

"Turning Sorrow into Joy, Jesus's Promise"

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Tanzania, in Africa, very interesting nation, a lot of testimony to the Word that has gone on there. There is a very, very, very strong persecution in the nation. Again, we want to maintain this in prayer. And we need to have a worldview, in our Christian prayers. Sometimes it's so easy to be focused on what's going on in our world, that we forget that there are people with whom we share this world. So take note of this if you would, and we're going to pray together right now. Our Father, in heaven, we look to you. We're grateful that we have an opportunity to intercede. Father you have given us, of your spirit that makes intercession, according to the will of God. And Father, there are times that we come before you with prayer requests that we carry in our heart that are too deep for words. You make it clear to us that at that point in time, the Ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is always going on, always continuous, always maintaining, leading us into the truth, glorifying Jesus, also has groanings that are too deep for words. And the Spirit takes those to you. Father, there are people in these persecuted nations who face things that are nearly inconceivable for us as followers of Christ. We don't like it when a strong Christian voice isn't allowed to be on the media. And we resound with our objections to that. But to have government opposition and a climate that is completely opposed to the name of Jesus, to the recognizing of who he is, it's nearly inconceivable to us in this nation. Father, we pray for Tanzania, we pray for the believers there, a small group, and yet you've spoken. And they have been able to accomplish. We pray for those believers to be strengthened by your spirit in the inner man. And that we, seeing what they face, will be much more bold to show who you are to the world, both in our actions and our words and our acts of grace and social kindness in our age that is so needed. Father, I pray for the fruits of the Spirit to be manifest in the lives of your people. That they may know that Jesus is different because they say, My how they love one another. Jesus leads differently. We pray for us today as we open your Word, as we celebrate together the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His coming glory. That you'll give us wisdom and insight to walking with Him today. And God's folk said, Amen. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to take out your Bible now. And I'm going to have you turn to this passage, John chapter 16. As your turning there, (Picture of different types of Emojis) ever use any of these? What are these called? Emojis. What are they for? To add spice to your communications. Okay. And obviously they have something to do with emotions and expressing those. So do you use them? It saves on words too sometimes, doesn't it. That's a good thing. What emoji describes your attitude. Is attitude important? Has anyone ever talked to you about attitude? Have you ever talked to anyone about your attitude? I remember being spoken to about attitude. And I was thinking, How do you even know what my attitude is? You can't see it, can you? How about this attitude? (Picture of young gymnast) This expression of McKayla Maroney's face went viral. And this is because she didn't like that the gold medal was being presented to someone else. She got silver in the ladies volt in the Olympics. And she didn't like that she didn't get the gold. She had displeasure and irritation. Is that attitude? Well, yeah, it shows. We know, from the beginning of the Bible, there is attitude. God was interacting with Cain and he says, Why are you angry? Why is your face fallen? There was attitude. The Bible talks about it. And so does this guy's shirt. (Picture of t-shirt) "Apparently, I have an attitude. Who knew?" And when we use emojis, we're able to choose the attitude that we want to express about this particular thing. And we send it along. And you know, sometimes we send a wrong attitude. When we're not even realizing we have attitude. We don't even pick it up. Jesus talked about that in Luke 9:51-55. He was going to Jerusalem. And as he was heading there, he came to a Samaritan village. And at the way he was being

treated, his disciples said, "Shall we call down fire on them from heaven and consume them?" That's attitude. And Jesus said to them, "You do not know what manner of spite you are of". Jesus said that. Sometimes attitude comes across and we're not even perceiving it. Then again, sometimes we perceive it, but we're not acknowledging it.

