

# John 16:16-33

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Preacher: Rev. Chris Ley

[0:00] Let's pray as we stand. Lord Jesus, open our ears to hear your words to us. That through them and in you, we may have peace.

We pray this in your name. Amen. You can take a seat. Well, this morning we're looking at John 16. We just heard it.

Starting at verse 16 going through to verse 33. And it's on page 902 and 903 of the Pew Bible in front of you. And it'd be helpful to have it open.

It's a bit of a wily text. It's nice to be able to follow it along in front of you. In our passage, Jesus ends his last instructions.

This is his final teaching to his closest disciples right before his death. It's the final sentence of his sermon. And in that final sentence, he begins it by saying, In this world, you will have trouble.

[1:07] I think it's a sentiment many of us can relate to. Life is hard. For many people, it feels like our lives are an unending effort to overcome constant challenges.

For many of us, it feels like we're always pushing against something. It might be financial pressure or relational strain.

It might be health concerns or an uncertainty about your future or indeed the future of the world. Life is marked by challenge, by resistance.

And Jesus tells us that when we follow him in a secular society, it won't remove that pressure. It'll intensify it.

Christians face pressure to conform to culture. Pressure to soften our convictions. Pressure to privatize our faith.

[2:11] Pressure to quietly drift. Pressure to Take heart.

I have overcome the world. Now, if you know anything about the context of this verse, at first glance, it seems completely ridiculous. Because within hours, Jesus is about to be arrested. By morning, he's going to be nailed to a Roman cross. And by midday, he will be dead. So how can he claim to have overcome the world just hours before he'll be killed by the world?

Surely he should be saying the world is about to overcome me. But if that is what happens, his words of comfort and confidence here are completely hollow. And they don't help us.

Unless the cross is not defeat. Unless what appears to be loss is actually victory. John 16 prepares us to see beyond the current trouble.

[3:29] Through the trouble. In the trouble. There is glory. Jesus takes what we see and feel. And he reveals that beneath apparent defeat, there lies victory.

So I want to look at that last sentence to his disciples in verse 33. By breaking it in half. And showing how through Jesus, trials become triumph.

So first, Jesus says, in this world you will have trouble. In the Bible, if it's open in front of you, you'll see the word is not trouble. It's translated tribulation.

That word literally means you'll be under pressure. You will be hard pressed. If you follow Jesus, expect the world to press against you.

To push against you. Every step. From every direction. If you follow Jesus, the world will resist you. They'll try to trip you up.

[4:31] Slow you down. Push you off course. In our passage, Jesus predicts that this pressure will show itself in three ways to his disciples.

First, Jesus' followers will experience deep sorrow.

Look at the beginning of our reading. Verse 16. Jesus says, a little while and you'll see me no longer. He's speaking about his death. Within hours, Jesus will be arrested, condemned, humiliated, beaten, tortured, and then grotesquely executed. Despite having done nothing wrong. He's warning his followers about this. He explains in verse 20. Truly, truly, I say to you. That means listen up. This is important. Underline this. Truly, truly, you will weep and lament. But the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful.

Jesus was the disciples' teacher. He was their master. He was the one they believed to be the Messiah. And he's about to be publicly mutilated and murdered.

[5:44] In a little while, in this world, as you follow me, you will have sorrow. And while you grieve, the world will rejoice.

Religious leaders will orchestrate Jesus' death. The crowd will all scream for it. And the Romans will capitulate to Jerusalem's murderous demands. It's all about to happen.

In a little while. And the disciples have absolutely no idea. In this world, you will have trouble. In a little while, it will look like evil has won.

And you will weep. And you will lament. And you will be full of sorrow. Jesus tells all of his disciples this beforehand. Why do you think he does that?

Well, because it's to show, even now, he's in control. He will not be surprised. All things have been put into his hands.

[6:46] And so he is preparing them for what's about to happen. Even as Jesus faces imminent torture, humiliation, and execution, his concern is for his followers' well-being.

And so he warns them, you'll weep. You'll lament. You'll sorrow. You're about to enter the blackest night, the darkest day. Death is at the door.

In this world, as you follow me, you will have sorrow. The second form of trouble the disciples will experience is confusion. The disciples can't make any sense of Jesus' words.

They don't know what's about to happen. They don't get that Jesus is about to die. And they certainly don't understand what his death will accomplish. Verse 18, they tell us as much. They say, we do not know what he is talking about.

