

John 16-16-24  
From sorrow to Joy!

**Preamble:**

Attendance usually drops substantially in the summertime due to vacations and the departure of the college students.

Considering this we plan on going to one service in July and August. Although, we may move that date up to June 10<sup>th</sup>. Please keep an eye on the newsletter.

**Prayer:**

Please join me in prayer....

**Sermon introduction:**

Last Sunday evening I had the privilege of preaching to 40 people in their 80s and 90s at the Fairwood retirement community, just west of Mead High School.

Some could not hear me very well, others could not see very well, others could not walk very well. Some of them hardly ever receive visitors. A few of them have been widows for decades. Many of them have experienced other significant hardships over the years.

Yet, despite all their suffering, most of them were very joyful. This is unexpected, isn't it? You would expect people who have suffered much to be sad and bitter. Yet, they were filled with joy. Abundant joy. Why? They were Christians. How does being a Christian lead to abundant joy in the midst of sorrow and pain?

Jesus gives an answer in John 16:16-24.

Let me remind us of the context...

Jesus just told the disciples that following him is going to be very hard. To make matters worse, Jesus also told them that he was leaving. As a result, their hearts were filled with sorrow (John 16:6). Yet, despite this bad news, Jesus promises them that they can experience joy, real joy, Christian Joy—even amidst intense sorrow. Jesus promises the same thing to us.

***Jesus tells us that we can experience joy (real joy) in the midst of sorrow (repeat).***

The word "joy" is referred to multiple times in our passage. How can we experience such joy amidst sorrow? Jesus describes three aspects of joy in our passage. He proclaims that-

*Christian joy is rooted in the gospel.  
Christian joy is resistant to theft.  
Christian joy is revitalized through prayer.*

**First, Christian joy is rooted in the gospel.**

This raises an obvious question...

## **What is the heart of the gospel? The death and resurrection of Jesus!**

**John 16:16–19 (ESV) — 16** "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." **17** So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" **18** So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." **19** Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?"

What events is Christ referring to? The simplest explanation of this passage, and the one that makes the best sense of the immediate context, is the explanation that argues that Jesus is talking about his death and resurrection.

Jesus says, in "a little while" (i.e., in a few hours) "you will see me no longer." This is a reference to Christ's crucifixion and burial. When Christ is dead and buried, the disciples will not see him. And then he says, "again a little while and you will see me." In a little while (in just a few days) they will see Christ again after he has risen from the grave.

Let's keep reading...

**John 16:20 (ESV) — 20** Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

Verse 20 is a wonderful allusion to the heart of the gospel. How? It is a reference to Christ's death (a source of sorrow) and resurrection (a source of joy). Let's look in more detail at the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### ***What will cause the disciples sorrow? The death of Jesus.***

The disciples sorrow will be great when they see Jesus arrested.  
It will be great when Jesus is falsely charged with blasphemy.  
It will be great when they see Jesus mocked and whipped 39 times.  
It will be great when the crowd cries out in unison "Crucify him, Crucify him."  
It will be great when they see a crown of thorns placed on Christ's head.  
It will be great when they see the nails driven through his hands and his feet.  
It will be great when his enemies mock him as he is hanging on the cross.  
It will be great when he cries out "My God my God why have you forsaken me."  
It will be great when he finally breathes his last breath.  
It will be great when his lifeless and disfigured corpse is taken down from the cruel cross.

No doubt, Christ death will cause the disciples great sorrow. And it should cause us great sorrow as well. He was the loving, sinless, spotless, lamb of God. Of the 115 billion people who have lived on planet earth, he was the only one who deserved not to die, yet he was murdered like a rapist or a thief.

*What will cause the disciples sorrow? The death of Jesus...*

### ***What will cause the disciples joy? The resurrection of Jesus.***

**John 16:20 (ESV) — 20** Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

Jesus will die, but three days later he will rise again. Yes, the disciples will be filled with insurmountable sorrow, but then they will be filled with overwhelming Joy when they see the risen savior.

The resurrection will be the source of great joy for the disciples. Yet, how much more joy should the resurrection cause in us, since we know so much more about the implications of the resurrection from the rest of the NT?

We now know that the death and resurrection of Jesus means...

That all our sins can be forgiven.

That we can be reconciled to a holy God.

That we can be adopted into God's family.

That we can be freed from the power of sin.