That's what is happening here in John chapter 16. We're going to look at verses 16-19, and kind of get the emergence of the attitude that comes out here, because Jesus is very thoughtful of the attitude of his followers. And he ministers to it because attitude colors your world. It's what we live in. It's what we carry. And here, as Jesus is heading to the cross, it's only hours away. And perceiving attitude, which begins to emerge here, and you'll see, he addresses it. He talks to it. Let's pick up at verse 16, where he gives them some information, "a little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me. 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'm going to the Father?' So they were saying, 'What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he's talking about." So that was the scuttlebutt going on between them. But they didn't ask Jesus, they didn't talk to him about it. Isn't it interesting how we haven't changed even when we're interacting with God on earth that we haven't changed. That scuttlebutt goes on...What's he talking about? I don't get it. What's up with this?....Now notice, on this emerging attitude, that Jesus speaks to them, verse 19, "Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, 'Is this what you were 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'?" Jesus begins to address attitude, immediately following that. And you need to know that this is part of his farewell discourse. This is when he's leaving them. And he has just a short amount of time. And what he focuses on, it's really important. And it has to do with attitude. Because it colors our world, we live in it. And this is what he's going to talk about, turning sorrow into joy.

This is Jesus promise. Notice his emphatic expression which he does twice. John 16:20-24, "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 a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer, is still mindful, remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. And your hearts will rejoice. And no one will take your joy from you. In that day, you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give to you. Until now you've asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full." Attitude is so important that Jesus focuses on it in his farewell discourse. And he talks about it. Specifically, individual attitudes which can become contagious. Have you ever noticed how attitude can become contagious? He focuses on it. And he talks about it relative to points in time. That's how he talks about it here. Because that's how we have to grasp

Attitudes, because it's so changeable, concerning points in time and what we're experiencing and the attitude is up and down. So right now, he says, right now, and in the near future, there's this about attitude. Then he says, but soon, and then thereafter, there's this about attitude. And finally, he says, so for now and unlike what has been, there's this for your attitude. This is Jesus promise. And it is a promise for the future. Because in these four verses, that we're looking at as recorded in our English Bible, these four verses, seven times over he uses a statement about what will be. This is the future and it's the promise, seven times in four verses, he uses a statement about what the future will be. And his

aim is to generate hope for the effecting of attitude. That's what we're going to look at, these points in time. And what he says about attitude.

So, right now, right now, and in the near future, a little while. Notice what he says here, beginning in verse 20. He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament", you will experience sorrow. You will. The words that are used here are weeping, that comes as an expression of grief. I've heard it various ways, like deep sobs, that's the expression that's used here. And the mourning, the heaviness, as in connection with death and a funeral. You will, he says, you will experience sorrow. You know, for the believer, you will even have agitation. He said that in John 14:1, "Let not your hearts be troubled." That word agitation, distressed, troubled, is the agitation of water getting stirred up, like by a storm, stop letting your hearts be troubled. He says it again in chapter 14:27. And in chapter 16:6, "Because I say these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart," this grief, this heaviness. You will experience this, for the believer, the follower of Jesus Christ. Note this, for the believer, the follower of Jesus Christ, he says, "it's a little while."

This message is encouraging. I want you to know that my focusing on this and my opportunity to present it to you has given me so much encouragement and I think it's here for you, too. If we capture and crystallize in our hearts what he's saying, because he is directing it to the heart of his people, anticipation for the believer, there's a little while that there is grief, there is distress. It's present there. As a matter of fact, there is a whole book in the New Testament that basically has the point: do not be surprised at the trial, the difficulty, the hardship. Yet we are, it takes us by surprise. We may say, How can God allow this to go on? Don't be surprised. The book I'm referring to is First Peter, and all the way through there, he's talking about us not being surprised at this. Why? So that there is a hope generated in us to deal with attitudes of sorrow, grief, distress, agitation. Do you ever find anything in this world that you can get agitated about? Usually, for me, it's about three times a week, on a good week. And this ought not to be the way it comes down. And I usually carry that around for a little bit. And it colors my world. It's what I live in, in that moment. So heads up, anticipate, like Jesus spoke to his believers here. A little while. A little while.

