

John 16:16-33

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As I said, John 16:16-33 is our text, and in this text we'll be looking at the coming separation that Jesus talks to the disciples about, and in verses 25-33 we'll be looking at this hour of victory that He predicts. I want you to go back to the beginning of the chapter, verse 1, and I want to outline where we went last week and just bring us up to where we're at tonight. In verses 1-4, we saw the warning of the world's hatred. If you're outlining the chapter, Jesus is warning, and it carried over from John 15, He doesn't want them to be stumbled or scandalized or offended, so He's warning them about the world's hatred. They did get hatred, and we still get hatred, so if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you'll have to face persecution.

Beginning in verses 5-15, is one of the marvelous sections of the gospel of John on Jesus giving instruction on the work of the Holy Spirit. We got a lot of teaching on the Holy Spirit. In verses 5-7, our need of the Spirit, He would be leaving but we would need the Spirit; and in verse 7, that it was necessary that He go away because then the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, could come to them, ". . . but if I depart, I will send him unto you." In verses 8-11, is the Spirit's ministry toward the world, that He would convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. We looked at that in great depth last week. In verses 12-15, the Spirit's ministry in the disciples. So, in verses 8-11, His ministry in the world convicting and convincing them of sin, drawing people to Christ; and in verses 12-15, we have the ministry of the Spirit in the heart and life of the disciples.

Notice in verse 15, Jesus says, "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he"—that is, the Holy Spirit—"shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." That's the end of that section where He's teaching on the Holy Spirit teaching us and bringing us into an understanding of who Christ is and who God the Father is.

Now, in verses 16-24 we see the coming separation. Jesus is basically wrapping it up and saying again, "I'm going to be leaving you. You're going to be distraught when I go to the cross, but don't be discouraged, I've overcome the world." Follow me beginning in verse 16. He says, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?"—which, by the way, that phrase 'because I go to the Father' is mentioned in verses 10, 16, and now in verse 17. Verse 18, "They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith."

I'm with the disciples. If I were in that upper room and I had the understanding they did, I'd be saying, "I don't know what He's talking about. Do you know what He's talking about?" They're looking at each other and just kind of, "I don't know what's going on." Maybe you're reading this with me right now and you're going, "I don't know what He's talking about either, and I'm not even in the upper room with them, I'm just reading it two thousand years after it was spoken."

Go back with me to verse 16, “A little while, and ye shall not see me,” this basically, and all through this section, is Jesus telling them, “I’m going to be crucified. I’m going to be buried, and I will be in the grave for three days and three nights. This is the ‘little while you will not see me.’” Then, He says, “. . . and ye shall see me,” is, I believe primarily, a reference to His resurrection in what we call His post-resurrection appearances to them. So, He’s going to be crucified, He’s going to be buried, their hopes are going to be destroyed and shattered, they’re going to be brokenhearted, but “A little while,”—meaning specifically, three days, I will rise again from the dead and your hearts again will rejoice, “. . . your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” That’s what He means in verse 16, and He carries that all the way down through this section, “A little while, and ye shall not see me”—I’m going to go to the cross.

Some Greek scholars point out that the two times the word “see” is used in verse 16 have a little different connotation or meaning to them. It’s uncertain if that’s the case, but it’s interesting and I think consistent with what Jesus is saying. When He says the first time, “. . . and ye shall not see me,”—this is “see” with the physical eyes, “You won’t see Me physically,” but then He says—“and again, a little while, and ye shall see me”—this is believed to be a spiritual sight or understanding. Nevertheless, in the post-resurrection appearances, Jesus was visibly seen with their actual eyes, but He had a glorified, spiritual body. So, He’s talking about the cross and then they’ll see Him in the resurrection.

Verse 17, “Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?” That statement, “Because I go to the Father,” I think takes it a little further and I believe that He’s actually implying that when He gets back to the Father, He’s going to send the Holy Spirit. And, when the Holy Spirit comes, He will glorify Jesus. So, they’re going to see Him through the eyes of faith. They’re going to see Him by the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and it’s going to change everything. It’s going to be a whole new dispensation—Church is going to be born, they have the Holy Spirit living inside of them, guiding them, teaching them, directing them, revealing Christ to them, empowering them to pray, all of that is going to be their joy when they receive the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. I think that’s what that’s looking forward to, verse 17, “Because I go to the Father.” In the Greek it’s literally, “Because I’m going to My Father.”

