

**In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen**

**Fourth Sunday of Easter [Jubilate] (2022)**

**Death to Life, Sorrow to Joy**

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***“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me . . . 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.” (John 16:16, 20, ESV)***

It is the last evening our Lord has with His apostles. Seated in that upper room where they celebrate the Passover, our Lord begins to speak to them. He reminds them that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one can come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). He promises to send them the Holy Spirit who will teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all that He has said. (John 14:26) Furthermore, He tells them that they must remain in Him for they can accomplish nothing without Him. He gives them a new commandment to love one another and then He warns them that having been appointed by Him to be one of His apostles, their appointment will bring the hatred of the world upon them.

Thus, Jesus encourages, fortifies, and strengthens His apostles for what lies ahead, He prepares them for the great tragedy that is about to happen as He also prepares them to receive great joy, a joy unknown to them in the past. He prepares them so they walk the path from *Death to Life, from Sorrow to Joy*.

Although He has warned them on at least three separate occasions, the apostles have no clue of what the morrow will bring. But on this last night with His apostles Jesus give them a clue, saying, ***“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” (John 16:16, ESV)*** Furthermore, He says, ***“I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.” (John 16:25, ESV)*** The hour is coming; indeed, the hour is already here! (John 16:32; 17:1) His mission on earth to save mankind has reached its zenith, His arrest, trial, suffering, and death are but mere hours away, Thus, He tells His apostles, ***“You will weep and lament.” (v. 20)*** But all of this confused His apostles, so they ask, ***“What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” (John 16:18, ESV)*** True, they did not know what Jesus was talking about, especially the truth of His affirmation that He must be crucified, die, and be buried. But it does not end there, He will rise again on the third day. He must complete His mission to fulfill His Father’s will to save all mankind from sin, death, and the devil. But the accomplishment of these greatest of events in the life of the world will fill His apostles with great sorrow.

Indeed, they will weep and lament, because their hope in Christ Jesus has been crushed by the Cross. They had ***“had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24:21, ESV)*** They had hoped that He would replace Caesar and lead the nation of Judah to return to its glory days of King David and the time of the Temple of Solomon. A nation faithful to God, one of religious self-rule and secular security. Truly, a confessing people of God and a nation of military and economic strength. Is this not what every Jew hoped for. But this would not be the case. For when Jesus said to them ***“You will weep and lament,”*** He also told them, ***“The world will rejoice.” (v. 20)*** There were many in Judah who did not share the apostle’s hope.

While the apostles are weeping in bitter grief, the world is laughing, it is dancing, it is filled with a spirit of joy. He who pretended to be the Messiah is dead. He must have been a fake for the true Messiah who is to come could not have come to such an end. Once again, our Jewish faith, our dedication to the Torah has prevailed and verified that we are the saved people of God. But this joy of theirs would not last. Instead, it would be replaced with fear and uncertainty as they learn that the One whom they crucified on the Passover, has risen from the dead, He has come alive, and is among them once again. How can this be? And in fear they ask, did we kill the Son of God?

That which brought fear and doubt to the Jews, brought great joy to the apostles. He is Risen! they shout. *"The little while"* has passed. The three days in the tomb has come to an end and our Lord Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. Weeping and lament had filled their hearts as the Lord was taken from them to be beaten, crucified, die, and buried. Their world had come crashing in, bringing utter sadness. Joy was gone from their lives, leaving a great empty hole of despair. Where once there had been happiness and comfort with their Lord, there is loneliness and sorrow. But Jesus told them, it will not last. Sooner than you can imagine, your sadness, your hopelessness they will be replaced with great joy. You will receive joy so great there are no words to explain it. Wait, for this will all happen in a little while. Wait, for it will happen in three days. In three days, *Death will change to Life and Sorrow will change to Joy.*

Their immediate sadness was the result of not understanding or believing the words of Christ. However, that sadness was quickly replaced with the joy of the Lord's resurrection, but now their calling was to live as apostles of Christ, proclaiming the Gospel message of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. Their calling brought about hardship, danger, and tribulation (John 16:32-33). Satan desired to mute their message and there were no means he would not use to accomplish his goal. One of his favorite and best methods was to use the world, to lead them to refuse to believe the Gospel and seek to kill those who proclaimed it. This unique Gospel message of God, that He will forgive the sins of those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, was not a message Satan or the world wanted to hear. No, this cannot be. No, Christ is not, could not have been the Son of God. So the world charged the apostles with blasphemy and troublemaking. They said their desire was to change world, and they do not wish to be changed. Is this not what a Christian, experiences today? Sure it is. In fact, the sadness experienced by the apostles must be examined in the light of being a Christian.

Satan and the world are two of the three great enemies of the children of God. These two are relentless in their quest to silence the message of the Gospel and those who believe in the forgiveness of sins promised therein. As an example, you desire to be a good father or mother, a good provider or homemaker, one who loves God above all things and desires to do what is right. But the world and Satan will not have it. At every opportunity these enemies of Christ inject trouble: financial strain, marital discord, unruly children, the death of a loved one, and so many other sorrows and temptations. They have one goal, to pull you away from Christ, to make you hate God. Thus, there is no tragedy which Satan and the world will not use to pull you away from God and His Holy Son. Through sorrow and remorse, weeping and lament, they seek to rob you of your faith and bring you to them.

These attacks from Satan and the world are an attack on your faith, making these matters of utmost importance to the Christian, especially when you are called on to confess Christ and help preserve Christianity. Here is where real suffering and the difficult battle against Satan and the world are encountered. The world laughs at you, derides you, dishonors your faith. They shout, "Your Savior couldn't save Himself, how is He going to save you?" You are regarded as an enemy of the world requiring extermination. Thus, Satan and the world hate you; their desire is to make you sorrowful. The Holy Spirit tells us to expect tribulation in this life, saying through

the evangelist Luke, ***“that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”*** (*Acts 14:21–22, ESV*). But joyfully, the time of our persecution is short, and we live with the certain promise of Christ, who said, ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*** (*Matthew 5:3, ESV*) Our Lord Jesus will lead all who are in Him *from the Sorrow of this world to the Joy of life eternal.*

Yes, your sorrow will turn to joy. The battle we fight in this life against our flesh, Satan, and the world, against the sin that so engulfs us, battles us, and accuses us is one we are called to fight all our days until God calls us from this valley of tears into His blessed and glorious home. Yes, we are tormented by our sin, because sin seizes every opportunity through the Law to show us our sinfulness. As with St. Paul, we do not do what we want, but we do the very things we hate (Rom. 7:15). This is our struggle, our fight throughout our lives, through our time of sorrow. And we cry out with St. Paul ***“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*** (*Romans 7:24–25, ESV*) For those who are in Christ, there is great joy St. Paul reminds us, ***“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15, ESV)*** Sinners like you and me.

To give us strength to persevere, St. Paul prays for those who are called to faith in Christ Jesus, saying, ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”*** (*Ephesians 1:3–14, ESV*)

Herein lies our great joy! The gracious gift of God which brought us to faith that we may believe and delight in the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Altar of the Cross. His death brought us the forgiveness of our sin and life eternal! Faith in the gracious and merciful gift of God’s only begotten Son is what wins the battle against our weeping and lamenting, against our wretched life, leading us to His victory which overcomes our sorrow turning it to joy unknown on that day we hear our Lord Jesus say to us, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Enter into the joy of your master.”*** (*Matthew 25:21, ESV*) This is the culmination of the blessings of God’s gracious gift of faith which opens our hearts to the truth that life in Christ leads us from *Death to Life and from Sorrow to Joy.* In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.