**A Little While**

 **John 16.16-23**

Our text for meditation this morning is the Gospel lesson read earlier as recorded by the evangelist St. John.

We pray Luther's Prayer before the sermon: Eternal God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, give us Your Holy Spirit who writes the preached Word into our hearts. May we receive and believe it and be cheered and comforted by it in eternity. Glorify Your Word in our hearts and make it so bright and warm that we may find pleasure in it, through Your Holy Spirit think what is right, and by Your power, fulfill the Word, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord. Amen.

Jubilate is the name given this 4th Sunday of Easter. Jubilate means, make a joyful shout to God. But there are many who would ask, "What are we to be joyful about?" We all have trials and tribulations in our life. Life is full troubles and pain, griefs and sorrows. Why be joyful?

Jubilate is part of the Easter season. We see the white paraments still gracing our altar and pulpit, reminding us that we are still in the Easter season, and Easter is the celebration of the Jesus' resurrection. He is risen… (wait for it)

Our text finds Jesus talking with His disciples "on the night when He was betrayed", shortly before His arrest, His abuse at the hands of the chief priests, scribes, and elders… before He would be beaten, whipped and crucified at the command of Pilate… before He died on that cross and laid in the tomb - it would be a little while before they would again see Him.

As Christ explains in this text, in a little while begin Christ's passion, which would be over after three days. At that time, He would rise and they would again see Him. In the meantime, the world would rejoice as they, His disciples, are in the throes of weeping and lamenting. Yes, the world would rejoice that Christ was dead, while they would know sadness that their teacher, friend and Lord had been laid in the tomb.

After a little while though He would rise from the dead, and they would see Him again. After that “little while” of seeing Him again, those fifty days of His appearing to them before His ascension, then it would happen that they wouldn't see Him for a little while. He would ascend into heaven, He would return to the Father.

Jesus also explains that after a little while though, they would again see Him, and no one would take the rejoicing of that reunion away from them for they would be with Him from that point on into eternity.

This is indeed a joyful text, at least for the disciples, only they didn't fully understand it until after Jesus ascended. So, what does this text mean for us? We certainly understand the sorrow that this life brings. Sin in the world has caused all pain and suffering. You suffer sorrow and pain, and you wonder, "How long, O, Lord?" Jesus' words to you are, "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while and you will see Me."

I know your thoughts, "Pastor, how does this 'little while' stuff have to do with me? This text cannot apply to me today, for Jesus was talking to His disciples almost two thousand years ago." It does apply to you, as does ***ALL*** of Scripture. But in these words of Jesus you will find reason to make a joyful shout to God, to celebrate Jubilate with true joy in Christian hope.

Yes, as Jesus told the disciples they would weep and lament, it is true. That little while, which Jesus promises His people they will be apart from Him, seems so miserably long. Illnesses seem to last forever, and God seems not to answer prayers for swift healing. Suffering and problems in this life seems to drag on for way longer than necessary, and God doesn't seem to hear the prayers of His faithful for a quick end to them. Yet Jesus promises, that the weeping and lamenting will be only for a little while and that we will see Him, and then seeing Him, there will be rejoicing and no one will remove that joy.

Do you see Him? Do you see Him with your ears? Do you see Him with your lips? His presence is here today in this place. He has come to you to ease your pain, to heal you, to be with you in weeping and lamenting, and bring you His peace. Your problem is that too often you are blind to what He would desire you to see by faith with your ears or your lips.

You want to see Christ on your terms, we all would, but Christ did not come to the disciples on their terms, nor will He come to you on your terms. Remember Peter telling Jesus that He would never suffer and die? Jesus' response was to call Peter, Satan. Jesus told him that he did not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.

Peter's sinfulness led him to manifest his sinfulness in his desire to keep Jesus from suffering and death. Peter wanted Jesus to forego the suffering and death that He had come into this world in human flesh to fulfill in order that Peter might be freed from his sins. Peter's sinfulness caused him to desire to delegate to God what ***he*** wanted for Jesus' life.

It is our sinfulness which also leads us to desire God to do for us what we want Him to accomplish in our lives. Our selfishness brings us to desire to change God, to call God "unloving or not listening to us" if He does not do things exactly in the way we desire.

While Peter made his own claims upon Jesus' life and work, his sinfulness kept his eyes closed to God's plan and work in action right there before his very eyes. In the same way, we often close our eyes to God's plan and His work in our lives.

Today we hear Christ's word to us from this text saying, "A little while, and you will see Me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father." Here He is today, because He has gone to the Father. He is present, He is speaking to us in the Word we hear. He is giving us His words of comfort, that although we may suffer for a time, He is here with us, even to the end of the age.

It is He who comes to us and strengthens us with His word. Christ takes the fear of death and suffering from us, as He pronounces to us that our sinfulness, which shuts our eyes to His plan, has been forgiven. He speaks to us, telling us that we are forgiven for imposing our will upon His plans for our life. Do you see Him with your ears as He comes to you in His word to you – forgiving your sin?

Today He is with us forgiving or fears and doubts as He feeds us with His own body and blood, strengthening us to face our trials and temptations. Do you see Him with your lips – as He is His body and blood with which He feeds you?

When we leave today, He sends us out with His peace dwelling in our hearts, giving encouragement to our failing spirit, "a little while and you will see me." It is with these words ringing in our hearts that we return to this place again, and again, and again – where His presence is promised to come to us, hidden in Word and Sacrament.

A little while and you will see me again, is His invitation to come again into His house where He speaks to us and feeds us. It is here then, that He comes to us again and again – always after a little while – each and every week. It is here in this place, that He fills you with understanding, through His Word to you. For as He speaks to you, He opens your eyes to see, giving you eyes of faith, to understand exactly what that "little while" means.

It is at the end of that little while that your sorrow will be turned into joy. Each week that takes place. Each week you see Jesus come to you with your ears and with your mouth. Each week, you see Him and rejoice in His removal of your sins. You see Him and rejoice that He is preparing you with His Word so that you will, “in a little while,” join Him eternally with the Father.

Ultimately, it is only a little while and then you will see Him. Yes, you will see Jesus face to face, as Job says, “with your own eyes. On that day He will no longer be hidden in the word you hear from the mouth of a man. He will no longer be hidden in bread and wine of His sacrament. On that day when He takes you home to be with Him, where He is with the Father, you will make a joyful shout to God, you will sing out the honor of His name, you will make His praise glorious.

But today, and after a little while, you see Him hidden in those gifts which prepare you for that glorious day. In a little while, you will kneel at table – and with eyes of faith you can imagine the scene as those who have gone before gather around that same table in heaven – face to face with Jesus. It is gathered at this meal that Jesus comes to you and you receive Him. Today, you rejoice in the gifts He gives, knowing that it is a joy that no one can take away from you.

When you leave this place, leave with Jesus’ word in your hearts, "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.” (vs. 22)

Yes, only a little while, and your joy will be complete. Yes, only a little while, and your joy will be eternal. So, today, make a joyful shout to God, sing out the honor of His name, make His praise glorious, for He comes to you and blesses you with all things that grant you a blessed future with Him forever. Amen.