

John: sermon #18  
**Joy for us in Jesus** (John 16:16-33)

## Introduction

In John 16:16–33 Jesus concludes his evening dialogue with his disciples (though his John 17 High Priestly prayer was apparently overheard by the disciples).

**Here in John 16 the disciples were wrestling with very difficult emotions: sorrow, confusion and fear. These emerge as they become increasingly aware that Jesus is leaving.** Tenderly and patiently, Jesus explains how they can have joy despite struggles, doubts and fears. **In these reassuring words of Jesus we find three important, interrelated concepts: a *principle* to grasp, a *promise* to believe and a *position* to claim.** Through these we too may find the joy that is in Jesus.

### 1. A *principle* to grasp (16:16–22)

*<sup>16</sup> "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."*

*<sup>17</sup> 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?'" <sup>18</sup> They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."*

*<sup>19</sup> 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'? <sup>20</sup> I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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."*

**The principle here is clear: God brings joy into our lives not by *substitution*, but through *transformation*. Jesus makes the point with an analogy: a mother's sorrow (pain) in childbirth is not merely replaced by joy, it is transformed into joy. The same baby that caused the pain is the very baby that brings the joy! Moreover the pain experienced in childbirth seems to go on forever—every minute seems like an hour. The mother feels as though the birth is taking a long time, when really it may be only “a little while.” But when the baby has been born, the pain is forgotten and joy fills her heart.**

**So it is in our life in Christ—what is painful, Jesus transforms into a blessing that brings joy. This occurs through the miracle of God's grace—transforming trial into triumph and sorrow into joy. “God...turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you” (Deut. 23:5). We see many examples of such transformation in Scripture: Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave, but God transformed that hopeless situation into victory. Egypt's persecution of Israel only caused them to multiply and prosper the more. King Saul's murderous pursuit of David only made him more a man of God. And, above all, Jesus took the cross, a symbol of defeat and shame, and transformed it into a symbol of victory and glory.**

**In John 16:16, Jesus announced that they would soon not see him; then, in a little while, they would see him (because he was going to the Father, verse 17). It was a deliberately puzzling statement and the disciples did not understand. What did Jesus mean? He was probably referring in one statement to two things: his death followed by resurrection appearances; and his reappearing to them (and remaining with them) through sending the Spirit following his ascension (his ‘return’ to the Father). Jesus' departure (bringing them pain), would lead to his sending of the Spirit—his abiding presence with them—the source of great and transforming joy.**

**The world was glad when Jesus departed. Both the religious and political leaders expected to see his followers die out and the “Jesus movement” disappear. But such was not the case. Jesus sent the Spirit to them and his church thrived—carrying his word of**

transforming grace to the ends of the earth. This participation in Jesus' life and mission brought them great transforming joy—even in the midst of persecution (Acts 5:41).

**What Have We Learned in this section? How Does This Apply Personally (Practical Theology)?**

*From Members of Your TLC Pastoral Leadership Team: We have learned that God brings joy into our lives not by substitution, but through transformation. As such, we learn that in our life in Christ—what is painful, Jesus transforms into a blessing that brings joy. We learn that this occurs through the miracle of God's grace—transforming trial into triumph and sorrow into joy. The key to this happening 24/7 in our lives is receiving and living in the Spirit—Christ's abiding presence with us —the source of great and transforming joy. We learn that this participation in Jesus' life and mission brings us great transforming joy—even in the midst of persecution (Acts 5:41). We have also learned that our relationship with Jesus builds our confidence in His redeeming power to transform every challenge and difficulty into victory for Him and brings joy and peace in our lives. It is only because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and our willingness to submit to Him and to learn from Him that we can participate in Jesus' life and mission.*

## **2. A promise to believe (16:23–28)**

*<sup>23</sup> "In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. <sup>24</sup> Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.*

*<sup>25</sup> "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. <sup>26</sup> In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. <sup>27</sup> No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. <sup>28</sup> I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."*

**The central theme here is prayer: “Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (16:24b), but underlying this theme is that of a new relationship they will have with God their Father ‘in that day’ (verse 26). This day is clearly the ‘day’ or time period soon to come when Jesus would ascend to the Father and send them the Spirit. At that time, as dearly loved, adopted children of God they will have direct access to the Father with the confidence that he welcomes them and that he gladly attends to their needs and requests.**

**This was a promise that they desperately needed, for Jesus was about to leave and, at first, they would feel abandoned. Jesus had been the one to hear them and to meet their needs. With him gone were they not alone? Not at all! In fact, their closeness to God would be enhanced.**