Maybe that's how you felt as you heard the Bible read. We don't know what this is about. Jesus explains further in verses 19 to 28. And then afterward, in verse 29, the disciples remark, oh, now you're speaking plainly.

[7:53] Now we get it. Now we understand. Verse 30, now we know that you know all things. You don't need anyone to question you. This is why we believe that you came from God. But Jesus answers them in verse 31.

Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming. Indeed, it has come when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and you will abandon me. The disciples think they understand.

But they don't. Jesus knows all of them are about to abandon him at the first sign of trouble. They're about to run as far from him as possible to save their own skin.

The disciples are about to watch what looks like the collapse of everything they've been hoping for. And they don't see that what appears to be defeat is actually salvation.

What will look like humiliation is actually glory. Jesus promises his followers while they are in the world that they will experience sorrow, and they won't understand what God is doing.

[9:00] And the third form of trouble they will experience is then fear. Verse 32, you'll be scattered, each to his own home, and you'll leave me alone.

Under pressure from the world, the disciples will run. They'll scatter. Judas betrays Jesus. Peter will deny him, and the rest will disappear.

Self-preservation will overpower loyalty. Fear will overwhelm their faith. And Jesus knows this. He tells them plainly that they're all about to abandon him.

And yet he does not abandon them. He doesn't say to them, you know, give an ultimatum, if you reject me, I'll reject you.

No, instead he prepares them. So that after they've run, they may remember his words, and see that even their failure did not surprise him.

[10:01] In this world, you will have trouble. For the disciples, it's about to take the form of sorrow, and confusion, and fear. Perhaps this has been your experience as well, of following Jesus.

And if it is, listen now to how Jesus finishes that last sentence of this last sermon at his last supper. The first half in this world, you will have trouble.

But now the second. Take heart. I have overcome the world. Jesus reveals a great reversal.

Christians have hope when we are facing trouble.

Jesus tells us that what has looked like defeat will actually be victory. Notice Jesus says, I have overcome the world. Not I will overcome the world.

I already have overcome the world. This is before the cross. Before his resurrection. Before they have scattered. How can he say this?

[11:10] It's because Jesus overcomes not by domination, but by obedience. See, the world defines power as force.

We've seen that on full display over the last couple days. Rome displays power by crucifixion. But Jesus overcomes by absorbing all evil and exhausting it.

He overcomes by submitting perfectly to his father. He overcomes by laying down his life willingly.

The cross is not the world defeating Jesus.

It is Jesus defeating the world. It is the love of God triumphing over darkness and death and sin and Satan.

I've triumphed over the world, he says. I am Lord over all. And at my cross in a little while, that will be the moment when my victory is realized.

[12:10] The trials followers of Jesus face will be transformed through the cross. Jesus' death and triumph over death will transform their sorrow into joy, transform their confusion into knowledge, and transform their fear into peace.

And I want to very quickly look at each. So first, verse 20. Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, sorrow will turn into joy.

Sorrow will turn to joy. Your sorrow will produce joy. Jesus gives the image of a woman in labor.

Verse 21. When a woman's giving birth, she has sorrow, because her hour has come.

But when she's delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish for joy that a human being has been born into the world. The pain is real. But it gives way to life.

The sorrow births joy. So also you have sorrow now, he says in verse 22. But I will see you again. And your hearts will rejoice.

[13:26] And no one will be able to take your joy from you. Notice Jesus says, I will see you again. Not, you will see me again.

He's foretelling his resurrection. In a little while, you'll see me no longer. In a little while, in mere hours, I will be dead. By this time tomorrow, Jesus' body will be buried in the tomb.

They will see him no more. And they will have sorrow. But then, in a little while afterwards, I will see you again.

A little while, after my death, I will see you. Dead men can't see. But this one will.

Jesus will see them again, because Jesus will be alive again, after his death. His physical body will rise again.

[14:24] His physical eyes, though closed in death, will reopen again, as he is risen, and he will once again see his disciples. And when the risen Jesus looks upon his followers, their short-lived sorrow will birth a joy that can never be extinguished.

Their sorrow at his death will turn to joy at his resurrection that no power of hell, nor scheme of man, can ever take from them. Death will be defeated.

As Jesus sees them, they will see that Jesus has overcome the world. So the cross doesn't erase sorrow. It transforms it.

Your sorrow shall turn to joy. That's how Jesus, through the cross, overcomes the world. All right, second transformation.