Verse 18, “They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. 19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him,”—so, up to this point they are talking about this among themselves. He’s sitting right there, and they’re talking about, “What’s He saying? I don’t know what He’s saying.” It’s like Jesus is right there, but they’re not asking Him. They’re talking among themselves, and they’re not asking Jesus. Verse 19, “Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?”—“You guys are talking among yourselves freaking out wondering what I’m talking about?” Now, He says, verse 20, “Verily, verily”—truly, truly—“I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned”—the idea is transformed—“into joy.”

Whenever Jesus uses a “Verily, verily,” it’s actually a “truly, truly,” He’s about to say something really important, really profound. What Jesus says here in verse 20 is so important. He said, “That ye shall weep and lament,”—again, this is basically talking about their sorrow when Jesus would be crucified. They had anticipated He was the Messiah, which was true, but their understanding of Messiah would be that He would set up His Kingdom then on earth and there would be a delay for that still yet today until Christ comes in His Second Coming, so they were devastated. They didn’t understand that. Jesus says, “That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice,”—the wicked world is rejoicing at the cross, that it is the end of Jesus, but the disciples are weeping and lamenting—“but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

We’ll get there on Sunday morning in several months, but when we get to Luke 24 and we read about the two on the road to Emmaus, do you know the story? Isn’t that a great post-resurrection appearance of Jesus? They were walking to the village of Emmaus, and they were all bummed out. They were all discouraged. They were all complaining about, “We thought He was the Messiah. We hoped, and this is terrible. Our hopes are dashed,” and remember Jesus shows up walking with them. The Bible says, “their eyes were holden,” so Jesus was incognito. They didn’t know who He was. He just kind of starts playing...I see humor here. I don’t know if I should or not, but He starts messing with them, “What’s the matter? Why are you guys sad?” Here’s Jesus in His resurrected body and instead of saying, “No, I’m Jesus. Man, you guys ought to be happy I rose from the dead.” He says, “What’s the matter?” They say, “What do you mean, what’s the matter? You must be new around here. You don’t know what happened? Jesus was crucified, all these horrible things, and we thought He was the Messiah. Some of the women went down to the tomb and they said they saw Him, but you know, those women don’t know what they’re talking about.” I’ll stop right there. I won’t say anything more about the women. “We had hoped He would be the Messiah. Our hopes are dashed.”

Jesus takes a deep breath and says, “O ye simple ones.” The King James says, “O ye fools.” That’s a little harsh. It’s, “O ye simple ones. You simple ones. Why don’t you believe all that the prophets have spoken about? Ought not the Messiah to have suffered and died, then entered into His glory?” And, beginning at Moses and the law, through the prophets, He began to expound to them all of the Scriptures concerning Himself. What an amazing Bible study that would’ve been—Jesus teaching on Himself through the Old Testament, all the Christology appearances of Christ, “Here I am in Genesis. Here I am in Exodus. Here I am in Leviticus,” showing the cross in the Old Testament.

Finally, they come to where they’re going, and they said, “You’re such a great Bible teacher, would You come in and have dinner with us? We want to talk to You some more.” They still don’t know who it is, so they go in. They sit down to eat, and say, “Would You pray for the food?” Jesus takes the bread, He breaks it and begins to bless it, and they looked at Him and saw the scars in His hands. Immediately, their eyes were opened, and they knew it was Jesus. No sooner did they know it was the Lord, He vanished out of their sight, just gone. Then, they said, “We’ve got to go back to Jerusalem,” seven miles, “we’ve got to jam back to Jerusalem and let people know what we have just seen.” They ran as fast as they could back with the

joyous good news, “Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, and He’s appeared to us.” They get back to the gang and say, “He’s appeared to us, too!” and their sorrow was turned to joy, verse 20. There’s a lot of reference to joy as well as sorrow in these verses.

