**Joy**

John 16:16-24

Let’s review what we covered last week on the Holy Spirit:

**The Names and Activities of the Holy Spirit:**

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| --- | --- |
| 1. The Spirit of **Comfort** to be with us and help us
2. The Spirit of **Truth** to teach us all things
3. The Spirit of **Grace** to give us all we need
 | “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” John 16:13-14  |

From John 14 through 17, in his longest recorded teaching for his disciples, Jesus returned over and over to **the topic of the HOLY SPIRIT**. Clearly it was vital for his followers to understand the person and work of the Spirit of God.

* ***He is the Spirit of Comfort*** who connects us with the presence of the Lord Jesus. This is why Jesus could say, “I will be with you always, to the end of the age,” because He was about to send the Holy Spirit to be with all of His followers at all times, everywhere.
* ***He is the Spirit of Truth*** to teach us all things - reminding us of all that Jesus taught, illuminating God’s Word for us and guiding us into ALL TRUTH.
* ***And He is the Spirit of Grace*** to give us everything we need. We do not have because we do not ask or we ask with wrong motives. But God is our loving Father who knows how to give good gifts to His children and the ultimate good gift He has given to us is His OWN SPIRIT, who connects us with all of the life and power and joy and goodness of the Godhead.

We have been using the **Spiritual Life Worksheet**.



Two weeks ago we made these commitments together. “We will trust Jesus, worship Jesus, walk with Jesus and work with Jesus.” But notice it does not say, “In our own strength, for our own glory and through sheer willpower and determination.” It says “for the glory of God, through the power of His Spirit, by abiding in Christ.”

It is only as we ***learn to walk with the Spirit***, to live IN the Spirit of God, to abide in Christ, that we have any chance of keeping these promises and being filled with the fruit that only God can provide. Jesus knew the key for his followers in remaining faithful to Him and in building the church would be their relationship with the Holy Spirit. So he explained as thoroughly and as clearly as he could. They couldn’t really understand. But that should encourage us – that we don’t have to understand the nuances of Trinitarian theology. We just have to trust in the Lord and listen to the still, small voice of His Spirit. And He will guide us into all truth and produce His fruit in our lives.

This brings us to verse 16.

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

Remember back to chapter 14 when Jesus started this discourse, “***Don’t let your hearts be troubled***… I am going to the Father and you can’t come with just now.” His whole purpose in this discussion is to comfort and encourage his followers, who are about to face their most serious challenge – without him.

***His time had come to leave.*** To go to the cross. To return to the Father.

Think about the different meanings of this “a little while and you will see me.”

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

* After the resurrection (2-3 days)
* In the outpouring of the Spirit (50 days)
* In his triumphant return (2,000+ years)

***After the resurrection*** Jesus spent 40 days visiting periodically with his disciples. There are twelve documented appearances of Jesus to different people at different times. But almost certainly there were more than that over those 40 days.

From the final appearance, documented in both Luke 24 and Acts 1, Jesus spoke peace to his disciples and ascended into heaven visibly. It was only 10 days after that when ***the Holy Spirit was poured out*** on the Day of Pentecost. So yes, the disciples were huddled together, praying and worrying for what to them must have felt like a long time. But truly it was “a little while.”

Now, 2,000 years is harder to understand as “a little while,” but we know from Peter that to the Lord ***1,000 years are like a day*** and a day is like 1,000 years. So God – who exists outside of time – does not view minutes and hours and years in the same way we do. He sees all of history all at once. **It is all PRESENT to Him**.

So let’s walk through this passage and learn from the Lord how to rejoice in our sufferings. He gives us ***four principles to remember*** so we can rejoice.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your sorrows are **Brief**

 “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”?’” John 16:17

Of all of Jesus’ teachings this one does not seem all that tricky. ***He had been saying for several hours and even days and weeks that he had to leave.*** He had come to give up his life as a ransom for many. He had to show them the greatest love of all by laying down his life for his friends. The Son of Man must be betrayed and must suffer and must die – but he will rise from the dead.

Still. They couldn’t understand. It was too much to process. They had finally accepted that he really was the Son of God – the fullness of divine nature in a human body. That *was* pretty tricky. We still scratch our heads at the incarnation and the Trinity. Fully God and fully human. We’ve got that. But “a little while.” No idea what that could mean.

The Chosen makes this a consistent point of emphasis with the word “SOON.” What is SOON? ***What is a little while?***

* If you’re in pain, a few minutes can feel like weeks.
* If you’re waiting to get married, a few weeks can feel like years.
* If you desperately want to have a baby, you know each cycle is around a month but it can feel like those months each have 10 weeks in them.
* If you are separated from a loved one who is deployed in the military or traveling for another reason, each day can feel like 1,000 years.

