

The Word Became Flesh

I Have Overcome The World

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: John 16

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How many of you would love the opportunity to spend a day with Jesus if that were possible? Wouldn't that be great? I mean, think of all of the questions that you would have for him and the conversations that you would want to have. For me, I wonder if even just for the first few minutes, I would just sit there in awe as I saw his face for the first time. Maybe you wouldn't even be able to look him in the face because you would feel guilty or ashamed or something else. I think that even non-believers would take me up on this opportunity if I gave them a chance to talk with Jesus.

You see, today, as we continue our walk through the book of John, Jesus is actually going to tell His disciples that it is better if He leaves them than it is to stay with them. Can you imagine the shock of hearing that? Jesus saying to you, "It's actually better if I leave than if I were to stay with you." Now, as a husband, I know that there are probably times I could tell my wife, "You know it would be better if I just leave," right? There would be moments that that would be accepted.

But with Jesus, the disciples are thinking there's no way we would want you to leave. But in essence, Jesus is telling them and us that more will be accomplished through the power of the Spirit than what could be accomplished if He stayed in the flesh in the person of Jesus. This means that it is to our advantage and better for us to have the Spirit of God living within us than to have Jesus in the flesh.

Now, from my point of view, this is going to be hard to believe because like all of you, I would love to sit down with Jesus in the flesh. So let's hear what He has to say to prove His point. If you were here last week, we are still in what is known as the Farewell Discourse, John's 13 through 17. This is Jesus' longest recorded speech or message in the Scriptures. We're currently still on the night that Jesus was betrayed, the final night before His crucifixion, and we are still in the upper room.

He's with His disciples in Jerusalem getting ready to celebrate the Passover. Jesus is going to use this opportunity in John chapter 16 to share more about the work of the Holy Spirit. He is going to prepare His disciples for His coming time on the cross, and He is going to promise His disciples that their grief will eventually turn to joy. And so He wants to continue to offer hope, not just to them, but to us as well.

Now, to make sure we get through all of John 16, we are going to jump in. So if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up to John chapter 16:1. The verses will also be on the screen behind me. Let's pray and then get started. Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your Word and for the truth that it speaks. We pray that Your Spirit would continue to speak truth to us today and that You would draw us closer to You.

Maybe there are some here today that have not taken that first step toward you of salvation, and maybe today's message will draw them to do that. For others, maybe they have been walking with you for many years, many decades. And yet today, there will be a new truth or a new understanding of who you are that will draw them closer as well. And so, Lord, no matter where we are at in our journey, we pray that You would continue to walk with us and that You would lead us and guide us.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. John chapter 16, starting in verse 1, we read this. Jesus says, "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think that He is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or Me. And I have told you this.

I have told you these things so that when the time comes, you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. The first thing that Jesus wants to make His disciples aware of is the fact that they are going to be actually kicked out of the synagogue, their home of faith as they have understood it, and that Jesus did not expect His disciples to leave the synagogue immediately. You see, it's hard for us to try to understand the mindset of these early followers of Jesus.

You understand that our Christian faith came out of the Jewish faith, right? And there was this weird transition when Christ came and there were still some Jewish people that did not believe He was the Messiah. And so they continued in this direction from the Old Testament. And yet we had this group of people that believed Jesus to be the Messiah, and this new faith was started, what you and I now today know as Christianity. Back then, it was often just referred to as the way. There was this new way.

Imagine how difficult it was for these early disciples and for the early church to make sense of, "Well, what do we still have to follow from these Jewish commands that we have been given? And what has Christ taken care of in this new covenant that He has made with us?" And so Jesus wants to let His disciples know. Don't stumble. Don't be taken by surprise when you are kicked out of the synagogue. It's okay. It's part of the plan. Something new is going to begin. But not only are you going to be kicked out of the synagogue, but you will be persecuted as well.

It's going to go beyond just being kicked out of the synagogue. It is going to be to the point where they are going to try to take your very lives. Even so, even when these individuals try to take your lives, they are going to believe that they are doing something holy or righteous or good. And of course, for those of us that have read ahead in the book and we know the story of Acts, we see this happen fairly quickly with Saul, don't we? He begins to persecute the early believers. And throughout church history, persecution from within the church has been greater than that from outside the church.

I know today in our culture and in our world, often the persecution comes from outside the church, but throughout church history, persecution was more common from within the church, and the disciples needed to be prepared in order to face that persecution. And so today, how does this apply to us? I pass this warning onto you that Jesus passed on to the disciples. If you follow Jesus, expect persecution to follow from within the church and outside the church. Don't be surprised. Don't be taken off guard by it.

And neither should you panic because Jesus says you will not be alone. He goes on in verse 5, "Now I am going to Him who sent me." Yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief, but I tell you the truth. It is for your good that I am going away. For unless I go away, the counselor, depending on your translation, it might say comforter, he will not come to you. But if I do go, I will send him to you.

