



Sermon Reflection Guide; John 16:16-22

1. This text teaches us a lot about the nature of true joy in this life. How do you think most people in our world today believe that happiness and fulfillment is achieved?
2. When the disciples had a question about what Jesus meant they didn't ask Jesus, but Jesus mercifully answers them anyways. What do most people do when they have questions or worries or fears concerning our world or God's word? What should we do?
3. In what ways does the resurrection transform the sorrow of the cross into great joy? What does Christ's resurrection prove about Christ's death on the cross?
4. In verse 22, Jesus tells the disciples their joy can never be taken away because he himself is their joy. Is Jesus your joy? What are some ways we can cultivate a greater joy in Christ? What should be our ultimate hope here and now in this life when we see the world around us falling apart and seemingly only full of sorrow?

Sermon Summary

Over the last several months we have heard Jesus speaking to his disciples in the upper room just hours before his betrayal and arrest. He has been teaching them and comforting them in various ways. In this week's text we see Jesus comfort the disciples with two distinct promises. First, he promises that "You will see me" and second, he promises that "your sorrow will turn into joy".

First, Jesus promises the disciples who are concerned and fearful for their own lives and the life of Jesus that they would see him. Jesus says in John 16:16, "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again, a little while, and you will see me." In the very next verse, we see that the disciples were baffled and perplexed about what Jesus meant when he said this. Although there is still meaningful debate about what Jesus meant today, it makes the most sense for us to understand Jesus' words in relation to his death, burial and resurrection. Jesus is preparing his disciples for the fact that in just a little while he will be put to death and they will see him no longer but just a little while after that he will be gloriously raised from the dead and they will see him again. This makes sense to us from our privileged place in redemptive history because we know the whole story of what is coming. However, when we consider that the disciples had seen Jesus slip away from the clutches and schemes of his enemies time and time again and that they did not know what would happen, we begin to understand why they were so confused and asking themselves what Jesus could possibly mean. In their wondering as they were asking one another, Jesus recognized their confusion and he mercifully answers the questions they had. We should be confident to always bring our questions and our concerns to Jesus and his word, for he is merciful and desires to answer our questions and calm our fears. We should never neglect to pray to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and to search his word for answers to any question we may have.

Before Jesus, moves on to comfort the disciples by telling them that their sorrow would be turned to joy, he acknowledges that there is real sorrow and lament in their very near future. Of course, we know why the disciples would be caused such sorrow and such lament. They were about to witness, firsthand the

cruelty and tragedy and injustice Jesus would face as he was tried, mocked, tortured and ultimately crucified. Not only would they be sorrowful over the death of their friend and master, but they would be moved to further sadness thinking that Jesus' movement had failed. Like disciples on the road to Emmaus who unknowingly encounter the risen Christ, they were in lament because they had lost hope that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel. Further, Jesus tells them in verse 20 that while they lament the world will rejoice. To add to the disciples' sorrow would be the world's rejoicing at the death of Christ. Believing that Jesus was the enemy the world which opposes Jesus and his word would rejoice thinking they had gotten rid of Jesus and would no longer have to hear his word or the Gospel.

This brings us to the second promise that Jesus makes to the disciples, that their sorrow would be turned into joy. Jesus says in verse 20b, "...You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy." Jesus knew that although they would experience the very real sorrow of his death and the rejoicing of the world that in three days, they would see the resurrected Christ and their sorrow would become joy. This is what David had in mind in Psalm 30:5, "...Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." It was the resurrection that transformed the disciples' deep sorrow into a real and lasting joy. The resurrection did not erase or negate the pain of the cross that Christ endured, the cross he endured on our behalf, we must never lose sight of the fact that it was our sin that sent Jesus to the cross. But the resurrection takes the cross and transforms it into our joy. How does it do this? The resurrection shows us that God the Father accepted Jesus' sinless and perfect sacrifice on the cross for the atonement of sin for all those who will by faith trust in Christ alone. The resurrection proves the redemption that the cross accomplished. This is why today we celebrate the cross and that the New Testament calls us to boast in the cross of Christ. Without the resurrection the cross would be a symbol of great sorrow but in light of the resurrection the cross is transformed into victory and joy for all of Christ's followers. This is why so much of our preaching and teaching and the lyrics to songs we sing and the prayers we pray mention the cross and thank God for the cross. It is as the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

In verse 21, Jesus illustrates this sorrow that turns into joy with the metaphor of childbirth, "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 born into the world." Just like the mother who will never forget the pain of childbirth, now rejoices and has that pain transformed into joy because of the birth of a new child. So too we know the real sorrow of our sin necessitating Christ's death on the cross, but we rejoice in the resurrection and boast in the cross because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. Amazingly Jesus tells us that not only is that sorrow transformed into joy but further he says it can never be taken away, verse 22, "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." Commenting on this John Calvin says, "By these words Jesus shows what is the nature of true joy." Jesus reminds us that true joy like this can never be taken away. There is no circumstance or person who can take away our joy. This does not mean that Christians will never again experience sorrow or pain, but it does mean that Christians have supernatural joy that is very different from the temporary happiness that the world offers. Jesus alone can make this promise because in verse 22 he places the impetus on what he will do. He doesn't merely say that we will see him again but in verse 22, Jesus says, "*I will see you again*". Jesus' promise is rooted in his work as our savior, in the Holy Spirit's promise to indwell true believers and in his promise to one day return to consummate the New Heavens and the New Earth. It is Jesus himself that is the true joy of all those who follow him and he will never be taken away.