Time is relative. ***Some seasons feel like they race by in the blink of an eye.*** Ask anyone who has kids who are grown. It’s a flash.

But other seasons can feel like they drag on FOREVER. Jesus understood this.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your sorrows are **Brief**

 “‘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’?” John 16:17

Imagine what it was like for Jesus - the eternal Son of God - who had ALWAYS been in perfect, uninterrupted communion with the Father - to be in a human body, confined to earth.

We can’t really imagine it. ***Jesus had to get up early*** and walk up mountains to get time alone with the Father. He had to quiet his racing mind, just like we do. He had to entrust his worries and fears to His Father in heaven. He had to work to memorize and meditate on Scripture.

33 years or so. Seems like a fairly short life. But ***for Jesus it must have felt like 3 eternities***. Yes, he lived in perfect communion with the Father, in full submission to the Father’s will and obedience to the Spirit’s leading. But it was still a struggle. It was still a massive sacrifice to let His omniscience be limited by a human brain. To let His omnipresence be limited by a human body. To let His omnipotence be limited by a human will and the exercise of faith.

For Jesus, as he prepared for the cross, ***there was a “joy set before him,”*** that enabled him to endure the worst suffering, the most unimaginable agony, the torment of God’s righteous fury… It was the joy of reunion with his followers and of reunion with the Father.

He was going TO THE FATHER. Through suffering. Through the cross. But back to the Father. Into the Father’s arms.

And so are you, brother, sister. **You are going to your Father in heaven.** ***SOON.*** In a little while you will feel His arms around you. You will see Him face to face. Yes, you will get there through suffering. It’s the only way. It’s the path. It’s the narrow road. It’s the small door. You save your life by losing it. To be first you must be last. You live by dying.

But your sorrows are brief.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your sorrows are **Brief**

“‘So they were saying, ‘What does he mean by “a little while” We do not know what he is talking about.’” John 16:18

The disciples always ***wanted to know the details*** - just like you and I do. They asked him if the kingdom coming soon meant that Rome would soon be overthrown. Would Jesus reign on David’s throne RIGHT NOW, in Jerusalem? Would the world come to worship him in this temple? Give it to us in minutes. Give us a date on the calendar.

Jesus said, “That’s not how it works, guys.”

***“It’s not for you to know the times and dates the Father has set by his own authority.”*** Acts 1:7.

* Will there be a rapture of the church before the great tribulation?
* Will the Antichrist be revealed in the next few weeks or months?
* Will persecution break out in the US?
* Will we lose our non-profit status and eventually our campus and our freedoms?

***We don’t get to know the details*** of the end times any more than we do the details of our lives.

* How long will this illness go on?
* How long will I have my spouse?
* Will I outlive my own children?
* When will I get a decent job?
* When will I feel financially secure?

***We don’t get to know the details.*** Anyone who tells you different is selling something. ESPECIALLY when it comes to Biblical prophecy and the end times. They are selling books and videos and a lot of false promises.

Here’s what we do know: our suffering, in the end, will be BRIEF. Paul says it this way:

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your sorrows are **Brief**

“For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all.” 2 Cor. 4:17

And similarly in Romans 8:

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your sorrows are **Brief**

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Rom. 8:18

Not only are our sufferings brief, they are miniscule in comparison with what awaits us. In the light of eternity, and the glory we will experience in and around us, we will look back and marvel at how very BRIEF this whole life experience was. Second:

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your Savior is **Coming**

“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’?” John 16:19

Here is Jesus’ central promise to his followers then and to all of us today: “YOU WILL SEE ME.” There are two ways this could happen. Either you die and Jesus welcomes you into your eternal home. Or Jesus comes back and you get to skip that whole pesky death thing and go straight to your eternal home. ***Either way, you will see Jesus.***

“To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” For your loved ones who died in Christ, who trusted in Him in a personal relationship, they are not drifting in limbo somewhere, they are WITH THE LORD. They see him right now.

Of the 11 disciples with Jesus (and probably some of the women were there too), they could not know that ***Big James would be the first among them*** to have this promise fulfilled. Sorry if that’s a spoiler for those of you watching the Chosen. Acts 12 shows the wrath of Herod the King in arresting the apostles in Jerusalem and killing James with the sword – chopping his head off.

John, the brother of James, went on to live the longest of all the apostles. James was the first of them to die. No doubt that was a special part of John’s suffering as his life was prolonged on earth. But James got to see Jesus.