That we too will rise from the grave someday with glorified bodies.

That heaven will be our home for all eternity.

Yes, the disciples would experience deep sorrow. But it would be followed by tremendous joy!

### ***How much sorrow and joy does the death and resurrection of Christ cause?***

Jesus illustrates this sorrow to joy principal in the next verse...

**John 16:21 (ESV) — 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.

I have never given birth to a child, but I witnessed the birth of my five boys. From my vantage point, it looked very painful. Plus, there is all the pain leading up to the birth—the morning sickness, the swollen ankles, the varicose veins, the physical exhaustion, and so many other things that I will not mention.

There is lots of sorrow and pain for nine months. But when newborn is placed in the mother's arms for the first time, it makes all the pain and sorrow seem insignificant.

Make no mistake, the mom never forgets the pain, but the joy far outweighs the pain.

We see this principal in operation all around us...

People endure the sorrow of studying for the joy of the advanced degree.

People endure the sorrow of team practice for the joy of a winning season.

People endure the sorrow of lifting weights for the joy of physical fitness.

I get up several mornings a week at 5am to lift weights and play tennis. But when I arrive at North Park at 5:30am, there are people there, lots of them, who have been there for at least 30-60 minutes. In other words, some people get up at 4am to work out... so much pain and sorrow!!! Why? because the pain and sorrow leads to the joy of physical fitness (and a jacked body).

### **Application:**

Here is the point...

Following Christ is hard. It often leads to sorrow.

Christ just promised the disciples that people would hate them for following him (John 16:1-15).

People will misunderstand us.  
Friends will leave us.  
Some will even try to kill us.  
We are called to bear the cross that Christ bore.

Plus, there is the sorrow of living in a fallen world.

I'm referring to sickness, loneliness, injuries, unemployment, difficult children, depression, divorce, difficult marriages, church splits, corrupt politicians, and rejection from friends.

But we can endure the sorrow knowing that Christ rose from the grave. Since Christ rose from the grave, we have the joy of knowing that we too will rise from the grave (1 Cor. 15).

When Christ raises our bodies from the grave, we will dwell with him on this earth for all eternity without any of the effects of sin. This is cause for great joy!!!

John describes heaven in the book of Revelation.

**Revelation 21:4 (ESV) – 4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

There will be nothing in heaven that causes sadness (i.e., tears).  
There will be no more death.... Imagine this for a moment.  
No more mourning...  
No more crying...  
No more pain... imagine this for a moment...

Positively... heaven is described as a great feat.

**Isaiah 25:6-8 (ESV) – 6** On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. **7** And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. **8** He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

We can experience joy now, in the mist of sorrow, knowing that all the sorrow of this life will someday be swallowed up by the joy of heaven.

Transition...

*Maybe you are thinking, I have joy now, but what if I lose it. Then what do I do? This brings us to the next point...*

*First, Christian Joy is rooted in the gospel.*

## Second, Christian Joy is resistant to theft.

**John 16:22 (ESV) — 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.

Jesus says to the disciples, “you will have sorrow now, because I’m going to die on the cross. But I will see you again after the resurrection. When I see then, your hearts will rejoice, and no one can take that joy from you.”

Notice that their joy is rooted in seeing Jesus after the resurrection.

We too experience sorrow now. Our sorrow is real. Life is full of pain and suffering. But we know that Christ died, rose from the grave, and will return someday. And when he returns, we too will see him face to face. Seeing him face to face will be our source of eternal joy.

No one can take the prospect of this joy away from us. No one! Which is why at the end of verse 22, Jesus said that “no one will take your joy from you.”

War can’t steal this hope.  
Loneliness can’t steal this hope.  
Sickness can’t steal this hope.  
Politicians can’t steal this hope.  
Elections can’t steal this hope.  
Bankruptcy can’t steal this hope.  
Gossip and slander...  
Thieves...  
Prison  
Persecution  
Satan can’t steal this hope.

Not even death can steal this hope! Why? Christ’s resurrection ensures that we will rise again someday and see him face to face.

### **Illustration:**

It was 1824. Adoniram Judson was trapped in a Burmese prison cell. Twenty-four hours earlier Burmese soldiers accused him of being a British spy. So, they grabbed him, threw him to the ground, tied him up, and drug him to prison, beating him the whole way (literally).