The disciples' confusion will turn to knowledge. Remember, the disciples don't understand what Jesus is talking about. They don't get that Jesus is about to die.

[15:32] And they certainly don't understand why, if he's over all things, he's about to be killed. But in a little while, after he leaves them, and then a little while later, once he sees them again, in verse 23 he says, In that day, you will ask nothing of me.

On that day, once I am risen from the dead, and you see me again, you will see everything clearly. After the resurrection, my cross will make sense.

You will understand that what looked like defeat was victory, redemption, glory. All of this will make sense.

You will see how in death I have overcome the world. More than that, in verse 25, Jesus admits, I've said these things to you in figures of speech, but the hour is coming when I'll no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but I'll tell you plainly about the Father.

In a little while, Jesus will share clearly his knowledge of the Father. They'll learn plainly about God. They won't be left guessing what Jesus is talking about.

[16:44] Verse 26, he goes on, In that day, you'll ask in my name, and I do not say that I will ask a Father on your behalf. It's a little confusing. Let me try a paraphrase.

In that day, through Jesus, in Jesus' name, Jesus' followers will be able to talk to the Father directly. Jesus' followers will have direct access to God, direct, intimate knowledge of the Father.

They won't need Jesus physically with them, telling them about the Father. For through him, through his death and resurrection, they will now know his Father as their Father.

This knowledge isn't just intellectual clarity, it's relationship. They will know God. And what will they know about the Father?

Verse 27, the Father loves you. This is the knowledge that Jesus has come to earth to reveal. the Father loves you.

[17:52] The Father so loves you. He so loves the world that he gave up his one and only Son. How great the Father's love for us. The Father loves you.

You will know this. Your ignorance and your confusion will be transformed into the knowledge of God. God. More than that, as you know God and as you know his love for you, Jesus says in verse 23, listen to this, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, whatever you ask in accord with my will, my Father will give it to you.

Until now, you've asked for nothing in my name, but ask and you'll receive. Why? So that your joy may be full. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of his love for us, the knowledge of who Jesus is, emboldens us to ask the Father for anything, trusting that if it aligns with Jesus' will, we will receive it so that our joy may be full.

The confusion of Good Friday will give way to the good news of Easter Sunday, the knowledge that God was not defeated at the cross, but triumphant in accomplishing salvation through it, and that knowledge deepens our joy.

So, so far, through the cross, our sorrow will turn to joy. Their confusion about God will turn to knowing God as their loving Father. and now one last transformation.

[19:30] Jesus tells his disciples, in the world, you'll have trouble. He tells them, in a little while, you'll all be running for your lives. You'll scatter. You'll leave Jerusalem and run home to hide and save yourselves.

You'll be filled with fear. You'll be riddled with unbelief. He knows all of this. He tells them plainly. He tells us why in verse 33. I have said these things to you so that in me you may have peace.

Jesus knows that fear will seize his followers' hearts and they will abandon him. And he tells them that he knows this so that they will know peace.

Not peace from trouble, but peace in him. You will abandon me, but I will never abandon you. You will run away from me, but still I give my life for you and I will come and find you. Their faithfulness will waver.

[20:35] His will not. I know you're about to betray me, deny me, run from me, but even when you run away, still I go to the cross for you.

Even when they hide, he rises and he comes to find them. This is peace. Peace rooted not in our steadiness, but in his victory.

It is peace that the world cannot give. It is peace that rests on the unshakable reality that Jesus has already overcome.

time. Jesus does not promise exemption from trouble. He promises triumph over it. In this world, you will have trouble.

You will experience pressure as you follow Jesus, resistance, rejection. Some of you feel this pressure in your lives today, at work, when integrity costs you advancement, in friendships, when conviction isolates you, or at home when your faith is met with indifference.

[21:49] There will be times when faithfulness to Jesus feels like it's setting us back rather than moving us forward. There will be moments when fear will overpower faithfulness.

You may know sorrow, you may not understand what God is doing, you may falter in fear. But none of that has the final word.

Because before you stand firm, before you understand, before you feel courageous, Jesus has already overcome.

The cross is not the world silencing Jesus. It is Jesus silencing the world's claim to power. And therefore, take heart. not because you're strong, not because you'll never scatter, but because he has overcome.

His victory is greater than your sorrow, it is deeper than your confusion, and it is stronger than your fear. Thanks be to God.

[22:58] Amen. Amen.