This is why Paul could write from prison, ***“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*** It’s a win / win. If they kill me, I see Jesus. If they let me live, I keep living for Jesus.

Hear this, brother, sister – ***you will see Jesus.*** He is coming for you and the day you see Him will be amazing beyond your ability to comprehend it. The funeral of a follower of Jesus is truly a joyful occasion. We weep for those left behind in this dark and broken world. But we do not week for the one who went before us into glory. They are healed and whole. They are done with the struggles and suffering. Their faith has become sight – and what they see is JESUS.

So be encouraged. Your sorrows are brief. Your Savior is coming. Third.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your salvation will be **Glorious**

“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 16:20

Here again Jesus reminds us of the conflict between this world and His kingdom. We do not belong to this world any more than Jesus did, so the world will hate us just as it hated him. “A servant is not greater than his master,” Jesus said in John 15. “If they hated me, they will hate you.” And just a few verses after this Jesus says, ***“In this world you will have trouble.”***

Remember the beatitudes. “Blessed are you who weep NOW for you will be comforted. Blessed are you who are persecuted NOW, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.” ***The key word is NOW.***

If you have your best life NOW, what does that mean for your eternity? You don’t want your best life NOW, you want your best life FOREVER. It’s a much better value.

This life is a vapor. It’s a mist. It’s a flower, a piece of grass. A breath.

And though this short life is filled with struggle and suffering and pain, ***the OUTCOME of all of that will be our final salvation***, our ultimate deliverance. It will be our GLORY. Look again at those verse from Paul we saw earlier.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your salvation will be **Glorious**

“For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all.” 2 Cor. 4:17

The weight of glory. Eternal glory. Our sufferings now are both momentary and light. This from PAUL. Compared to you and me, Paul’s sufferings were brutal. Yet they were, in truth, light. Because he saw the glory that was coming. He saw the glorious image of Christ being developed in him and in all followers of Jesus. “We have this treasure in jars of clay precisely so that we give all the glory to God and not to ourselves!”

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your salvation will be **Glorious**

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Rom. 8:18

There is a glory that will be revealed TO US - in the kingdom of heaven. And there is ***a glory that will be revealed IN US*** - when we will be LIKE JESUS, the moment we see Him face to face. Our remaining sin will be purged away and we will be GLORIFIED. Perfected. Totally righteous; just like Jesus.

Here in John 16 Jesus compares it to having a baby.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your salvation will be **Glorious**

“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.” John 16:21

Now, I don’t know what **your labor and delivery experiences** were like, but let me tell you about mine. I mean Kristin’s. I take half credit. Ok, 40%.

Our first son, Seth, was 5 days late. That alone was rude. Then we had 15 hours of labor with those constant visits from doctors and nurses and residents and interns poking and prodding and checking and just shaking their heads to say, “You’re not making progress,” as if it’s your fault, like you didn’t do the reading or you didn’t’ finish your homework or something.

Later we learned that Seth had a gigantic noggin that came down the birth canal and went clunk. Stuck. No further. So after those 15 hours of labor, they called for an emergency C-section and sliced Kristin open. Trust me, it was gross. I almost passed out. Literally. The anesthesiologist was like, “Oh, sir, you better sit down.” Went white as a sheet.

Come on. When a baby is born you expect to see a clean, shiny, happy smiling baby - not a purple, bloody, long, misshapen, floppy mess of arms and legs and slime that is more like the movie Alien than Father of the Bride 2. There’s a reason I almost passed out.

It was fairly difficult for Kristin too, just for the record. But for that particular part she WAS passed out, so I had the more difficult assignment. You’re welcome. I made it through.

We have similar stories for Caleb and Joel. Caleb got the record with over 30 hours of labor ending in a VBAC. Joel chose the Seth process with 20 hours of labor and then an emergency C section. Micah was the easy one with a scheduled C-section. The hardship there was that we got in at 8 in the morning and kept getting bumped for those annoying emergency C sections. And she wasn’t allowed to eat that whole time. I was. Why would I not eat? Had to keep my strength up so I didn’t pass out! Come on. I learned.

The point is that while we remember the details of those long, agonizing labor and delivery stories, and we tell them because they’re awesome; as soon as you are holding your baby in your arms, all the pain, all the struggle fades away.

Jesus uses the word “sorrow” for a woman in labor. Some might suggest that word isn’t quite strong enough. But we can agree on the word “joy” for when you hear the baby make that first cry and then you are holding him or her in your arms. Joy. Life. A little person. Your little person.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your salvation will be **Glorious**

“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.” John 16:22

Do you hear this? ***There is a joy coming*** for you that no one will ever be able to take away or diminish. That moment when we see Jesus again, our hearts will rejoice. Oh, come Lord Jesus! How we long for that day!

Our final salvation, our full deliverance, the completion of history on THAT DAY. The great day of the Lord. When Jesus will shout again, “It is finished.” When the alst trumpet sounds. When the archangel shouts. When the sky will be rolled back like a scroll. Then the whole world will see Jesus revealed in glory, leading all the hosts of heaven like the conquering King that He is.

The joy of that moment.

Until then, we trust. We wait. We persevere. We hold on to these truths: our sorrow is brief. Our Savior is coming. Our salvation will be glorious and one more:

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your supplications will be **Answered**

“In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” John 16:23

When that great day comes, ***there will be nothing left to ask for***. Jesus will make all things new. The world will be fixed. You will be fixed. Prayer will no longer be necessary. Faith will no longer be necessary. Sorrow and pain and death and evil will be vanquished forever.

**For now, we pray** to our loving father, in the name of the glorious Son, knowing that He hears our prayers and will give us exactly what we need exactly when we need it. Like any good parent, he doesn’t give us exactly what we ask for right away, because then we would become spoiled brats and nobody likes a spiritually spoiled brat.

Don’t miss the significance of this promise, here the 5th and 6th time Jesus says the same thing in these four chapters of John. WHATEVER you ask. ***In the name of Jesus.*** It’s not a magic formula, it’s a principle. Are we praying for the things JESUS would pray for? Are we asking for the purpose that He would be glorified and His kingdom priorities advanced?

One author compared prayer to an old antenna on a TV. Kids don’t get this. Us old people do. There used to be these metal sticks on cars and television - the deep, fat ones - that was how you got TV shows. Netflix and Hulu are a new idea. Smart phones are even newer. Back in the day, we had radio and television received on antennae.

And you had to mess with them. You had to aim and reposition. And sometimes as a kid you had to stand over in the corner, positioned in a specific way so the big game would come in nice and clear. YOU couldn’t see the game but your Dad kept you over there.

Prayer is like that. ***Sometimes we pray and just get static.*** We don’t get answers. We don’t have a clear sense from the Lord about what He is doing in a given situation. So we have to ADJUST THE ANTENNA.

My NT professor back in 2005 was Dr. David Pao, who is now the academic Dean for TEDS in Chicago. Dr. Pao was married right out of college, but his young wife soon got very sick with terminal cancer. He got a masters in Theology from Wheaton on his way to a PhD in NT and theology, so he understood the concept of prayer. He understood the sovereignty of God.

He is the sixth generation in his family to go into full-time Christian ministry, having been raised in China by a father who not only pastored churches but also led the Free Church seminary in China. So David’s family knew how to pray.

I’ll never forget hearing the emotion in his voice as he shared this story. He and his family, his church, his fellow students, cried out to God in prayer for his wife. Still she got sicker. They kept praying and she did not get better. The TV showed nothing but static. But they kept praying. They kept trusting. They believed God for a miracle.

But then she died.

He said only then did he accept that God’s will was for his young wife to die. Not until that moment. As long as she was breathing, they were praying specifically and with bold faith in the power of God for her complete healing.

We can’t know the specific will of God. Sometimes all we get is static.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your supplications will be **Answered**

“Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” John 16:24

***Don’t lose heart in praying.*** God delights to answer the prayers of His children. Keep adjusting the antenna. We can’t be certain that we understand the will of God and the details of His plans.

A few years after his wife died, David met another young Chinese woman in the PhD program at Harvard. They fell in love, got married and have two daughters who are now in college themselves. Dr. Pao continues to train young men and women to know and love the God of the Bible. He continues to pray in faith, believing that God can and does do miracles.

“Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

God has GOOD THINGS in store for you and your loved ones. You can’t be sure what those precise good things are or WHEN they will come. Soon. A little while.

**To rejoice in your suffering, remember:**

* Your sorrows are **Brief**
* Your Savior is **Coming**
* Your salvation will be **Glorious** (v. 20-22)
* Your supplications will be **Answered** in Jesus’ name

Our light and momentary afflictions are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory. Your sorrows now will not last forever. Your Savior is coming - soon. Your salvation will so far surpass your wildest expectations that heaven can only be described in Revelation with ginormous pearls and streets of gold and emeralds the size of buildings and 12 trees overflowing with fruit and the throne of God in the middle of it all. We can’t imagine; we can’t conceive how very glorious and amazing it will all be.

And for now, Jesus delights to answer our prayers, as we pray in His name, for His glory and Kingdom. So let’s do that now.