Now, those of you that were here last week or have read previously in John chapter 15, you're asking yourself, "How is it that Jesus could say, 'You haven't asked me where I'm going?'" Because in John 15, didn't Peter ask Jesus where he was going? He wanted to know, "Where are you going that we cannot follow?" But here is what Jesus is saying. When Peter asked Jesus where he was going, it wasn't because he was concerned for Jesus' sake. He was concerned for His sake. He was wondering, "Well, what does this mean for me? What does it mean for the disciples?"

What do you mean you are going away?" Jesus tells them, "It's actually for your good that I will go away and that I leave." This had to be extremely difficult for the disciples to hear and to believe that to be true. Truly, it would be hard for all of us to believe that.

And as hard as it was in that moment for them to hear that, it would only become harder during the next 24 hours when they would inevitably have to ask the question, "How was it to our advantage that Jesus would be arrested, that He would be beaten, that He would be sentenced to execution, that He would be nailed to a cross, and that He would die." But yet theologian Henry Alford says this, "The dispensation of the Spirit is a more blessed manifestation of God than was even the bodily presence of the risen Savior." That's what Jesus is saying here.

I know it's hard for us to believe or comprehend, but Jesus is saying, "It is better that I will send the Spirit than if I were actually here in the flesh." Now, 2,000 years later, we can look back in church history and say without a shadow of a doubt that when Jesus went away and sent us His Spirit, this Spirit, the Spirit of God, that comforter, has had a broader and more effective ministry in the entire world than Jesus had when He was here in the flesh. Jesus could now be with every believer all the time.

Think about that. Now that we have the Spirit, He is not confined to one body and said the Spirit can now indwell all of us around the entire world. What a blessing that is. And I think that we have just grown to take that for granted. And I know that I have heard people say, "Man, when I get to heaven, I can't wait to talk to Peter and James and John and say, "What was it like to be with Jesus? What was it like to see the miracles and to be a part of that?" And I truly believe that when they get there, if we have these conversations, they're going to look at us and say, "What was it like to have the Spirit of God living in you?"

You and I live in this part of the church age where the Spirit can indwell us." What a blessing that is. We go on in verse 8. Jesus said, "When He comes, this comforter, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. In regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me, in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father where you can see Me no longer, and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

One of the works of this Holy Spirit that you and I take for granted is to convict and expose the sin in our lives. It is more of an awareness simply between right and wrong. It's not simply a conscience of knowing what we should do and shouldn't do. It is the recognition of our need for a Savior because we have erred against a holy and righteous God. This is what the Spirit does for us. And I want to give you a warning.

It is very dangerous to ignore the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Scripture actually says it is possible that if we ignore the conviction of the Holy Spirit, it is possible to become numb to those warnings. So I encourage you, if something has been pointed out to you by the Holy Spirit, if you are feeling convicted of something, take care of it right then and there. Don't wait. Allow the Spirit to convict and to guide you. This is one of the responsibilities, one of the jobs of the Spirit. We go on in verse 12.

Jesus says, "I have much more to say to you more than you can now bear. But when He, this Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own. He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you for all that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

In this statement, Jesus is setting the disciples up as well as ourselves in anticipation of receiving further instructions from God. These instructions are going to come through this Holy Spirit that is going to dwell within us. And for some, in the early Church age, that Holy Spirit dwelling through humans is going to write the New Testament texts that you and I have today. He is preparing us to receive that text as God's continued, inspired, infallible Word from Him.

And to know that the Spirit of truth still teaches us today, the Spirit still guides you and I, but never in opposition to the Scriptures. Sometimes I will have people come into my office as a pastor and they'll say, "Pastor, I'm struggling to determine what God's will is for my life. I want to be able to hear and interpret from the Spirit." And so they often will have two choices in life and say, "Well, should I choose choice A or choice B? And my first response to them is always, what does Scripture say? Because the Spirit is never going to guide you contrary to Scripture.

I don't know that I've ever had somebody come into my office and use these exact words, but I have had someone tell me in the past, "Do you know, Pastor, I think God is telling me that I'm supposed to divorce my wife and marry this other girl." And I say, "No, I really don't think that that is God." God's not going to command you to do something that is contrary to His Word. And so you and I, when we are trying to hear His voice, that is our first go-to. What has God said in His Word? And then there are things, there are decisions that you and I make that the Word is indifferent on.

Like, "Should I choose this job or that job?" And in that situation, I often will just tell individuals, and in my own life, I just say, "You know what? God, I'm going to pray for your direction, and then I'm going to make a decision when a decision needs to be made. And I am going to trust God that you are powerful enough that even if I make the wrong choice, you will get me back on track." I have learned in my own life that God's will for my life is not always necessarily a single file line that I have to follow, but it's like a five-lane highway that has protections on both sides.

