

Take Heart

John 16:16-33

Key Verse: 16:33

"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."

The world in which we live is difficult. Life moves at an incredibly quick pace as things are getting more and more complex. We're moving toward a more isolated social media environment with less physical contact. Society is getting more liberal with fewer inhibitions as the younger generations are walking away from God. All the while there seems to be more natural disasters, wars and general unrest. People long for peace but have difficulty finding it. The world offers its version of peace but it's anything but that. What are we to do? Where are we to go? In today's passage Jesus extends his hand and invites us to himself where he is like the eye of a hurricane, the calm within the storm.

Today's passage continues where last week's left off. It's the night before Jesus is arrested and eventually murdered and he's been teaching his disciples about the work of the Holy Spirit. And he concludes by saying, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." (v16) Out of all the things he's been saying for some reason the disciples get hung up on verse 16 and a side discussion erupts. "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'?"¹⁸ They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'?" We don't understand what he is saying." (v17-18) And Jesus sees that they have questions 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'?"²⁰ I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy." (v19-20) Jesus knows that his death is coming. He's telling his disciples exactly what's going to happen so that they can anticipate his death and know how they should prepare. Actually he has been saying this for quite a while in the book of John. Jesus knows what's going to happen because he is God. And John confirms it by recording what happened. As Jesus speaks about his death he mentions that the world is going to rejoice when it happens. Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Sadducees, the Pharisee, the political leaders of the time, didn't agree on much because they all had competing interests. However they could agree on at least one thing, they wanted Jesus dead. When it finally happened, they were glad to be rid of him and even celebrated Jesus' death. The disciples would be different. They would be filled with a deep sense of grief and go into mourning after losing the Lord.

As God's children, every time we think of Jesus' death, it should lead us to the same place of profound grief. And as we think about Jesus' crucifixion, inevitably we come to the question: Why did Jesus have to die? Why did God subject himself to this horrendous agony at the hands of his creation? And of course the answer is, it's because of our sin. The Scripture says that we have, in a sense, killed and participated in the murder of the Lord Jesus. Jesus didn't die because of any sin that he committed, our sins were placed upon him, and he was punished in our place. For the wages for sin is death, and so he was killed because of the sins of his people, and the realization of this should lead us to this place of profound grief. And every time that we sin and the Holy Spirit does

his work of convicting us, we must come to greater awareness of just how dark, wicked and evil our soul really is. Our first reaction is to resist the Spirit's conviction and justify ourselves. We don't like to hear it. So we say, "That's negative and gives us low self-esteem. Don't say that because it gives us a bad self-image." However the Spirit is good at his job of convicting us of guilt and as soon as you become really depressed and discouraged by looking at your sin, you're just starting to approach an area of honesty. In reality, we are much worse than you think. The Bible says that even our good works, the best that we could do, are like filthy rags, like a woman's used sanitary napkin, to God. (Isa 64:6) We don't even realize just how bad we are because we think that we are pretty good. And even when we mess up, we think, "I'm a good person, I'll work hard and turn this around, it will be ok." It's like a small child, who's being potty trained, goes into the bathroom. After a long time the father realizes, hey where's my kid, it takes fathers a long time to realize this, and he finds the bathroom covered with poop. And the child, covered from head to toe, has a big smile on their face saying, "look daddy, I cleaned up." The child thinks they have done something good but has no idea just how bad it really is. That is the way we are toward our sin. We have to realize how terrible our sins really are and it was because of us that Jesus died. This should bring us deep grief and godly sorrow where we sincerely repent of our sins.

However some of us go into that place of deep grief and mourning and we never come out. We get stuck there, obsessed with our sin, not realizing that, the grief and conviction is not where we stay, but it's the beginning that is intended to kick-start us into the next stage of the life of faith. Jesus says in verse 20, "You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy." That grief of repentance, recognition of sin, the death of Christ should then lead us out of that into a place of joy, where God's people are happy. And Jesus gives us this example. Take a look at verses 21-22. "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."²² 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." Jesus says, You'll begin in grief, convicted of your sin, a murderer of Christ, and that will end up in joy. A joy that no one can take from you. And Jesus uses the analogy of a woman in labor. When you look at a woman who's in labor, you can see that she's going through intense, excruciating pain. What you don't see is any hint of joy, unless she's got a good anesthesiologist, and then she looks uncomfortable. But after she gives birth, that's when she has joy, because this new life has come into the world. They say that new mothers are radiant, that's because after giving birth they are overflowing with joy as they cherish their newborn babies. And nothing can take that joy away, not even changing dirty diapers. Jesus says, That's the way it is. When you think about his death, and you think about your sin, it is just pain, anguish, but when you see his resurrection you should be filled with a joy that no one can take away from you. What Jesus is referring to when he says, "In a little while I'll see you again," is his resurrection. He is going to die and he's going to rise from the dead. While Jesus' death should produce grief, his resurrection should produce joy. God's people should be happy that sin is not the final word; that death is not the end; that the grave is not our destiny, but that Jesus has risen from the dead to conquer all of our enemies.

Jesus continues take a look at verses 25-28. "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."²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.²⁷ No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.²⁸ I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the

Father.” Here Jesus is referring to his ascension into heaven where he will be next to our heavenly Father. Jesus will die, that will cause them grief, he will resurrect, that will give them joy and then he will return to the Father and that will bring them love. So they will transition from grief to joy to love. Through Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension they will realize just how much God loved them to sacrifice his one and only son for them.

After Jesus ascends into heaven there is one last thing he has to do, what is it? Take a look at verses 23-24. “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.”²⁴ “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” Jesus invites us into a special relationship with him through prayer. When we realize the love that God has for us, through all that he did, we come to love Jesus and believe in him and put our faith, trust and hope in him and he will reside in us and us in him. Here’s the process just to recap. Jesus will die. Our sin grieves us. Jesus resurrects. That gives us joy. Jesus returns to the Father. Now we know that we are fully and completely loved by God. Subsequently, we are invited to pray so that that the joy that has been given to us can be made complete.

What does Jesus tell us to pray for? Anything. Jesus tells us to pray for anything and everything. But he puts a little caveat on it, by saying, “in my name,” what does Jesus mean by that? Actually this has very deep meaning. In a sense Jesus’ disciples would become his ambassadors and as his ambassadors they would have the “right” to ask the Father for whatever they needed to accomplish his will. In the past we could not come to God because of our sins, but now we can come to God in the name of Jesus because Jesus is our mediator. Jesus opens the door for us to approach God. This is a great privilege. It is a privilege to have access to the one who created the heavens and the earth. When Jesus gave his name to the disciples, this gave them his authority to carry out the work of God. I heard a story about a guy who got his first job as a governor’s aid. When the governor gave him his first project he was gung ho and fired up to do a good job. But as he went throughout the state, he found that no one would listen to him and he couldn’t get the project done because no one knew who he was. So he went back to the governor really dejected because he failed. Upon hearing the news, the governor wrote him a letter detailing his project and set him back out. The results were completely different. All the state employees complied with his requests and he was able to successfully complete his project. It was at that point this aid realized the power of the governor’s name. And from that point on, if anyone ever gave him trouble, he would invoke the governor’s name and it would get done for him. This is why we finish our prayers, “in Jesus’ name I pray,” because we ask by the authority of Jesus. We have the authority of Jesus to act on his behalf. Not only does it give us authority, it provision as well. It’s like having a credit card to get whatever you need to get the job done. At work, our bosses give us the things we need to get our job done. It’s the same with God. He wants to give us what we need to do his work. However with great power comes great responsibility. There is a degree of trust that Jesus has when he gives his name to his disciples. And if we use it for the wrong purpose, we will get in trouble. Or if we try to use his name without Jesus’ permission it won’t work as in the case of the seven sons of Sceva. (Acts 19:14) This is like when Pharaoh gave Joseph his signet ring or the father gave his prodigal son his ring to ensure their authority. We can not abuse the power of prayer as if prayer is the stick that whacks the cosmic piñata just so that we can get whatever we ask for. And answered prayer makes our joy complete.

“Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.”³⁰ 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.” (v29-30) Though the disciples were honest and sincere in their affirmations of faith, Jesus knew their limitations far better than they did. (Jn 2:24-25) Look at verses 31-32. ““You believe at last!” Jesus answered.³² “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.” The words “you believe at last,” could also be translated “Do you now believe?” (NIV footnote) This seems to capture the thought better. They did believe but it was not complete faith or strong faith until after the death and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit. “You will be scattered,” is a fulfillment of the prophet Zechariah who spoke of the Shepherd (the Messiah) smitten by decree of the Lord Almighty, which resulted in the scattering of the sheep. (Zech 13:7) In spite of the disciples’ loyalty, faith, and love, they all failed Him miserably. And Jesus’ prediction, “You will leave me all alone,” was fulfilled when everyone one of his disciples deserted him (Matt. 26:56) when he was arrested and by Peter’s denial. (John 18:17, 25-26) Yet the Father had not forsaken Him.

Let’s read verse 33. “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.” Jesus says that in the world we will have trouble. People think that becoming a Christian will make things better. I used to think this too. I remember asking M. Deborah Kim, when will my life get easier? She said, “It won’t.” I thought, that’s a downer. And do you know what, she was right. Because when you become a Christian, all of a sudden people won’t like you, and you won’t be able to lie, cheat or steal your way out of a situation. You have to be honest. That comes at a high price and causes you all kinds of trouble. This happens because we used to be an enemy of God and a friend of the world and so the world didn’t give us any trouble. But now we are a friend of God and an enemy of the world, so we will have a lot of trouble because the world is against you. But in Jesus we will have peace. Jesus become like an eye of a hurricane where we can have peace in the midst of trouble. And so Jesus says, don’t lose heart. Take heart. And he gives us this great declaration, “I have overcome the world.” And we can have peace knowing that Jesus overcame the world. We can have peace because the Creator of all the universe loves us and backs us up.

When you really start to think about it, everything that people pursue can be found in Jesus. People are looking for joy, love and peace. That’s what they want. They want to be happy, they want to be in a meaningful relationship where they can love and be loved. And they want peace; peace with themselves and peace with God. And when we seek these things outside of Christ we will have trouble. Because everything apart from Christ doesn’t last. But Jesus makes this tremendous declaration to his disciples that he will die, he will be raised up, he will leave them, but I will give you joy, answer your prayers and give you peace. So I ask you this question: What has Christ done for you? What joy has Jesus given you? Where is the sin that you have left because of his resurrection? Where are the troubles that Jesus is guiding you through? What prayers has Jesus answered for you? And as God’s people, I believe that we are supposed to testify to what God has done. (John 15:27) To tell others the story of what God has done and speak about the wonders of God. Sure we are to tell the big story of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, but our own story and how Jesus has impacted our life. And when we testify about the faithfulness of God, it builds us up and we become more encouraged because we are secure in the hands of God. Thank God for his wonderful grace and promise that he has overcome the world.