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Easter VI
May 25, 2025
Text: John 16:23 – 33
Title: The Best Is Yet To Come

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. What is it that you look forward too? Do you look forward to the release of a good movie? A good meal? How about the family vacation, or time spent alone with your spouse? Maybe you look forward to time alone? Is the perfect weather something to look forward too?

How about goals, what goals do you work towards? Do you work towards a better car, or maybe a different house? Is financial security the goal that you have? Maybe an important goal for you is a higher educational degree, or a promotion at work? What is a goal that is worth working hard for?

Life is full of things that we look forward to or work towards. One of the greatest things about America is that because of God's blessings and our soldiers' sacrifice, which we honor this Memorial Day weekend, we have the freedom to work and obtain those things that we want and look forward too. Parents usually put it this way, "I want my kids to have the opportunities and the things that I never had. I want them to have a better life than I did." I'm sure that each of us have, at some point, heard that before.

There's always something that we have to look forward too. There's always the hope and promise of things yet to come, and almost always that's a promise of something better than what we already have. "The best is yet to come!" as we like to say. Life is full of such things, and we Christians are certainly not left out of these hopes and promises of things still to come.

As Christians, we have several promises that we can rely on throughout our life of faith. For example, life is a lot happier as a Christian, and we never really have any reason to be

depressed or unhappy. Everything that we could possibly want is provided for us, and God takes care of everything that could trouble us. Our lives are simply easier. Last week's reading from Revelation 21 tells us, "[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes...neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain...for the former things have passed away."

Another promise that we have of a better life is the promise in I Corinthians 10 that "God will never give us more than we can handle." That's certainly a great promise to have! I know that my pain will never be too much! I know that my problems will never be too great to handle by myself! I can be confident in my ability to endure because I won't be given more than I can bear! Thanks be to God for that!

These things and many more are certain in your life when you have a strong enough faith! If you're experiencing problems, if you're not happy enough, if you feel overwhelmed by the struggles of your daily life then that's an indication of a problem with your personal faith! You need to try harder to be a better Christian, and you need to pray more sincerely for strength. You definitely need to be more committed to your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without that unwavering commitment on your part, you can't possibly hope to have the blessings and promises that God makes in His Holy Word.

I hope that these last few points have caused a reaction in you as you've been listening. I hope that they may even have made your blood boil a little. I can assure you that I haven't suddenly changed my Christian confession, and I promise you that I haven't suffered some kind of mental episode that's affected my faithful understanding of God's Word. I've presented these false teachings to you in order to make a point. Our enemies, sin and the devil, are masters at getting us to desire and to look forward to better things to come. The phrase that I used earlier

describes the idea perfectly; the best is yet to come! Sin and Satan regularly warp that promise to lead you away from the promises of Christ that are true for you here and now.

The first example that I used, that the Christian life is always one of happiness, is an expectation that I think many people have when they begin a life of faith, or when they look at certain sects of Christianity. There is an expectation that everything will go right after you repent and begin to have faith in Jesus Christ. Your problems will suddenly go away, and your life will become much happier and easier because you can put all of those things behind you by “giving it all to God.” Scripture is taken out of context, and a false understanding of the entire Christian life is the result. Eventually, when you realize that life isn’t always happy and perfect as a Christian, and that the promises of Christ – that you will be hated because of Him, that you will weep and lament while the world rejoices, that you will live a life of persecution – when people realize that these are really true, they lose faith and accuse God of not caring and of being unfaithful. We fool ourselves into thinking that the Christian life wasn’t supposed to be like this, and sooner or later we reach the conclusion that faith doesn’t really “work.” It has no value.

The second example, that we will “never be given more than we can bear,” is yet another way that sin and Satan lead us to take God’s Word in a mistaken way and reach a false teaching because of it. That Scripture verse from I Corinthians 10:13 only refers to us not being *tempted* beyond what we can bear! It says nothing about pain or suffering or our own ability to endure them. Plenty of Christian martyrs from history and from the various parts of our world today know better than us just how far suffering for your faith can go. Suffering is a part of every human’s life because of the sin that is in the world. To deny that suffering exists or to claim that we somehow don’t deserve the same pain as other people is to deny the full extent of sin in our own life. God’s Word is clear, suffering and pain are the result of sin, and there is no free pass

given to believers and no reduced sentence. Paul points out in Romans 8 that God didn't spare His own Son from suffering, we shouldn't expect anything less in our own lives.

These and other false promises of better things to come along with our sinful tendency to covet more and better things infect our faith, and they can damage it when we discover that they aren't really true. We allow ourselves to be misled even further by believing that we are somehow not strong enough in our faith, and that we must try harder or do something different to make it better. We deny the faith that God has created in us, and return to the age old conclusion that we have to do something more to earn salvation. But if our salvation were dependent on the strength and sincerity of our faith, then we would all be in very serious trouble because we'd never know if we had enough faith, and we'd never have the assurance that comes from the promises of God. The smallest faith is enough to be a part of God's promises, and with God's true and unbreakable promises the best really is yet to come!

The second reading today from Revelation 21 is a marvelous picture of what is yet to come for those who have even the simplest faith in Christ Jesus as the risen Savior! Listen again to this marvelous description, "And he...showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel,...And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light...By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it...and there will be no night there..."

The best really is yet to come, and what more do we really need to look forward to? A new heaven and a new earth will be made for us, and because Christ first rose from the dead on that victorious Easter morning we will be raised at His return to occupy this new creation. It will

be unlike anything we have ever seen or imagined, and with it the best truly is yet to come to us! The Triune God will choose to dwell with us in person! His presence will be all the Light that we will ever need, and we will be with Him eternally so that there isn't even any need for a specific place to worship Him, like a temple or a church!

Until then, we have the hope of knowing that the best truly is to come! And much like a movie company gives us a sneak preview of coming attractions, our Lord has already begun giving us sneak previews of these better things to come. Every week, Jesus comes to you personally in His Word and in His Sacraments. He joins Himself to the bread and wine, and is really there in, with and under it. He comes to you in the eating and drinking of this sacred act. He comes to you through the ear when the Word is read aloud, and when it is preached from this pulpit. The Lamb dwells with us, His people in these things, and they are but a sneak preview of the things that are to come when He will dwell with us in a visible and complete way.

He has given us the preview of this time of triumph in His own resurrection, and He began to do it even before He was crucified. Just before this week's Gospel, Jesus told the disciples that He would leave for a while, and then He would return, and in these verses He tells them and us that our joy may be full as we receive His blessings and gifts, and the greatest of those gifts, faith, comes now that He has overcome the world. The Holy Spirit –whose full arrival we will celebrate in two weeks – creates faith in Christ at our Baptism. Then He ignites that faith in us, and sends us out into the world to tell the Good News that the best really is yet to come. And at the same time, the Holy Spirit sustains our faith in Jesus and in His resurrection until the best is no longer yet to come but is actually and completely here! The assurance of this promise coming to us because Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.