



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Blvd. Port St John FL 32927

Third Sunday after Easter
April 21, 2024

✠ **In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.** ✠

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning comes from the Gospel:

“And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy, no man taketh away from you.”

The Church year is organized in seasons. Each season is dedicated to an aspect of our relationship to God and to each other. Advent is anticipation of the end times, Christmas is Incarnation of Jesus, Epiphany is the spreading of the Gospel to the Gentiles. In Lent, we repent our sinfulness, and in Easter season we consider the Resurrection, both that of our Lord, and the one we are meant to share.

The exchange in the Gospel this morning was confusing for the disciples. Frankly, it can still be a mystery to us. Jesus says, You will see me, then you won't. Then you will see me again. You will be sorrowful, and the world will rejoice. Then you will be joyful again and no man will take your joy from you.

Fortunately, we have the benefit of history to help us decipher the riddle. Jesus would be taken from them on Good Friday, when he was crucified and died. The world, the kingdom of the devil, rejoiced to see His death. At the

Resurrection, Jesus is raised from the dead, and their joy is restored. However, He leaves them again at the Ascension, sending His Holy Spirit at Pentecost to infuse them with understanding and to preserve their joy through their lives, their deaths, and their reunion with Him in heaven.

It would be easier for us if Jesus had decided to hang around so that we could get to know Him in our time. But He does explain why He goes ahead of us. In Chapter 14 of the Gospel of St. John, He tells us that He goes to prepare a place for us, that where I Am, ye may be also. This world is not the place we were created to share with God. These poor, aging, too often ill bodies, are not the bodies that can endure ecstasy and eternal love in heaven. He transforms death by the Resurrection, and He also transforms our lives into the anticipation of the real life which is to come, life in our own Resurrected bodies, lit by the love of God, which we will be able to share perfectly with those we love.

That is the point of the Epistle from St Peter that we read today. We are to live in this world with the understanding that it is not our home. We need to be looking forward to the world to come. We are to endure the injustices and the difficulties of this life and to offer them as sacrifices to God. Importantly, the sacrifices we make in this life aren't only meant to help us

grow into a godly and Christ like life, but to be the example that inspires and converts those who watch the way we live.

We should know, that when we proclaim that we are Christians, when we pledge your allegiance to the world to come, that we become objects of surveillance. The people around us want to know if we are hypocrites, if the holiness we proclaim and follow is just a story, a way to get by, or if we really know a secret. Because if the secret is true, if we can live through the sadness of this world in charity and hopefulness, if our faith will deliver us to the unspeakable joys that we were created to experience, then they too will need to know that secret and to share that life.

Of course, knowing the secret doesn't make this life easy. Living is hard. Life is full of disappointments. These bodies we inhabit today age, get sick, and even die. The prospect of dying is fearsome to us. We don't see through the veil of death, except through the eyes of faith. The world, even our own experience, tells us that death is the end of our lives. I was watching a show with Tristyn Friday night, one of those animated cartoons that pretend to be philosophical. In it, the religious family was either despairing of afterlife or aggressively promoting some Eastern philosophy. The family dog, who was the only reasonable sounding voice, calmed the infant who spawned the question with the belief that we just go black and there is nothing more, leaving the infant to ponder that terrible lie alone in his crib.

God, however, has given us His Holy Scripture, and the sacraments, to teach us the truth about death, to uncover the lie the devil and this world put upon us. That we are living through this life to the purpose of living forever in a more beautiful life, and that the people God puts in our lives are meant to join us, because our good example will lead them to the same joy.

Jesus ends this Gospel with the analogy of the woman in travail, going through the pains of

labor to deliver her child, and then basking in the glory of that birth, united finally with her child, able to love the child the way it was meant to be loved, forgetting all the pain, and living in ecstatic joy.

That is a good metaphor for us. We can understand the lesson from the viewpoint of the mother, but also the baby. In the womb, the baby knows its mother, hears the heartbeat, and is miraculously nourished and developed. But the baby cannot see the mother. It cannot be embraced by its mother. It cannot embrace her back because its life is confined in a temporary world, and it is outgrowing that world. That womb, as comfortable as it has been, cannot nourish and fulfill the child's purpose and its ultimate joy, of knowing its mother, its father, and joining the world of light.

The baby fears its transition too, just as we fear death. Its world is disrupted, and it is pushed against its will toward the light. It passes through the threshold in fear, and with hope, and enters the other side overwhelmed by the light, complaining that its comfortable life has been dislodged as it takes its first breath of air, and then is welcomed into the embrace of its mother, the love of the father, the experience of the new world full of light and experience and love.

As Christians, we look forward to heaven with that understanding. That through the door of death is life. That shedding this world, we will be outfitted with a life that is unbounded in joy, and peace and love. We want to bring all those we love with us, so we follow St. Peter's direction, living in this world in the manner that draws the people who watch us, whether hopefully, secretly or antagonistically, along with us to heaven.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen