

Well, how are you today? No, seriously...how are you feeling? Are you happy? Sad? Are you having a tough time? Maybe you're hurting today. It could be physical...it might be emotionally, mentally, spiritually, or all of the above. Maybe you're here today and you need comforting. You know, I doubt very seriously there's a person in this room who doesn't need comforting. We all need comforting in various ways and at various times. And Jesus knows this.

Right now, He knows exactly how you feel and what you need...and He certainly knew this about His disciples on the night before His crucifixion. He knew they were hurting and confused about all He'd been talking about. Leaving...they can't follow...they're going to be kicked out of the synagogues and even killed. It was too heavy for them to take anymore. They couldn't bear it. And so, He's been trying to prepare them...He WANTS them to be prepared for what they're getting ready to endure, and He wants them to have confidence because He's sending a replacement in the person of the Holy Spirit to guide them (as we saw last week) into ALL TRUTH. Let's see this now:

John 16:16-22

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’? 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. 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.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.

We all know that we live in bleak times and that knowledge can be overwhelming at times. We can even be fearful of what is to come...to dread it...to want to escape it. But as followers of Christ, we know we serve a sovereign God who is in total control. Nothing happens without Him approving it. He's never taken by surprise. He will provide and sustain! Yes, it's true, we live in a fallen world and all humanity has endured this fact since the Garden of Eden. And Jesus endured it too. He came and lived our existence and yet, He didn't live downcast and hopeless...even though He knew was going to die a gruesome death, but He didn't live despondently.

But He saw His disciples were despondent. Remember, they thought Jesus was going to set up His kingdom and rule and reign from Jerusalem as the Messiah...overthrowing the yoke of oppression of the Romans. But He didn't. Church, you and I must understand, for the majority of the Apostles, having been raised in Jewish homes, they had massive amounts of Messianic expectations that they had placed upon Jesus. But He never went that route. Why? Because it wasn't time. The Messiah would have to die first, then the Church would have to be established, (Gentiles grafted into the vine), and then the return of the Savior to set up His Millennial Kingdom. That's the order.

So, as they're making this walk to Gethsemane, their sorrow is growing deeper and deeper as they listen to Jesus speak of leaving them. In fact, we're now probably less than 2-3 hours from His arrest. Judas will soon arrive with the band of soldiers that will arrest Jesus and take Him away. Jesus alludes to this fact again in verse 16...

John 16:16

¹⁶“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.”

It seems like Jesus is almost talking in riddles. He's not. He's simply stating that He's going away (the soldiers will soon arrest Him), and by 3 pm the next day, He'll be dead...but Sunday's coming and they'll see Him again. Yet, for the disciples, they're still confused. Verse 17...

John 16:17-18

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."

It's been said, "You don't get very far by exchanging ignorance for ignorance." ☺ That's exactly what was going on when the Apostles were asking **one another** these questions. They needed to be asking Jesus! He's the one with the answers. But we hesitate don't we. We hesitate to come and ask the Lord...but it's when we come to Jesus and ask Him for help that we get His presence and we get relief for our questions. Did I say we always get answers? No. Sometimes we will...but not every time. Sometimes God doesn't give us an answer...sometimes we just get Him...we get His presence...we get His peace and that's enough...it's sufficient.

Think with me about what is happening. They're walking from the upper room...out of the protection of the city walls of Jerusalem, down into the Kidron Valley...it's dark...maybe there's couple of torches amongst the group...but mostly it's deep, dark shadows and with those shadows came the whispering and the murmuring of the disciples.

You know it's interesting...for the first time since all the way back in John chapter 14, verse 22, no one but Jesus had spoken a word. But now the silence has been broken by the disciples in their sorrow and their confusion. So, they murmur, because they're confused, perplexed, afraid. And maybe that's you today. You're scared to ask. Don't be. Don't live in confusion and hurt. Jesus knows...verse 19.

John 16:19

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'?"

Let me ask you something? Does the Lord know what you're thinking at this very moment? Yes. Why? Because, He's omniscient...that means He knows everything. He knows your next thought before you think it. King David said as much in Psalms 139:

Psalms 139:1-5

¹ O Lord, you have searched me and known me! ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. ³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. ⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

The Lord knows how you're feeling today. That's so comforting! Don't be afraid to acknowledge to Him what He already knows. He knows what you're thinking...He knows your next thought before you do. So, talk to Him...don't be intimidated by all of this...He's not wanting to beat you up. Remember, He died for you while you were still a sinner. **He wants you to come to Him**. He wants to comfort you. He doesn't want you to stay in pain or stay distant from Him in guilt and condemnation. He wants to give you joy...and joy comes when we rest in Him. And, that's what Jesus was seeking to do for His disciples. He wanted to comfort them, because He knew they were

hurting and He acknowledged it with another: “Truly, Truly” (we’ve seen that phrase 25 times in John’s Gospel):

John 16:20

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.

When Jesus was killed, the world rejoiced. I bet the Pharisees had a big ole party the night of Jesus’ crucifixion. They thought they’d gotten rid of Jesus! **On the other hand**, for the disciples, they were grief stricken...drowning in indescribable sorrow. The Greek word for “sorrow” is: lypeo (loo-pey-o), it means: “to cause extreme grief and offense.” This is a guttural sorrow. It’s what you feel when a family member dies.

Remember how Mary Magdalene was so distraught after finding the tomb empty? She thought the body had been taken. She was so grief-stricken that she didn’t even recognize Jesus when He walked up to her. Remember in Luke 24, the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus? Same thing. Jesus comes up to them and they don’t even recognize Him. They’re so overwrought with grief. Their sorrow was guttural.