And he gives me freedom within that to make some decisions. And so this Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to us through His Word, and I am grateful for the work of that Spirit in my life. We go on in verse 16. Jesus went on to say, "In a little while, you will see me no more. And then after a little while, you will see me." At this, 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 what does he mean by, "Because I am going to the Father?" They kept asking, "What does He mean by in a little while?" We don't understand what He is saying. Now, of course, as we look at this, we understand that Jesus is speaking about the crucifixion and the resurrection. But the disciples didn't know that was coming yet. In a few days, this would all make a little more sense. But what you and I see as clear was a mystery to them.

And so as you're reading God's Word, as you're reading in the New Testament, one of the things that I always encourage you as a believer, as you're reading about the disciples and the questions that they're asking, is to make sure that you offer them grace. They didn't get to read the end of the story. They didn't know what was going to happen, and so offer them grace in the midst of that. They're trying to make sense of this. They're asking similar questions that you and I would have asked. They were very, very confused. We go on in verse 19.

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask them 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?" I tell you the truth. You will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. For 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.

Now, I'm not a woman, so I don't know that to be true, right? Women, apparently, after you've given birth, and all the pain that you go through, when you see the child, maybe there's this moment of elation and the pain goes away. I can't understand that, but maybe you do. He is saying the same is going to be true for you. Though you have grief now, don't worry, it will turn to joy. So it is with you. Now is your time of grief. You are in the time of labor pains, but I will see you again. And when I see you again, you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy.

Jesus knew that the disciples needed some more information to work through this. They needed their hearts to be comforted. If Jesus was going to be taken away from them, their minds needed to be prepared to endure this coming crisis. Now, it is a crisis for them, but Jesus knows that it is going to happen and that it needs to happen. And so you and I need to understand this truth that Jesus' death and resurrection weren't a bump in the road or an obstacle to accomplishing God's plan, it was God's plan.

As I think about this in my own life, it can offer me peace in the midst of my trials to understand that my bumps in the road and your bumps in the road can also be a part of God's plan. It can shift my perspective amid those trials and tribulations that just as the direct result of a woman's labor pains are hard in the moment, they bring joy when the new life is revealed. Jesus' death doesn't bring regret. It brings joy because we know the rest of the story.

We know what is going to happen. There's some of you today that probably have on jewelry, whether it's a necklace or a bracelet or earrings or a ring that has a cross on it. Do you know how strange that would have been to people 2,000 years ago? The cross was a sign of punishment. It was a sign of judgment. It was to be feared. It would be like you wearing an electric chair on jewelry today, right? It wouldn't make any sense, but how can we wear that? We can wear that now and we wear it with pride because we know that that cross doesn't represent fear or judgment anymore.

It represents the greatest act of love that was ever shown because we know the end of the story. That's what Jesus was preparing His disciples for. It's what He's preparing us for. So in verse 23, Jesus says, "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. For until now, you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language, but I will tell you plainly about my Father.

And in that day, you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. I don't need to do that. You will have a connection. No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. Did you ever wonder why in the church we end our prayers with in Jesus' name? It's because right here, Jesus said we are going to pray in His name. And when we pray in His name, we have the ability to come before a holy and righteous and loving Father because Jesus serves as our mediator to Him.

And so when we pray in Jesus' name, we are approaching Him because Jesus is now our high priest. And so He told us to approach the Father in His name. It's important for us to remember that Jesus didn't die on the cross because God so hated the world, but because He so loved the world. God loves us. He wants a relationship with us. Jesus brought the love of God to man. One person put it this way, a good analogy. A pulse doesn't make the heart pump, but it is evidence of a pumping heart.

Our love for God, so our love for Him doesn't make Him love us in return, but it is evidence that He has loved us first. You see, our love for God is because of what God has done for us. God loved us first. Jesus goes on to say, "I came from the Father and I entered into the world, but now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.

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 are from God." And I just want to pause there on verse 30 and help you understand what they are saying. They have been with Jesus for three or four years now. They've seen the miracles. They've heard the speeches, all of that. But the fact that Jesus answers their question before they ask it, now they say, "Oh, we believe. Now we get it. Now it makes sense. Now we understand." And so Jesus' response, "You believe at last.

Do you believe now? But a time is coming and has now come when you will be scattered. Even though you say you believe, a time is coming when you will be scattered each to your own home. You will leave me all alone.

Yet I am not alone for my Father is with me." What is Jesus referring to? Only a little bit later in the Garden of Gethsemane, all of them are going to scatter when they come to take Him. They are going to leave Him alone, but He says, "I'm not alone, for the Father is with me." As we look at this farewell discourse, as Jesus is speaking to His disciples and He's speaking to us, we get our foundations, our doctrines of faith, the orthodoxy of the Christian faith.