Now when he's referring to this, in context, it's perfectly clear to us, isn't it? We look up the verse 16. Again, he says to them here, on his way to the cross, in his final discourse, "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." Is that mystery to you, as to what that means? Now, to us, it's kind of clear but to them it wasn't, What's he talking about? What does he mean... Go on to the Father, see me not then see me?...attitude, but he wants them to anticipate. There are some things that the Lord knows that he would like to tell us. But sometimes, we're just not in the frame of mind to receive it. Now the benefit is for us here, post resurrection, that we'll of course know what he's talking about. But to them, pre resurrection, pre death pre resurrection, him going away. They could not fathom someone coming back from the dead. They couldn't fathom an impossible thing, for that to take place. it was impossible for man, but not for God. So God knows some things about what we're going through, in what agitates us, gives us grief. His point, it's a little while. Jesus was not going to be at hand. He was not going to be accessible to them. That's what's in their mind. And he's talking about all of this, and they're getting an attitude. And he goes after what's really causing that attitude, this distress of your soul. His accessibility, his not being there when he has been, they've been able to go to him for everything. And he provided the answer. Things are gonna change and they don't like it. Jesus says, Yeah, well, guess what? It going to be there. And it's going to be worse than you imagine, because it'll be weeping. And it'll be weeping. And it'll be mourning. And it'll be sad. But it's just a little while.

For the world, verse 20b, not followers of Christ, this is like...Yes! Yes! Yes! This stuff that I've been hearing, this stuff about a judgment of God, this stuff about like you shall not do this and you shall not do that. This guilt and judgment are gone! And yes! A little while, the world rejoices, the world says yes!, those not followers of Christ, the world says, It's about time that sexuality came out into the open, not this whole Christian view of it. Yes! It's about time that something happens here in our nation that makes this different. Yes! Yes! The world rejoices. Not the 10 commandments: not to steal, not to covet, not to lust, not to take God's name in vain. Gone! Yes! anticipation.

For the believer, verse 21, it's like a woman giving birth, sorrow that it's come. But immediately, it, the anguish, doesn't stay in her mind, when the joy of that child born is there. I've never gone through that, personally. I have gone through that in real close connection on several occasions. And there was the expression of joy, immediately. Now there was pain to deal with later there. But that immediate, that's the picture that Jesus is placing here in front of us. It's an excellent picture of how the height of joy, what happened here, you kind of overlook what was the sorrow, that's Jesus picture. So you also, you too, just like that, have sorrow now. You know, in John 16:33, in anticipation for the believers, those present and those who follow in generations to come, Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation," agitation, you will have irritation, you will have things that stir you up, But be encouraged, take heart. I have overcome the world." I have handled this. I have handled this. Wouldn't it be so good to hear in the midst of our agitation, The Lord, right at hand, totally accessible, the one who is in complete control say to you; Hey Tom, I've handled it, take heart. Can I say to you, based on the Word of God, that's exactly what he's done here for us. I've handled it....But life is such a disappointment. I've handled that. But it's such a setback concerning Christian values in our world. I've handled it....How much clearer does he have to be? Well, we have to be in a frame of mind where we hear him. That's how much clearer. The anticipation, I've handled it.

And this is not the end. It's not the ending, this agitation, this sorrow, this grief, this mourning. It's not the ending. It's not done. As a matter of fact, if we could rightly follow Jesus, we could well see that this is taking us somewhere. It's taking us somewhere that's soon gonna be different. But soon and thereafter, he says this, verse 22, "But I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice. And no one will take your joy from you." Nothing can take it away. No person, no event, no circumstance, no change in what is the christian nation that we've lived in is going through, nothing can take it away. Now I need to go one step further. These disciples were being told that Jesus was going to be appearing to them again, a little while. You will rejoice in your heart. This is going to be a heart joy, it will be going on in your heart, it will be a joy that's in your heart, a happiness of heart that no one will take away. This has to do with seeing Jesus again. That's what this has to do with, this heart joy. So he says, a little while. I'm going to map out what he was talking about here. The "little while" that he was talking about here was in 15 hours, in approximately 15 hours, he was going to be on the cross, he was going to be dying. That was the "little while". And then again, he said "and a little while", which is approximately 36 hours after that he was going to be out of the grave. He was going to be back in their presence. As a matter of fact, let me give you the timetable here. It was that he died and was put in the tomb between three and five o'clock on Friday afternoon. And he was raised at dawn, about six o'clock am Sunday morning. That was the timetable, the "little while", 15 hours. And then again, "a little while", 36 hours. And he was being very, very clear in his promise, a little while and a little while. And in this "little while", he says, seeing Jesus again, post resurrection, something will happen to you.

