

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

We hear these words from our Gospel reading again - **John chapter 16:22** “**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.**” So far the word of the Lord...

“**What is this He says to us? We did not and still don’t know what He’s saying.**” It’s like when a teacher says something significant, but nobody quite understood what the teacher meant, and everyone is too afraid to ask. “*Did you get what he said?*” The whispers abound repeating the same question throughout the classroom and the teacher knows that what he said didn’t click for his students. The teacher repeats himself for the benefit of his students, but the looks in their eyes clearly convey that the lesson still isn’t clicking. So the teacher takes a different approach. Amen, amen “**truly, truly I say to you**” - this key phrase communicates to the disciples that “*You’re going to want to hear this, so pay attention!*”

Jesus had warned the disciples three times prior to His crucifixion that He would be taken from them by betrayal, injustice, and violence. And then after being killed, He would rise again on the third day. The time was drawing near. “**A little while, and you will behold me no longer**” - you’d think the disciples would start to catch on to what Jesus was saying. Now, you and I have the benefit of knowing how this story ends, so when Jesus says “**you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice**” we understand that He’s talking about His approaching death.

We’re in the season of Easter, but this text takes place Maundy Thursday night. “**In a little while**”— tomorrow, that is Good Friday —Jesus will go to His death. “**The world**” would rejoice at His death, whereas the disciples would weep (I can’t help but think of Mary weeping outside the

tomb, wondering where Jesus' body had gone). Maybe the message did start to get through to the disciples; at least the part about Jesus' approaching death. They understood that death was within the realm of possibility for themselves. You may recall "doubting" Thomas who we heard about two weeks ago in our Gospel reading. An earlier memorable "Thomas-moment" came about as Jesus went to raise Lazarus from the dead. Thomas said, **"Let us also go, that we may die with him."** (Jn 11:16). Oh Thomas... This loyalty to Jesus was commendable, but he was in for quite a lesson concerning life after death. Again, you'd think some things would have starting clicking for the disciples after such a miraculous sign.

"A little while, and you will behold me no longer..." But Jesus doesn't leave the disciples without hope of seeing Him again. He continues, **"again a little while, and you will see me"** (Jn 16:16). On the third day Jesus would rise again. Death could not bind Him. He would be recognized at His Word (Jn 20:16) and in the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:31-32).

"You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy" (Jn 16:20). Yes, the disciples would endure a period of sorrow. Sure, Jesus promised that their sorrow would turn into joy, but sometimes joy simply seems out of reach, unattainable, incomprehensible. You might be familiar with such sorrow. The inability to conceive, a miscarriage, the loss of a loved one, a broken marriage, an addiction that just won't go away - these are just a few examples of the trials and temptations we are subjected to as we live in this fallen world. In the midst of such things, sorrow abounds. There is no joy in these things. After the fact, perhaps you can begin to perceive how God was using such trials or thorns of the flesh to draw you closer to Him, but when you're in the thick of it - things can seem pretty bleak.

A few weeks ago, Pastor began to lead us through the book of Job during Bible Study on Wednesday evenings. Job knew sorrow and suffering intimately. He lost his livelihood as well as all of his children. Job had several friends who sought to comfort and counsel him in his time of trial and need. If you're familiar with Job, you know that the counsel these so-called "friends" provided was less than helpful. If they had told Job, **"You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy"** - Job probably would have said something like, *"Maybe... But that doesn't help me right now!"*

Jesus taught His disciples, **"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven"** (Lk 6:22-23). Elsewhere the Scriptures tell us to **"rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings"** (1 Pet 4:13) and to **"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds"** (James 1:2). Our Epistle reading for today says, **"For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly"** (1 Pet 2:19). Again and again we hear these admonitions. Yet, in the midst of suffering it's difficult to trust that these promises are true. And it's even more difficult to find joy in them!

Praise God, we have a Savior who has experienced such trials and suffering on our behalf. When you think that no one can possibly understand or empathize with what you are going through, know that Jesus can and He does. He does not abandon us in our time of trial and need. He takes our sorrow upon Himself. Keep in mind that Jesus didn't ascend to the Father until He ascended to the cross. His route back to heaven took Him through hell. And knowing that makes this easy-to-relate-to scenario all the more comforting: **"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” (Jn 16:21). The labor pains might be long. But once that baby has been born - there are smiles all around. For new life has been brought into the world. In Christ, we are granted new life. **Romans 6:4 “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”**

Today, we rejoice for we see Jesus with our ears (when we hear His Word and receive His sacraments). Jesus continues to keep His promise: **“again a little while, and you will see me” (Jn 16:16).** We don’t need to ask **“What is this [Jesus] says to us?”** because we know that on the Last Day we will see Jesus face to face, and I’m sure there will be smiles all around.

Sorrow will last but a little while. Joy - joy will last forever and no one can take this joy away from us. For we have Christ’s promise, **“I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (Jn 16:22).** Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed, alleluia!] Amen.

The peace which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.