

John 16:16-22 “I Tell You the Truth . . . Your Grief Will Turn to Joy” Easter Sunrise Service
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He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

In the name of Jesus, who proved all His promises to be true by His resurrection from the dead! Amen.
God’s Word to give us true joy in all of life is written in John 16:16-22

These are Your words heavenly Father to give us life with Jesus now and forever! Your Word is truth.

Dear fellow recipients of life,

We have all had experiences where our situation didn’t look good. Our team was behind, but somehow they came back to win. Some people have faced serious health issues, but God restored their health through treatment. Some people have had to say goodbye to those who’ve died, like the disciples did with Jesus. But, that was not the end; their sadness vanished when Jesus kept His promise to rise from death.

I Tell You the Truth . . . Your Grief Will Turn to Joy!

There is a time of grief. Of all the days of the year, Easter ought to fill our hearts with joy. The “alleluias” that have been unsung for the six weeks during Lent are filling the air of our church. But, does it carry over into our lives? Our Savior told his disciples, *“I tell you the truth; you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve . . .”* (v.20) Weep, mourn and grieve. Just hours after Jesus said these words, with the rooster’s crow still ringing in his ears, Peter had wept bitterly. Later, as Jesus walked from Pilate’s palace to Calvary carrying His cross, the daughters of Jerusalem mourned and cried for Him. Jesus’ followers were still feeling the pain on Easter Sunday morning. Mary Magdalene, a faithful follower of Jesus, was wetting the graveside with her tears!

Why does God in his Word share scenes of His people in sadness? It’s because it’s reality. If we ever think that the Christian life is one of ease, read in the Scriptures about the lives of believers! Christians hurt. We cry from sadness. We mourn our losses. We grieve over guilt. The pages of Scripture simply confirm what we know from our lives. Our hearts may be cheerful today. Maybe we woke up singing, “I know that My Redeemer Lives” or some other hymn. But that wasn’t the case every day during this last year was it. And it won’t be the case every day from now until next Easter.

What has caused our tears? Was it problems at work or home? Whose death are we mourning this year or with some of you how many deaths? What burden has caused you to grieve? Was it sin caused by worry and selfish pride? The real question today isn’t what pain we have, but how will we deal with it?

Jesus said to His disciples, *“In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” Some of his disciples said..., ‘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?” They kept asking, ‘What does he mean by “a little while”?’ 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”?’”* (v.16-19)

Did you count how often the phrase “a little while” was spoken? It was seven times in three verses. Through those words “a little while”, Jesus was telling them, “Take a step back and look at the big picture. Whatever you’re going through won’t last long. In a little while, it will be over.” Sometimes we may question a person who says that to us. If you’re a runner on mile 21 of a 26 mile marathon and a person sitting in a lawn chair says, “Just a little while keep going!” you want to say, “Easy for you to say. Why don’t you run the race and see how it feels at mile 21?”

It's different when Jesus says it. First of all, He has run the race. He knew what it meant to cry at the graveside of a friend. He knew how it felt to be rejected by people. He knew what it felt like when He was going to die and actually died. He has gone through it. But, also as the Son of God, He is all-knowing. He actually knows how long our "little whiles" will be. For His disciples, Jesus knew that they would abandon Him. But he also knew He'd see them again on Easter Sunday. He knows exactly how long our little whiles of suffering or heart-ache will be. He promises to help us. So, hold on to Him for just "a little while."

Jesus has a much better view of life from an eternal scheme of things. Ask one of our older members here about how time seems to fly by. For a student, the last month of school can seem to last forever, but to someone older, months can seem like days. Now consider our Savior's perspective from eternity. He knows our troubles are momentary compared to the eternal glory that lies ahead for us.

There was once a 2 year-old child who contracted cancer and after a valiant fight, he died. The bell rang before the funeral service. But instead of the pastor welcoming everyone, people heard the voice of boy's father. Not wanting to face the congregation out of fear he wouldn't be able to finish what he wanted to say, he spoke on a microphone from the pastor's sacristy. He said, "Before we begin, my wife and I want to thank all of you for your love and support. It means so much. But we also want to let you know that today we have joy because we got to do something that not every parent gets to do . . . we got to teach our little son about Jesus so when he died Jesus took him to heaven." Then, the pastor began the service and preached on these words of Jesus: "*In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.*"(v.20)

Your grief will turn to joy! That's how Jesus finished His statement. It's not: "*Your grief will overlap along with joy.*" But, "*Your grief will turn to joy.*" That is what Easter is about. It takes a sad, seemingly hopeless situation and turns it to joy. The disciples mourned over the loss of their Savior. But when they saw Him raised from death, they realized that their Savior's death was needed to pay for their sins. In view of Easter, the cross that caused them so much grief two days prior turned into a source of joy. And, look what Easter did to the grave! Mary was crying at sight of that tomb. But when her Savior stood next to her and called her by name, from that time on whenever she thought of that grave it would be her source of joy, powerfully declaring that Jesus was the Son of God.

Jesus' resurrection has changed life for us. Instead of guilt and grief in seeing all the trouble our sins have caused, Easter is a sign for us that God accepted Christ's payment for all our sins. Instead of only weeping at the grave of someone we love, Easter turns our sadness to tears of joy in the sure hope that we will be reunited with our loved ones when we are together with Jesus in heaven. Instead of worrying about what happens when we die, Easter turns death into a temporary sleep for our bodies until the Lord returns to raise us up and give us glorious bodies like His risen body. This is why Easter turns our griefs into joy.

I read of a Hindu woman who went to visit a Christian missionary who had taught the woman's daughter about Christ. The woman asked, "What did you do to our girl?" The missionary said, "We did nothing." But the girl's mother said, "Oh, yes you did. My daughter died yesterday, and she died smiling. Our Hindu people do not die that way." Because of Jesus, that girl's ailing heart was smiling. As Jesus promised, "I will see you again . . . and nothing will take away your joy" (v.22) Not an unbelieving family, not the guilt of her sin, and not even death could separate her from her loving living Savior. And nothing can take away His love and forgiveness from us who are in Christ our Savior. He is risen! Alleluia. Amen.