Now you need to see this clearly. This is very vital, he is not saying that your sorrow will go away and your joy will come. He's not saying that. What he is saying, look at verse 20 with me again, at the last phrase. What he is saying is that "your sorrow will turn into joy". The very thing that is giving you sorrow in that "little while",...his death on the cross, his being gone, inaccessible, not at hand, his being buried...that thing of grief will turn into joy. It's not going to be that the sorrow will go away. It's that the sorrow, the thing that is causing you sorrow, will be turned into the thing that causes you joy. And it will be the very same thing, his death, his being gone, this sacrifice, which is causing you sorrow, once understood that will become to you the greatest source of joy, of rejoicing in your heart, that no one can take from you. You see that he's not talking about the sorrow going away. He's talking about what this sorrow accomplishes, and thus turns into joy in our hearts, a joy that is deep seated and real, a happiness of heart that can not be taken away. Now, post resurrection, we understand that. This death of Jesus Christ paid the total sin debt for a human being, so that if somebody would trust Him, that He is the sacrifice for your sin, you would trust him, you would have complete forgiveness, and total acceptance before God for all eternity. And all that means...the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the saddest event on earth, where God was killed, because humans didn't like his way....becomes, for those who trust him, the greatest source of joy. "That thou, my God should die for me", turns it into joy, anticipation of seeing Jesus, post resurrection. This cannot be taken away.

And it clears things up. Verse 23, "In that day, you will ask nothing of me." There'll be no confusion. Folks, do you see an analogy here? There are things in our world today, very much among the Christian community, that are giving them grief. Believers, good solid believers for years, who are grieved, and their hearts are agitated, stirred up to the point where they even kind of like the Capitol being stormed, where they kind of like that. And here, Christians are becoming comrades with criminals because of what they like. And Jesus words, his words, I've handled this. In this world, you'll have trouble, verse 33. I've handled this. As a matter of fact, the way he handles it is such that the very thing that is causing sorrow and turmoil is actually what turns into joy in the way he handles this and what he does with this. We can believe him or not believe him. We have that option. But as a believer, what generally are we to do? Believe, we are to believe him. Oh, Lord, I do believe, help my unbelief! That's a good attitude. The one where I can't hear him is not a good attitude. That's not a good attitude. And Jesus, in his fairwell, discourse, was so concerned about attitude, that he directly spoke to them about it, to generate hope for joy, because this is before it happens. It's all future for them and for us. All future. This clears things up. They couldn't understand it here. But look what he says to them, verse 23. He says, "In that day, you will ask nothing of me." You'll get it. Like they were wanting to ask him about, What does he mean, this little while, a little while and because he's going. You're not going to ask me anything. You'll see it. You'll see it cleared up.

One final thing here. So for now, that's where they were living, in the now. That's where we are living, in the now. It's right now. I just to make it clear. We are presently in "the now". Correct? Okay. Yes. So for now, there was a now for them and there's a now for us. There is a now that has some things that are going on in the past, that's not now. And some things that are coming on in the future that's not now either. But there is a now. You're driving me crazy! Well, I'm doing it for a reason. Because Jesus says, verse 24, "Until now", right up to this point, some other stuff has been going on. But now, there's something different. So for now, and unlike what has been, Jesus says this. Jesus, in his emphatic way, does this. "Truly, truly, I say to you". Now we've seen that over and over and over, when we've gone through these promises of God in the Gospel of John. What does he mean when he does this? Why does