Jesus says in an illustration, verse 21, this is an illustration of what He’s saying. He said, “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow,”—this is obviously talking about a woman who is giving birth to a child and is in labor pains. She’s in sorrow—“because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child”—or the child is born—“she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” Jesus gives an illustration, I can’t fully relate because I’ve never given birth to a child. I’ve been there when our children were born.

I thank the Lord for my wife. I thank the Lord for the children, but I thank the Lord also that I don’t have to give birth to children. I just observe and pray. He basically says, “You know, there’s that labor period and labor pains, and it’s difficult.” He describes it there in verse 21, “. . . travail,”—but when her hour comes and the child is born—“but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more”—I laughed today. One commentary said that’s hyperbole because every woman remembers her labor. Any of you women here tonight that have had children, forgotten completely the pain of labor? You say, “No, I’ll never forget that.” This is speaking hyperbole. This is saying that she forgets because in weight the positive joy overwhelms her heart “. . . that a man is born into the world.”

Jesus then gives the application, verse 22, “And ye now therefore have sorrow”—so, they were entering into that sorrow—“but I will see you again,”—so you have now therefore sorrow, this is again the cross, the crucifixion—“but I will see you again”—this is the resurrection and even beyond the coming of the Holy Spirit. Notice verse 22, “. . . and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” I love that. You’re going to have a joy that is unshakeable. You’re going to have a joy that no one can take from you.

Try to imagine when they saw Jesus crucified, they know He was buried, and then they saw Him alive. Can you imagine that? I mean, we know all about the resurrection. We read it and we get familiar and comfortable with it. We watch the movies on the gospels of Jesus and we see the portrayal of the resurrection of Christ, but I don’t know how we could ever begin to fathom the emotion and the joy and the mind-blowing experience of these disciples to actually see Jesus risen from the dead. I mean, if you saw someone actually die, three days later he’s alive again, you’re going to go, “Whoa! That’s freak out time!” And, He’s in a glorified body. He just appeared through locked doors in rooms that they were in. This is just an amazing time for these disciples, and it was hard for them to process.

Even at the end of the forty-day period of Christ’s resurrection appearances, before He ascended back into heaven, they still didn’t know what was going on. They said, “Lord, will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?” And He said, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses.” It wasn’t until after Acts 2 that they began to understand when they received the fullness of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

But, I love that He says, verse 22, “And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again,”—that’s the resurrection—“and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”—no one can take away your joy.

Joy is different than happiness. Happiness is based on happenings, circumstances. When everything is going good, you’re happy. When things aren’t going good, you’re not happy. But joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Amen? No matter what your circumstances are you have that spring, a well of joy in your heart, knowing that you have the blessings of God through Jesus Christ and all the salvation and the joy that He brings. “. . . your joy no man taketh from you,”—the blessing of joy.

Sorrow is temporary, verse 22, joy is permanent. Sorrow is temporary, and the joy is eternal, no one can take that away. “And in that day,”—here He wraps it up. This is the clear teaching of Jesus. He says, “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. 24 Hitherto”—or up to now —“have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Jesus goes from saying, “You’re going to have sorrow, you’ll see Me risen from the dead, you’ll have joy,” and now He says, “When the Spirit has come and you’re experiencing this joy, you’re going to have a new relationship with God the Father in My name through prayer.”

When Jesus was here on earth with them, they could just ask Him the questions, they could just petition Him. But, now that He’s gone, He’s not seen with the naked eye, with physical sight, they have to pray. Now, He’s going to talk to them about prayer, and He makes the promise to them of the privilege of answered prayer, the promise and privilege of answered prayer, “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.” In other words, “I’m not going to be here. You’re not going to be able to ask Me questions, but you’re going to be able to go directly to the Father,” “. . . Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” Again, it must be according to His will, and it must bring Him glory for Him to give you what you ask; but if you’re praying in the Spirit, according to the will of God, in the name of Jesus.

Now, I want to break this down a little bit because there’s some insight that we need to get in these words on prayer. First, we’re promised that we can go to God the Father in the name of God the Son, and we can receive whatever we ask. I believe Christian prayer is trinitarian—we pray primarily to the Father, through the merits of the Son. Now, don’t miss this. When it says, “. . . in my name,” He’s not talking specifically just about the actual name, “Jesus.”