**Here Jesus emphasizes prayer. He did so throughout his ministry—both in word and action. He was indeed a man of prayer. Here he makes it clear that prayer is essential to relationship with God and to a fruitful Christian life. But this prayer is not legalistic ritual. Rather it is the exercising of a privileged *relationship*. This prayer is access to the Father in Jesus’ name—and access that brings us the fullness of transforming joy.**

**In explaining this Jesus promises to speak ‘plainly’ about his Father and their coming relationship with him in Christ Jesus through the Spirit. He had been speaking to them in parables and analogies (like washing feet, the vine and the branches, and the pregnant woman), but henceforth he will speak in non-figurative language. His purpose will now be to clearly reveal the Father to them—and he will do so through clear words and through the ministry of the Spirit dwelling in their minds and hearts.**

**It’s important to note here that the deep/plain understanding that Jesus has for us involves knowing the Father. And this understanding will transform everything (including our prayer life). This understanding comes through Jesus’ ongoing ministry as the ascended Lord where he serves as our High Priest (making intercession for us; see Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) and as our Advocate (speaking in our defense; see 1 John 2:1). The key to understand**

**Jesus' ongoing ministry is the ministry of the Spirit whom Jesus sent to indwell us.**

**We see all this at work in the book of Acts, where the early church was a praying, Spirit-led church. They believed the promises that Jesus made to them about their new relationship with the Father and so they asked God for what they needed in Jesus' name. And their joy was full. There is indeed joy in praying and in receiving answers to prayer. There is joy in entering into Jesus' prayers to the Father through the Spirit. "What a privilege to carry everything to God [in Jesus, through the Spirit] in prayer"!**

**What Have We Learned in this section? How Does This Apply Personally (Practical Theology)?**

***From Members of Your TLC Pastoral Leadership Team: As such, we learn we all have direct access to the Father with the confidence that he welcomes us all and that he gladly attends to our needs and requests. We learn here that Jesus makes it clear that prayer is essential to relationship with God and to a fruitful Christian life. But this prayer is not legalistic ritual. Rather it is the exercising of a privileged *relationship*. This prayer is access to the Father in Jesus' name—and access that brings us the fullness of transforming joy. We learn that Jesus transforms us through His clear words in Scripture and through the ministry of the Spirit dwelling in our minds and hearts. It is important again to note here that the deep/plain understanding that Jesus has for us involves knowing the Father. And this understanding will transform everything (including our prayer life). The key to understand Jesus' ongoing ministry is the ministry of the Spirit whom Jesus has sent to indwell us. We see all this at work in the book of Acts, where the early church was a praying, Spirit-led church. As well, we see that prayer is a *vital tool* in bringing us closer to God. It builds our confidence. Prayer is something we should look forward to participating in with Christ. It should not be considered a duty, chore, obligation, etc. Knowing that God through His unconditional love for us wants to draw us into a prayerful relationship with Him should bring us closer to Him,***

should result in our desire to join with Him in a *continuous prayerful exchange*.

### **3. A position to claim (16:29–33)**

*<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. <sup>30</sup> 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."*

*<sup>31</sup> "You believe at last!" Jesus answered. <sup>32</sup> "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. <sup>33</sup> 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."*

**In verses 29–30, the disciples suddenly moved out of their spiritual stupor and made a tremendous affirmation of faith. First, they claimed to understand what he had been teaching them, though this claim was premature, as their subsequent actions proved.**

**They also finally put their faith and assurance in Jesus: “Now we...see...this makes us believe.” It was quite a statement of faith, and Jesus seemed to have accepted it as genuine. In his prayer recorded in the next chapter, Jesus told the Father about his disciples and reported on their spiritual condition (17:6–8). Certainly he knew their weaknesses, but he was quick to approve their growing evidences of faith and assurance.**

**But as we note in their experience, it is possible to have faith, understanding, and assurance *and still fail the Lord*. Unless we live out our faith, apply our understanding, and rest in our assurance, we will falter when times of testing comes That is what happened to these disciples, and Jesus warned them that it would happen.**

**He had already warned Peter that he would deny him, but now he warned the entire group that they would all forsake him. How could it be any other way, they did not have God the Holy Spirit indwelling them, they could not help but be carnal minded men**

who would flee at the sight of a mob coming to arrest Jesus. But we have God's Spirit who enables us to live out our faith, and apply our understanding and rest in our assurance that all trials will come to an end.

**Jesus has promised never to leave us alone** (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5); yet his disciples left him alone. Peter, James, and John went into the Garden with Him, but then fell asleep. **Jesus knew that the Father would be with him. "I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me" (8:16). "The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone" (8:29).** What an encouragement it was to Jesus to know that he was doing the Father's will and that he could depend on the Father's help.