he do that? What does he mean? Help me out here? What does he mean? Yeah, it's like, this is really real! This is like so true! This is like, wow! That's why he does this and every time he comes to a place, where that emphasis is important, like here concerning their attitude and his farewell discourse, he does that, he does that thing. You know this thing about Jesus, he's got some things that he does, how does it affect you? I hope it affects you well, because he's saying, you know, trust me on this. "Truly, truly", verse 23, "I say to you." So that's his emphatic way. And then Jesus gives his evaluation here. He says, "until now", "truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, and He will give it to you." "Until now", his evaluation, you've asked nothing in my name. You haven't asked in my name. Now this is really important, because four times over in this farewell discourse, Jesus says this same thing. And it's the thing that has to do with our attitude, and attitude of sorrow being turned into joy. And four times over, he says this thing. (John 14:13-14, 15:7, 15:16, 16:23-24) And what this thing is that he says is ask, ask. You'll receive, God will give. Notice what he says at the end of verse 23. "Whatever you ask of the Father, in my name, he will give it to you." He will give it, you will receive it.

Final note here. Jesus expressed purpose here. Now I've already developed this thing about asking in Jesus name. It's in line with what his character was. It's in line with what he was teaching and what he stood for. It was in his name. This identifies with Jesus. And I'm asking the Father in his name, because it's what Jesus stood for. "Until now", he says, "You've asked nothing in my name". And then he states his express purpose. He says, "Ask" and that he says in the form of a clear direction, I want you to ask, ask. You don't have to ask me, ask the Father directly, put it in my name. Then he says, "and you will receive", a statement of purpose, "that your joy may be full." This is amazing. He, in about 15 hours, it's going to be on a cross. Before that, he's going to be arrested. He's going to be flogged. He's going to have a crown of thorns jammed into his head. And as he goes, knowing that's coming down, he is concerned about us having an attitude of joy in what we're doing, in what he's put us in, joy. Ask and you'll receive, that your happiness of heart may be full.

Folks, I want you to know that this isn't just 20 century stuff. It isn't just 21st century stuff. It was there in the first century, for them. And I want you to know the church has recognized this right along. This is a pastor, who years ago, was speaking to his congregation, and as he spoke to his congregation, in like circumstances to our own, he said these words. "We ought now to appropriate the use of this teaching this doctrine to ourselves. Having been regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, we ought to feel in ourselves such a joy as would remove every feeling of our distresses. We ought, I say, to resemble the woman in labour, on whom the mere sight of the child born produces such an impression, that their pain gives them pain no longer. But has we have received nothing more than the first-fruits, and these in very small measure, we scarcely taste a few drops of that spiritual gladness, to soothe our grief and alleviate its bitterness. And yet that small portion clearly shows that they who contemplate Christ by faith are so far from being at any time overwhelmed by grief, that, amidst their heaviest sufferings, they rejoice with exceeding great joy. But since it is an obligation laid on all creatures to labour till the last day of redemption, let us know that we too, must groan, until, having been delivered from the incessant afflictions of the present life, we obtain a full view of the fruit of our faith. To sum up the whole in a few words, believers are like women in labour, because, having been born again in Christ, they have not yet entered into the Heavenly Kingdom of God and a blessed life." John Calvin, to his people, years ago, talking about their present distress, turned to joy, by Jesus promise.

So, to wrap this up, be assured that this attitude thing can be seen to you. By this way, this way that Jesus came, that this is just a little while, and soon, there's going to be joy of heart that cannot be taken

away. As a matter of fact, the very thing will turn into joy. So now, by prayer, I let my request, in the name of Jesus, that matches him and what he stood for, be known to God. And as a result, our joy, full. But if it can't be taken away, why don't I have joy now? It's because of what you're focusing on, in your attitude. It's because of what you're focusing on, in your attitude. "Set your heart and mind on things above, not on things of the earth. For you've died, and your life is hidden, with Christ, in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, we too, shall appear with Him in glory.", Colossians 3:2-4. So no wonder that Pastor James could say to his people, Count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Oh, I have to admit, I have to admit, I get an attitude at times. But I so need to come here.

Father in heaven. I thank you, Lord. I thank you, Lord, that we can trade off these sorrows for joy. And by letting the world see that, they might ask a question for the reason of the hope within us. Father, by your grace, Jesus, we will see again and this joy now doesn't have to be taken from us. In Christ's name I pray, amen.