Once in prison things got worse. There were no cable televisions, weight rooms, meals, bathrooms, showers, or prisoner’s rights in 19<sup>th</sup> century Burmese prisons. But there were diseases, large rats, and unregulated cruelty. The first night his feet were placed in metal shackles and hoisted 5 feet off the ground. He remained in that position for eight hours.

Adoniram went to Burma to tell people about Jesus. But now his infant was dead, he was in jail, he expected to be tortured and murdered without a trial, and his wife was alone in a lawless city.

Shortly after he was released from prison his wife died, his three children were dead, daughter died, and several of his good friends died.

His sorrows did not end here. His second and third wife also died.

Was Judson robbed of his joy? Almost! He nearly went crazy—literally. Yet, all the sorrow he experienced was not enough to rob him of his joy. He held on to the fact that Christ suffered, died, and rose from the grave. As a result, he had the joy of knowing that someday he would see Christ face to face.

Prison, the death of his children, and the death of his three wives could not rob him of his joy.

### **Application:**

Many of us have our joy robbed from us all the time. Why? We look for joy in things that can be stolen from us.

We look for joy in money... there could be another great depression.

We look for joy in health and beauty... but our bodies age or get injured.

We look for joy in family... but even the best families can feud.

We look for joy in rest/leisure... but vacation's don't last forever, or they are ruined by stressful phone calls and emails.

Some look for joy in porn... but their lusts are never satisfied...

Others look for joy in hobbies... but they all eventually lose their luster, they never ultimately satisfy.

We must find our joy in the thing that can't be taken from us. We must find our joy in the fact that we will see Jesus face to face someday.

One scholar writes,

The devil longs to steal our joy, and it's not usually too hard. Placing our joy in things like relationships, work, events, security, and health is like putting your life savings in a piggy bank, leaving it in a high-crime district at night with a hammer, and adding a note asking people to leave it alone because it's really valuable. You're a fool if you think it will be safe. But if our joy is in Jesus, we trade the piggy bank for Fort Knox, and the devil gets a plastic spoon instead of a hammer. (Carter)

This prospect of eternal joy only applies to Christians...

*Transition... I understand that joy can't be taken away from me, but can I grow in my joy in this life? Yes... this brings us to the third point.*

*First, Christian joy is rooted in the gospel.*

*Second, Christian joy is resistant to theft.*

### **Third, Christian Joy is revitalized through prayer.**

**Let's examine the connection between joy and prayer.**

**John 16:23–24 (ESV) — 23** In that day you will ask nothing of me.

The phrase "in that day" refers to the period after his resurrection. The phrase, "you will ask nothing of me" more than likely means that the disciples will no longer ask Jesus for things, because they are now called to pray to the father, through the work of the son, and in the power of the Holy spirit.

**(23b)** Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

Does this mean that if we ask the father in Jesus name for a new pair of jeans, a new house, or a new Lamborghini that we will answer our prayers? No!

Although God does care about the little things (i.e., motorcycle helmet).

What does it mean to pray in Jesus name?

Praying in Jesus's name means that we depend on Jesus for access to God the father. God does not answer our prayers because we are virtuous, but because Christ was virtuous. We cannot come to him in our own name, we must pray in Christ's name.

In addition, praying in Jesus name also means praying in accordance with Christ's character and priorities.

**24** Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

What a promise...

Jesus, the son of God, encourages us to ask the father for things in his name, or on his merits, and according to his desires. And when we do, we will receive what we ask for. Wow!!! What a promise.

Jesus says similar things elsewhere...

**John 14:13-14 (ESV) — 13** Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

**John 15:7-8 (ESV) — 7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

**Matt. 7:7-11 (great verse)**

**Application:**

We can pray with confidence if we are praying in Christ name and according to Christ desires. When we do, the father will answer our prayers leading to even more joy.

Both the joy of getting the thing we asked for and the joy of knowing that the father cares about our needs.

Nothing revitalizes joy like answered prayer...

**Conclusion:**

I want to end this week like I ended last week.

What sorrows are you currently facing?

A difficult marriage.  
Difficult children.  
A stressful job  
A chronic illness  
Persecution at the office?

Jesus understands your sorrow.

At the same time, he wants us to remember that we can experience joy (real joy) in the midst of sorrow.

How? By remembering...

*Christian joy is rooted in the gospel.*  
*Christian joy is resistant to theft.*  
*Christian joy is revitalized through prayer.*

Let's pray...