Years ago in the church I previously pastored, there was a guy there—bless his dear heart—but if anybody prayed on the platform and didn’t close their prayer in Jesus’ name, he’d freak out. “You gotta say, ‘in Jesus’ name.’ If you don’t use that phrase, ‘in Jesus’ name,’ it’s not going to work.” I don’t think that’s the case. Praying in Jesus’ name means that you’re praying based on His merits for you of who He is, that it’s in Jesus, through Jesus, because of Jesus that you can have access to God the Father. There’s no merits on my part. I’m not coming in my name or my authority, I’m coming in Christ’s name. It basically means that you are approaching God the Father on His merits. You’re praying to the Father.

Now, it doesn't mean you can't say, "Jesus, help me," or pray to the Holy Spirit, but generally, our prayers should be to God the Father, and that we understand that our access is because we are in Christ, and it's through Christ and because of what He did for us on the cross—His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, right hand of God the Father—that we have access. This supports the doctrine that there's only, 1 Timothy 2:5, " . . . one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There's no reference here to praying through Mary or to Mary, or through the saints or to the saints. Christian prayer is to God, and we all have access directly to God the Father. What a blessing that is. Amen? What a joy that is. Now that we are in the church, we're born again, we have the Holy Spirit, I can come directly to God the Father. That's the pattern for prayer, it's in Christ's name, it's in His merits for what He's done for us.

Verse 24, He says, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name,"—they hadn't really prayed like this up to this point—"ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Through the Spirit's power, the merits of the Son of God, Jesus, we come to God the Father. That's why I say true Christian prayer is trinitarian—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but it gives us the pattern of prayer. I do believe the Bible teaches very clearly there's only one way to get to God, and that's through Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the Bible does it teach we can pray to saints or other people or individuals to get access to God the Father. You might want to meditate on some of these verses.

Now, the second section tonight is verses 25-33, and we won't need to tarry on it as long. It says, "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs,"—this, from verses 25-33, is the end of the teaching section. Basically, He's wrapping up His Upper Room Discourse. He says, "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father"—I'm going to plainly declare unto you the Father. " . . . when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father"—He's going to send the Spirit to reveal the Father to them.

Verse 26, "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you,"—so, He says, 'I don't want you to go anywhere else other than directly to the Father, and you have access yourself.' "For the Father himself loveth you,"—that's a great statement there to underline, the Father actually loves you—"because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. 28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

By the way, that "Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me,"—is the Greek word *philé* Òà It's not agape but *philé* ð love. But the Father loves us, and He knows that we love Jesus, and because of that, that He's come from God.

I want you to notice verse 28. This verse actually has in this statement kind of like the entire person and work of Jesus Christ. Look at it with me. He said, "I came forth from the Father,"—this is His deity and His mission. Where did Jesus come from? He came actually from heaven. Put alongside this John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,"—that word 'with' means face to face—"and the Word was God." There are three

statements about Jesus in John 1:1. The first statement is that He is eternal, “In the beginning was the Word;” the second statement, that He’s personal, “and the Word was with God,”—that is, with God the Father, so again, you have two Persons, God the Father, God the Son, face to face. And, He’s the divine Word, “and the Word was God,”—or God was the Word. This is a clear statement about His deity in verse 28, “I came forth from the Father.”

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He came from heaven. He left heaven’s splendor and majesty and glory enthroned, and He came down to earth. Amen? Read Philippians 2, “. . . he humbled himself . . . and took upon him the form of a servant.” Jesus is God. That’s His mission.

The second thing it says, “. . . and am come into the world,”—this is His humanity. So, we have His deity, “I came forth from the Father,”—and then we have His humanity—“and am come into the world,”—this is His incarnation, He became flesh. Alongside that you put John 1:14, “And the Word”—it is eternal, personal, and divine—“was made flesh”—or flesh became and pitched His tent among us. So, His deity, His humanity, and thirdly, His ascension and exaltation, and we would assume that it would include His crucifixion and resurrection. He says, “. . . and am come into the world”—that was the humanity of Christ, the incarnation, and at the end of verse 28, “again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” This is His ascension and exaltation. This would be a great verse to spend some time studying because it’s so comprehensive—His deity, His humanity, His ascension and exaltation. “I leave the world, and go”—back—“to the Father.” It’s so comprehensive.