Jesus knew...for His disciples, great sorrow was coming, but He said, “...your sorrow will turn into joy.” Joy...in the midst of sorrow! Yes.

Listen church, JOY is the highwater mark of the life of a believer! I’m convinced joy is what everyone is really chasing, whether they realize it or not. Saved and lost alike...everyone wants joy! Problem is...in the world...people think they’ll get joy from money, sex, drugs, alcohol, fame, their bodies, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, status, position. No...true joy comes from a person...Jesus Christ. When you know Jesus, you have life... It’s in knowing Jesus that we’re set free! Jesus said, “You will know the truth (Him) and the truth will set you free.”

If you’re saved and you’re truly following Jesus you can have joy in the midst of suffering. Yes, joy should mark the life of a believer. Does it mark your life, or are you seeking to have joy in some other way? Those other ways are counterfeit, tricks of Satan to steal your joy. **Take a look at this picture**. I’ve asked this before, but I’ll ask again: is this victory or defeat?



For anyone that knew and loved Jesus that looked like defeat. But church, isn't this how God works...the very thing that brings pain and grief into our lives can also be the very thing God uses for our good? At the moment...Jesus' death on the cross looked like defeat, but it was actually victory...**BUT** at the time, for the disciples, it brought soul-crushing, sorrow. Yes, it's true, Jesus had told the disciples over and over again that He would rise from the dead, but they couldn't see that. They could only see that awful moment in front of them, and they felt doomed.

Let me ask you something, is God every going to forsake you? No. Yet, if we're honest, in the middle of our darkest moments, the doubts can creep in and we entertain those doubts and that brings suffering...to the point...we can't see three feet in front of us because of the pain. We're too overwhelmed to think straight and our brain can't compute what we're seeing and experiencing...so, we just hurt. Yet, **BROTHERS AND SISTERS**, when we look to Scripture and what we know about Jesus...remembering He said, "I will never leave your nor forsake you, I'll be with you till the end of time..." That's what has to override our emotions. We go with what we know, **NOT WHAT WE FEEL.**

Watch how Jesus fleshes out this truth...

John 16:21

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.

Here we are on Mother's Day, reading this Scripture. How appropriate! After dedicating all of these precious children. (How about the timing of this?) You know, I've watched Pam suffer through child bearing twice. I know my two oldest daughters have done so...four times for Katy...soon to be twice for Kandace. You're here today because your mother gave birth to you and it was painful. That's part of the curse...but, oh the joy when the child is laid in the mother's arms. The same event that brings pain, brings the joy...like mommas having babies. Verse 22...

John 16:22

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.

What is Jesus saying about joy? According to most bible commentators, two things really...#1 He's speaking of the joy in this life in the midst of suffering...joy that's akin to peace or shalom in spite of our earthly circumstances...and then, the second thing would be the eternal joy of our salvation. Our salvation is permanent...it can never be taken away.

I want to show you something as we begin to close. There's something in this Psalm that the Lord spoke into my thoughts as I prepared this message. It's a psalm of Asaph, one of the men King David put in charge of leading the people in singing. As you know, many of the psalms were used for that purpose. So, I'm going to ask our Asaph to come...Tim is going to come and play as we read this Psalm. This psalm, BTW, is a description of how God delivered the nation of Israel out of Egypt; and thus, it's a psalm of remembrance, one that was sung to remind them of God's hand upon them. Before we read Psalm 81, I want to show you a picture:



That little guy is in a fix, isn't he? He's trying to pull out the banana, but he'll never be able to do it. As long as he has a hold of the banana, he'll never get his hand out of the jug. And, that's a picture of us in so many ways. Keep that in mind as we read. Follow along with me.

Psalm 81:1-16

¹ Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! ² Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. ³ Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. ⁴ For it is a statute for Israel, a rule^[d] of the God of Jacob. ⁵ He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over^[c] the land of Egypt. I hear a language I had not known: ⁶ "I relieved your^[d] shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. ⁷ In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah* ⁸ Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! ⁹ There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. ¹⁰ I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. ¹¹ "But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. ¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. ¹³ Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! ¹⁴ I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. ¹⁵ Those who hate the Lord would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. ¹⁶ But he would feed you^[e] with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

I would satisfy you...I see it this way: Jesus is standing three feet away, while we have our hand stuck in the jug on the banana, (anything that replaces the preeminence of Jesus in our lives), the "foreign god." Whatever you can't get enough of is your god. Do you want joy? It only comes through Jesus. **That's what Jesus was teaching those sorrowful disciples.** They would have to look past the pain...just like a woman in labor...to the joy that is permanent in Jesus.

Tim has been playing and I would like for us to sing with Tim. See the screens...

**His mercy's enough
His grace is sufficient
So come if you're needing
Forgiveness or healing
His mercy's enough**

**Oh, and this is our hope
The cross, it has spoken
Death is no more
Christ is the Lord
Oh, this is our hope**

**Hallelujah
We are not alone
God really loves us
God really loves us**

**Hallelujah
Oh, praise my soul
God really loves us (yes, He does)
God really loves us**

I want to ask you to stand with me and come down here and pray with me. Your coming is going to represent letting go of the banana and coming to the Lord Jesus...desiring no foreign gods...just Him...and when you do that...you'll be coming with your mouth open wide and He'll fill it-satisfy you. As you're coming...sing this...

**What a Father
What a Friend
What a Savior He is**

**What a Father
What a Friend
What a Savior He is**