He is saying in this speech that He is God, and that He has existed in heaven's glory and goodness since all of eternity. He is making it clear that He was born of man, that He took on flesh, and He added humanity to deity. He has made it clear that He was going to die, but that was not going to be the end of the story. He was going to rise again from the dead, ascend back to the heavens, and be with the Father again. This is the summary of our Christian faith. And so the disciples finally making sense of this say we believe, now we believe, but here is the truth.

It is much easier to find belief for Jesus in the upper room than what it was going to be in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were soon going to experience this testing moment of which they could never imagine. I think about this in our own lives. Again, you may not want to offer grace to the disciples and say, "How could they run away from Him in the garden?" After everything they've seen, why would they flee and run away afraid for their lives? But think about your own life, your spiritual journey.

Don't you notice that when you have this mountaintop experience, whether it was going to a camp or going to a convention or reading a book or being involved in a Bible study, and you feel that you have taken so many steps towards God, isn't it amazing that right after that mountaintop experience, the enemy seems to attack? And you and I are just as guilty of the disciples. Sometimes we run away and we flee in those moments. I think we all can relate with the disciples. If we're honest, we wrap up in verse 33, "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

For in this world you will have trouble, but take heart, for I have overcome the world." In the next chapter, Jesus is going to pray for His disciples. He's going to pray for us. But before He does, He makes it very clear that on this night, everything that He has shared, the goal is to bring us peace and comfort. He doesn't promise us that we are going to have peace the entire time we are here, but He offers us the peace. And the only way that we can find that peace is through Jesus Christ.

We cannot find it anywhere else in the world, which is why you and I run into so many miserable people in the world. Because they have tried to find that peace in so many different things. And they have found the truth that it only leaves them wanting, and often it's worse than when they started. The only way to have peace in this world is through Jesus Christ and recognizing the truth and the promise that Jesus said, "Though you will have trouble, take heart, for I have overcome the world." We know the victory is going to come through Jesus Christ.

I read a great conclusion to John chapter 16 that I want to share with you that said, "Knowing that Jesus has overcome the world brings us good cheer. It is the foundation of our peace in Him." We see that Jesus is in control, and we see that although He leaves, He does not abandon. We see that He loves, and we see that the victory is His, and so we can be of good cheer indeed. Now, I know that whenever we talk about having peace or having good cheer or having joy, I always want to make it very clear that this does not mean that there will be certain days moving forward that will be difficult for you.

There will be days of grief, there will be days of trouble, there will be days of heartache. But Jesus says, "Those will pass as well, for I have overcome the world." So as we think about John chapter 16, we need to be reminded of how awesome it is that you and I have the Holy Spirit. We often take it for granted that the Spirit of the living God has taken up residence in our hearts and in our lives if we have invited Him to do so, and that the Spirit has made us aware of our sin and our need for a Savior.

And I don't want to get into all of the theological implications, but you need to understand how much grace God has given us that without that initial act of grace on the Spirit's behalf, you and I would all be lost. It took that act of grace for us to recognize our need for a Savior and that came through His Spirit. Jesus tells us that we are to pray in His name, that we connect to the Father because of Jesus, and so we can have communion with Him. We are promised that that Spirit will guide us and direct us, but not just the Spirit, but also His Word, our New Testament Scriptures, that He is revealing His plan to us, our instructions for moving forward and to understand right from wrong.

And He has told us, just as He told His disciples, "Your grief will turn to joy because Jesus has overcome the world." Jesus is victorious. You and I have nothing to fear. Our future is secure, no matter what happens today or tomorrow, that we can have peace amid the chaos because Jesus has overcome the ruler of this world. And in the end, all things will be made right. This was true for the disciples, and it is true for us as well.

There's no way for me to know what you bring with you today, the hurt, the pain, the heartache, but God knows what you are going through, and He looks at you and promises you there will be a day when your grief will turn to joy. We'll have people up front that if you want them to pray with you, if you're going through a difficult season right now, we would love to walk with you. This is what it means to be a part of the family of Christ. And sometimes God speaks to us through His Spirit from another person, and that can be good as well. Let me close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your peace that you offer to us, that You have given us the comforter, Your Holy Spirit, that guides us and directs us, Lord, that points out sin in our lives. Thank you for Jesus, that He is the great high priest that has gone before us, that has allowed us to come to You, our heavenly Father. Thank You for the hope that You promise us.

Father, if there is anyone here today that comes and feels like they are without hope, may they be reminded that they can have the victory through Jesus and they can experience your hope and your peace again. Thank you for walking with us. Thank you that you have not abandoned us. Thank you for victory through Jesus. And so it's in His name we pray. Amen.