**John 16:33 is the summary and climax of Jesus' message. Why did he give this message? So that his disciples might have peace in a world of trouble. Note the contrast between "in me" and "in this world." In Christ there is peace; in the world there is trouble. This is the position we are privileged to experience: we are *in Christ*, and therefore in Christ (who is the *overcomer*) we overcome all the trouble that Satan, the world, and our flesh throw at us.**

One commentator defines this peace as "the possession of adequate resources." In Jesus Christ, we have all we need. **This peace is not a commodity, but a relationship with the Ultimate Provider—in the Son, from the Father, through the Spirit. "In me [Jesus]" is the key. In ourselves, we have nothing; "in Christ" we have all we need.**

**The reality is this: we are either *overcome* or we are *overcomers*. "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). The world wants to overcome us; this is why Satan uses the world to persecute and pressure us. The world wants us to conform; it does not want us to be different. But as we yield ourselves to Christ and trust and rest in him, we are participating in the love and life of the Supreme Overcomer. Through faith we are united to Christ and claim our rightful spiritual position in Christ and receive the benefit of his victory—a victory that is already won.**

**What Have We Learned in this section? How Does This Apply Personally (Practical Theology)?**

***From Members of Your TLC Pastoral Leadership Team: We have all learned or seen that one of the challenges of life is what happens when we fail in the midst of trouble. As we note above in the experience of the disciples, it is possible to have faith, understanding, and assurance and still fail the Lord. Yet, in failure, we can be encouraged and instructed in heart via John 16 and some additional thoughts via the Old Testament:***

**Proverbs 24:16 “for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity.”**

**Proverbs 28:14 Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.**

**Eccles 4:10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!**

**Great News! Because of the incarnation, Jesus is the one who is always there to pick us up in our failure. In Christ there is peace; in the world there is trouble. This is the position we are privileged to experience: we are *in Christ*, and therefore in Christ (who is the overcomer) we overcome all the trouble that Satan, the world, and our flesh throw at us. One commentator defines this peace as “the possession of adequate resources.” *In Jesus Christ, we have all we need*. This peace is not a commodity, but a *relationship* with the Ultimate Provider—in the Son, from the Father, through the Spirit. “In me [Jesus]” is the key. In ourselves, we have nothing; “in Christ” we have all we need. We are to “walk the walk” not just talk about our faith. We need to strive to live out each day with Christ in mind in every situation that comes our way. We should yield and trust in Him before times of trial come our way. That way we have confidence during the trial that Christ is with us, *we know He is there and will see us through*.**

## Conclusion

Now we see how these three important concepts interrelate:

- Jesus reveals a wonderful *principle*—in Jesus, God transforms us and transforms our sorrow into joy.
- That principle becomes real in our lives as we believe his *promise* to give us his peace filled relationship with the Father personally. We live in this *promised* relationship in belief through prayer.
- And our faith flows from our understanding of our *position* in Christ. In Christ we are more than conquerors. We live in the love and life of the One who has already overcome.

John 16:33 also is a preface to Jesus' great High Priestly Prayer in John 17. He had taught his disciples his word; now he would pray for them. Word and prayer go together. In his prayer we'll see that he uses the word *world* nineteen times—for Jesus has overcome the world. He was facing the hatred of the world *and the devil*, yet he endured the suffering and the shame to win the victory for us.

What joy as we participate in the love and life of Jesus—he truly ‘turns our mourning into dancing’ (Psa. 30:11). There is joy when God answers our prayers. There is joy when we experience Jesus' victory over the world. *Indeed, no matter what we face, there is for us today and always, abiding joy in Jesus.*

What Did We Learn Here Today? What Is Useful To Us Personally (Practical Theology)?

*From Members of Your TLC Pastoral Leadership Team: We learn and can apply that Jesus reveals a wonderful principle—in Jesus, God transforms us and transforms our sorrow into joy. We learn and can apply that principle becomes real in our lives as we believe his promise to give us his peace filled relationship with the Father personally. We live in this promised relationship in belief through prayer. And we learn and can*

***apply that our faith flows from our understanding of our position in Christ. In Christ we are more than conquerors. We live in the love and life of the One who has already overcome, Jesus Christ! Jesus is at work interceding for us in the presence of the Father. We can have confidence in that. We can rejoice in our relationship "in Christ" and have assurance that He will guide us to success.***

***Sermon Series*** is provided by Ted Johnston via the Senior Pastor Team of Tom and Alberta Ecker to assist ... Bible studies in series covering a book of the Bible.

**This issue continues a series in the gospel of John** with material from

*The Bible Expository Commentary* by Warren Wiersbe, *The New Bible Commentary*,

*The Parable of Joy* by Michael Card, and *The Gospel of John* by F.F. Bruce.

**Note: Bold script above covered in Worship Services.**