Verse 29, “His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly,”—they say, ‘Finally we understand what You’re talking about’—“and speakest no proverb. 30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” They said, “You’re speaking clearly now. We understand what You’re saying, and “. . . we believe that thou camest forth from God.”

Verse 31, “Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?”—He’s questioning them, and He switches right back in verses 32-33—“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come,”—so, it’s now —“that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own,”—this is, again, He would be arrested, He would be tried, He would be crucified, and all of the disciples would run for their lives—“every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” I love that verse, verse 32, “You’re all going to be scattered. You’re going to go every man his own way. You’re going to leave Me alone,” Jesus would be arrested, He would be tried, He would be whipped, beaten, mocked, crucified, hanging on a cross, and everyone would forsake Him, but He says, “and yet I am not alone,”—I love that—“because the Father is with me.”

I believe the same is true for you and me. No matter what we go through, no matter what’s happening in our lives, we are never alone. Amen? We used to sing a song, He promised never to leave me / Never to leave me alone. Christ promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. If you’re a Christian, you are never alone, and He promised He would never leave you or forsake you. Read Romans 8, “There is . . . no condemnation,” no separation, no defeat

in Christ.

So, “I’m not alone. The Father’s with me.” The same is true of you and me, and then here we go, the last verse of teaching before He goes into His great prayer in John 17. “These things,”—the question is how far back does ‘these things’ go, and there’s two thoughts. First, it goes all the way back to John 13, and in context, that’s probably what He is referring to. But I think that also would apply to when He began to speak in John 14 about, “Let not your heart be troubled,”—neither let it be afraid—“ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Remember what He said? “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that were I am, there ye may be also.” Then, John 15, “Abide in me,”—and you’ll bear fruit; chapter 16, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, He’s come to be with you to strengthen you, to help you, and to guide you.

So, “These things”—goes back over the Upper Room Discourse—“I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace”—you might have shalom. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer”—He’s been talking about the trouble, the sorrow, the anguish, the fear that they’re going to have when He’s crucified and buried and gone and they don’t see Him. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Don’t forget that. In Christ we have overcome the world. They’re going to be devastated when Jesus is crucified, but it only took a few days before He rose from the dead and their sorrow was turned to joy. Their sorrow was turned to joy. The very sorrow of the cross God transforms into joy. He doesn’t substitute the joy for the sorrow, He turns it and transforms it into joy.

Notice He mentions joy and peace. “You’re going to have My peace, and you’re going to have My joy. It’s going to come through answered prayer. You can have access to the Father.” All of this is for us as well as believers.

Now, what does He mean by, “In the world ye shall have tribulation?” He basically means that we haven’t arrived home yet. We’re not in heaven yet. You and I both know that’s true, right? “In this world ye shall have tribulation.” It’s interesting. I’ve never seen that on a promise card. You send someone a card in the mail, “In this world you shall have tribulation. God bless you.” They should at least finish the verse, right?

This tribulation is not the Great Tribulation of which the Church will not pass through. I believe the rapture will happen before the tribulation, and the difference being that this tribulation here comes from the world, the flesh, and the devil. The Great Tribulation, that is future, will come from God Himself. The source of the Great Tribulation is God. It’s His wrath, and “God hath not appointed us to wrath,”—the Bible says—“but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How we love this statement Jesus said, “. . . but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” This, “I have overcome the world,” is emphatic in the Greek. It means that Christ is our overcomer, and when I am a Christian, I am in Christ. In Christ there’s no condemnation; in Christ there’s no separation; in Christ there’s no defeat. Jesus rose from the dead, and we have

joy, we have the Spirit, we have access to the Father, we have answered prayer, and one day He's going to come back and establish His Kingdom on earth and we're going to reign with Him. Amen? So, we have great and marvelous joy.