that everything that he said is true.

That he really has accomplished what he said he was going to accomplish. That reality transfigures their sorrow by incorporating it into the texture of the new joy that they're going to live with for the rest of their lives.

[10:21] Do you know what I'm talking about? They will see how much God loves them. And how glorious it is that Jesus has redeemed them through his death.

It's amazing. And this has so many implications for us today. Whatever sorrow you have in your life, Jesus knows about it.

And he cares about it. And he wants you to know that in him, that sorrow will be transformed into joy. The deaths that we experience in our lives are very, very real.

The death of a loved one. The loss of a career. The loss of a friendship. The loss of a child.

The diagnosis of cancer. Chronic illness. Disability. Loss of opportunities. These are all real sorrows. And they are real deaths in our lives.

[11:31] But as Christians, the cross and the resurrection becomes the new paradigm for our lives. We will suffer sorrow.

But Jesus says that sorrow will not get the final word. Jesus is saying that life is waiting for you on the other side of that death.

Life is coming in just a little while. Because Jesus has suffered. Because Jesus has suffered. And he has risen again. And he's going to take our sorrow.

And he's going to fold it into his purposes for us. And our sorrow will become part of his great redemptive story. Our scars and our wounds will proclaim the glory of his victory over death.

That could not hold him down. And it cannot hold you. Amen. And friends, this joy is permanent. It's permanent.

[12:33] It will last forever. Our subjective feelings will change. Right? Especially, it's been sunny over the past couple of days.

And I'm just reminded that when the winter is long in Vancouver and it's cloudy and you don't see the sun for a few months. When that sunlight breaks through, it's a joy.

You just bask in it. But the clouds come again. Right? But the joy that Jesus promises here is permanent.

It will never go away. And this doesn't mean that we're going to be constantly joyful as Christians. But what it means is that our joy is grounded in an objective reality that's outside of us.

Thanks be to God. And it is constant. It is unshakable. And it means that our sorrow, your sorrow, will not last forever.

[13:35] Because new life is coming. That's the first point. The cross and the resurrection transforms sorrow into joy.

And that joy, which we have in Jesus, which is permanent, It's permanent because it's founded on a new relationship that he creates between us and his father.

And this is the second point. The cross and the resurrection moves us from alienation to access.

This is verse 23. It's the second truly, truly statement.

Look with me. In that day, when you see me again, when I've risen from the grave, you'll 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've asked nothing in my name.

[14:39] Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full. Jesus is creating a whole new relationship between us and the father.

Without Jesus' cross and resurrection, we're separated from God. Right? We can't get close to him. We can't know him personally.

And what Jesus is saying here is that my death and my resurrection is going to put you into an all-access relationship with my father. He transforms our sorrow to joy.

And he doesn't leave us on our own. He puts us into direct relationship with God that's going to bolster and encourage this new joy that we have in him.

Do you see this? And this is not something, Christian, that you have to wish for. This is true for you today if you believe in Jesus.

[15:45] Okay. But, like, what does the relationship look like? Because it often feels out of our grasp, doesn't it? It's verses 23 to 27.

And I see two things here. This relationship is, number one, it's open and free. And number two, it is intimately close.

So just really quickly, I want to look at these two things with you. This new relationship that Jesus creates between us and the father is totally open and free. We have free access to the living God of the universe.

To the God who created everything. We have his ear. Look at verse 23. Where he says, ask anything in my name.

That means total, complete, unlimited access. It's like we have a direct line to the monarch or the president or the prime minister.

[16:54] Maybe, do you have somebody in your life who you could call right now? And you could ask them for anything. And they wouldn't question you. They would just do it.

I hope you have somebody in your life like that. But if somebody comes to mind, just imagine if that person who would do anything for you had unlimited power, unlimited money, unlimited authority in the world.

That's what this is like. It's an incredible privilege. You know, back in the old days, God did dwell among his people. But they didn't have access to him.

Remember the stories of the Old Testament. Of people coming into contact with God's holiness. It did not end very well for most of them. But now, as Christians, we have direct, open, immediate access to the living God.

This is amazing. And not only is it open and free, it is intimately close. Intimately close. And it's intimacy in both directions, if you will.

[18:06] God is drawing close to us by his word. And we are able to draw close to God by prayer. Look at verse 25 with me.

Jesus says, Have you ever wondered what Jesus means by this?

Well, Jesus is talking about his word. When he says he'll tell them plainly about the Father, this is what the Holy Spirit did for the apostles.

Remember a few weeks ago in the sermon series, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come and teach them all things and remind them of all that he said. And included in that is everything that they need to know about the Father.

The Holy Spirit explained to the apostles who God the Father is in plain language so that they could record it for us in Holy Scripture.

[19:13] So now we, 2,000 years later, have an intimate and accurate account of what God is like. Isn't that amazing?

Now somebody might say, but Jacob, the Bible is confusing. This stuff is difficult to understand. And some of it is.

And of course we have to study. We have to really get into it and try to understand it. But the point is, it's there for us. The Holy Spirit has given us Holy Scripture to know God.

God draws close to us through his word. And this is the last point. Verse 26 shows us that we can draw close to God through prayer.

So look with me. Verse 26. In that day, again, after his resurrection, you will ask in my name. And I do not say that I will ask the Father on your behalf.

[20:15] For the Father himself loves you. Because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. This is amazing.

We can draw close to God in prayer. And this intimate love that the Father has for us means that he is listening to you and to me directly.

Wow. This is an incredible privilege. And it's not like, you know, we have to pass our prayers to Jesus and hope that he sends them up to the Father.

And hope that the Father responds favorably. No, Jesus says, I will need to ask on your behalf because the Father loves you. Jesus is not a note passer.

He's a status giver. Right? What this means is that anyone who loves Jesus gets the status of a beloved son or daughter of the living God.

[21:21] And we pray in Jesus' name simply to claim our status. We are your children, God. Hear us in the name of your son who has purchased this status for us.

Isn't this amazing? That we've been brought into the love of God. We've been given intimate access to the inner life of the Trinity.

It's almost unspeakable. This means that by Jesus' cross and resurrection, he has given us a permanent joy that we can now put into practice by this new relationship that we have with God. And there is so much to say about what this means in our lives. And I hope that you can unpack this more in your Bible studies and in your community groups.

Because it's just amazing. But I want to give us two real quick takeaways as I end. And honestly, they're quite mundane. So I'm sorry. The first one is we should study scripture.

[22:36] Right? Because we want to learn more clearly who God is. We want to draw close to him through his word. Because he's given us intimate access to his mind and his heart.

So take advantage of it. And the second one is that we should pray to the Father. Pour your heart out to God.

Because he's listening. He knows you better than you know yourself. He is intimately aware of your sorrow.

He cares about it. He loves you. And he wants you to talk to him in prayer. So this is how we put our joy into practice in our lives.

So friends, especially in this season of Lent, let's commit to putting these into practice. Amen? Let me pray for us as we end.

[23:46] Heavenly Father, we are stunned. We are awed by the promises of Jesus to us.

That you actually hear us. That you are attentive to even me. Thank you, Lord, for this great promise.

Thank you for this great privilege. Father, I simply pray that you would help us to understand and believe you more clearly. And Lord, that each one of these, your children, would be confident in your love for them.

And Lord, that each one of us would bring our sorrows to you. So that you might transform it into joy. Lord, give us that joy in the certain hope of the resurrection.

Even tonight. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.