**Sorrow Now? Joy Eternal?**

**John 16.16-23**

Jubilate – Easter 4

04.25.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jubilate Sunday, “make a joyful shout to God” Sunday. What is there to be joyful about? Well, I would suggest that you do not find your joy in the things of the world. A cop was found guilty – and the news covered the rejoicing that took place. I do not condone what officer Derek Chauvin did, and the guilty verdict is correct. God is not tolerant of any racism. God created one race – the human race. It was into that human race, in our shared flesh, that the Father gave His only begotten Son to die for ALL mankind.

There is however no joy in his being found guilty – nor any joy in any guilty verdict – no matter how correct. If Chauvin harbored any hatred or prejudice in his heart, that is indeed sinful. It is however sad that his family, as well as George Floyd’s will now be without them – one in prison – one gone from this vale of existence. Should we be joyful that justice was served? No! We should expect nothing else. That it does not always happen should make us sad. That justice does not happen in every case is just further evidence that sinfulness is only too rampant in all of humanity.

There is nothing to be joyful about sinfulness. Sinfulness brings pain, suffering, and death – none of those are joyful.

But, today in our life we are joyful because sinfulness has been defeated. It was crucified in the person of Jesus who bore in His body the sinfulness of all. The power of sin is death, and that was buried in Christ’s tomb. Death remained in the tomb when Christ rose again to declare our resurrection. Today is the 4th Sunday of Easter, Jubilate – make a joyful shout to God, all the earth. Today we sing out the honor of His name and make His praise glorious. He is risen! (He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Amen.)

In our Gospel, Jesus proclaimed to His disciples, “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.”

Did they understand what He was talking about? Oh yes, they had heard the words of Jesus. He had told them what was coming. Three times He had proclaimed something along the lines of, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

They had heard Him speak the words, but did they understand them? Did they have faith in them? As answer, all we need do is examine the works of His followers on that third day, the day we know of as the Resurrection of our Lord, or, Easter.

Why did the women go to the tomb that morning? Because they had not believed the word of Jesus that He would rise on the third day. They went with the things necessary to prepare His body for extended burial in the customary manner – they believed that what they had seen with their eyes three days earlier.

Why did the disciples run to the tomb when informed by the women that His body was missing and that young men had declared that He had risen? Because they did not believe the word of Jesus that He would rise on the third day.

Why did Thomas disbelieve when His closest friends told him that he had missed out when Jesus appeared to them in the upper room – risen from the dead? Because he did not believe the word of Jesus that He would rise on the third day.

It was just as Jesus foretold on that Thursday night to His disciples before He was arrested in Gethsemane. After He had washed their feet, predicted His betrayal, instituted the Lord’s Supper, declared His oneness with the Father, promised them the Holy Spirit, called them the branches and Himself the vine, explained their relationship to one another, and their relationship to the world that He again foretells His death and resurrection. On this Thursday He does it a bit more cryptically, “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again, al little while and you will see me.”

Not understanding, they are asking one another what it means. Knowing this, Jesus speaks to them again. “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'? 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.”

He was going to be crucified – they would be filled with sorrow. But only for a little while. He was going to rise – their sorrow will be turned to joy.

But is that all Jesus was speaking of? John records these words in the simplest Greek, 3rd graders’ Greek. There is more here.

After Christ’s ascension they would be filled with sorrow – they would continue to live in this world. They would see the sinfulness, they would see their countrymen reject Christ as Lord and Savior, they would ultimately die gruesome deaths for their unwillingness to deny Christ.

Their sorrow would be turned to joy – they overcome the world. On Pentecost, all would be made clear, their minds and hearts opened by the Holy Spirit’s work in them a new understanding. Their joy in having the full picture would overcome the world. In their suffering, they knew joy, for they knew what was and now is fully theirs in Christ and His eternal life in them.

Their sorrow was turned to joy as they proclaimed in a multitude of tongues the marvelous deeds of Christ, that He had fulfilled all the prophesies of the Old Testament, that He had died and rose again. Their sorrow of being imprisoned was turned to joy that they had been counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.

Their eyes had been those that only saw things in this world, and allowed this world to dictate to them what is sorrowful and what is joyful. Do we always consider what it says in our text from Lamentations about where joy is found? Let me read those words to you again.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; let him put his mouth in the dust—there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.

When loved ones die, it is hard to see that the steadfast love of the Lord has not ceased – it is hard to see past the sorrow our heart feels to the joy we know by faith wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, that they are now in paradise with Christ.

When we look at our aging bodies as they betray us – it seems impossible to get past our sorrow-filled hearts of what we know must endure in our flesh to see that the Lord’s mercies never end, that they are new every morning, and that His faithfulness is great.

We do not want to wait. Yokes are a heavy burden. Silence can be interminably long. I do not enjoy being beaten by sinful men – either with their fists or their lips. When these things come upon us, the compassion of the Lord seems distant, His steadfast love feels like it has abandoned us.

Are suffering and sorrow good for you? It depends on who you are. In our text, Jesus is talking to His Christians. He promises joy no one can take away. He promises that sorrow will only last a little while, but their joy will last forever. He promises that they will be able to ask the Father for anything in His name and He will surely give it.

Suffering and sorrow draw Christians closer to God by purifying their faith. Faith is purified of the fleeting feelings of the moment and strengthened by the clear words of the gospel. Christians learn not to judge God by what they feel God has done – or not done – for them lately, but rather to trust in God because of what God says. They learn to find God in the crucifixion, where Jesus suffered for them. They look to that suffering and that sorrow and they know that if God can bring good out of such vile evil, then He can surely bring good out of their suffering.

While we wait for the salvation of the Lord, we may ask, “How far away is that?” Not very far! Often, we cannot see the end of trouble. That is exactly why we cannot afford to depend on what we see. Faith demands God’s promise, not sight. Christians live by what we hear, not by what we see.

In this world, with our eyes, we are filled with sorrow because we fixate on our suffering. God invites us to look beyond the little while of our suffering to the suffering of His Christ. Do not look with your eyes, but see what God’s Word proclaims the suffering of Christ means.

You come to the table and receive the very body which was abused at the hands of vile men, was crucified and died for your sins. This cup is the very blood which was shed for your times of doubt and fear, for the remission of sins.

Whatever we ask in Jesus’ name, our Father will give us – Jesus declares that. How can He deny us anything of true, eternal worth when He gives us to eat and drink the very body and blood by which His Son has already redeemed us from sin, death, and the power of the devil? Could the Father deny us anything that we truly need when He has given unto death for us His only Son whom He loves?

What is it which brings sorrow to you this day? What is the loss you mourn? What pain you suffer? How deep is your sorrow? No matter how great it is, Christ has borne all of it – and more. He has carried the source of it – sinfulness. He has carried all sin to the cross and buried it in His tomb. In His suffering sacrifice He has made holy the suffering of His children.

He does not leave us without comfort but gives us His Holy Spirit who testifies to us – just as we heard a couple weeks ago. His Spirit testifies to our spirits that we are the beloved children of God. Christ has overcome the world – no one can take this joy from us.

Therein lies our true joy. You are the beloved of God. His eternal life is His gift to you in Christ Jesus, our risen Lord. Jubilate! Let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord! He is risen! (He is risen indeed. Alleluia. Amen.) Amen.