

John: Give Me Joy in My Heart

John 16:5-33

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Please turn with me to the gospel of John. We have been in recent days in the upper room discourse beginning with the wonderful and extraordinary event of Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13, and now this evening we are in chapter 16 and we pick up the reading at verse 5.

Almost every book on preaching that has been published in the last forty or fifty years—and there are many of them—almost all of them give advice to preachers like myself that we should be able to write down in a sentence 'what the purpose of the sermon is.' It's a good discipline, what we sometimes refer to as 'the big idea.' Well, Jesus tells us here 'what's the big idea' of this sermon, because it is a sermon. He's preaching to His disciples and He tells us what the purpose of this sermon is. He began it in chapter 14 and verse 1. "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God believe also in Me." And then again in verse 33 of chapter 16, as though He were almost rounding off the sermon again and bringing it home to where He had begun. "These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world."

Now, if that is the purpose of Jesus' sermon, to enable Christians not to be deeply troubled in heart, what would you teach them? What would you say to Christians if the intent of what you are saying is that you don't want them to be troubled; you don't want them to be distressed. And Jesus' answer to that question is a discourse on the Trinity. Yes, a discourse on the Trinity because that's what we have in these chapters; this is what we have in the text that is before us. Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit; He speaks of Himself as the Son of God; and He speaks of His Father in heaven. Imagine that. That a doctrine that some of us may regard as esoteric, as something for the 'school men' to pontificate about; Jesus says this is the meat and drink that gives you comfort and strength and solace and vigor and vitality when you're facing trouble.

Now, ladies, when you were driving your SUV's to pick up your children, did you think this week this week about the doctrine of *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*? It's been in the bulletin now a couple of weeks. I'm simply making a point, and it

startled me when I thought about it. I have to say that it took me back. That Jesus' recipe, Jesus' remedy for troubled distressed Christians, is to expound to them God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is saying it is at the very *heart* of what we need to know.

In our text this evening in verses 5-11, He speaks of one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. In verse 12-16, He speaks of how the Spirit sheds a spotlight on Jesus as the Son of God. And in verses 17-33, He speaks about the security that is ours because we have come to know God as our Father.

Now, the disciples had asked the question in verse 5, "Where are you going?" They had asked that question before but they had not returned to it; they hadn't pursued it. "We don't *know* where you are going," they had said. And Jesus had been explaining to them where He was going but they hadn't understood it. And now Jesus is returning once again to go over that ground; that He is going away, but that He will come to them again and that His going away will actually prove to be to their advantage. Did you notice that? His going away would be to their advantage. Now, let's pause. At the risk of making too lengthy an introduction, I've got to pause for a second because which would you prefer? Suppose I could bring you tonight Jesus walking out of this door? Imagine if Jesus were to walk out of that door? Do you never ask the question, "What did He look like? What color was His hair? What color was His skin? What color were His eyes? What was the shape of His hands? What kind of body did He have? How tall was He? How much did He weigh? What was His accent?" Of course you asked those questions. We long to see as we shall see the glorified body of Jesus in heaven. Supposing I could bring Him out to stand before you, which would you prefer? Would you prefer Jesus in heaven, or Jesus standing here before the congregation of First Presbyterian Church? And while you're pondering that answer, Jesus says, "My going away is going to be to your advantage." And I dare say that there are some in the congregation who are asking themselves, "How can that possibly be? How can that possibly be to our advantage not to be able to see Him, to touch Him?" So, let's see what it is that Jesus unfolds now as He pursues this discourse on the doctrine of the Trinity. In the first place, He speaks of the world being convicted by the ministry of the Spirit. In the second place of the glory of Jesus that is revealed in the pages of Scripture. And thirdly, He speaks of the love of the Father for all of His true children.

I. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin.

The conviction, first of all, that the Spirit brings in verses 5-11. When He will come, when the Spirit comes, when the other Helper comes, He will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, Jesus says. Of sin because men do not believe in Me. They will be convicted of their sinfulness, Jesus says. And that is how it happened isn't it? On the day of Pentecost of which this is a prophecy, they had judged Him and thought Him to be merely a good teacher. It

was this worldly view. And then the Spirit came and they were convicted of their sin. They were convicted that they had never believed in Him. They had their view of Jesus, but it was a mistaken view, and when the Spirit came, that view of Jesus was overturned. They had rejected Him. They had crucified Him. Good religious people discover the appalling truth about themselves--that they had participated in the crucifixion of the Son of God.

Do you understand that when the Spirit comes, that's what He does; He shows us that we're sinners. He shows us that we're unworthy of the least of God's mercies. He convicts us that unbelief in Jesus is a sin. It's the greatest sin that you can commit, and it's possible tonight that there are some in this congregation who may hear Jesus saying on the Day of Judgment, "But you *never* believed in Me. You *never* trusted Me. You *never* gave your heart to Me. You *never* walked before Me as a servant walks before His Master. I gave you all these privileges; I called out to you again and again and again and you would not come, and you would not believe." And when the Spirit comes, as He did on the day of Pentecost, He convicted the world of sin and of righteousness, Jesus says, "Because I am going to My Father."

What did He mean? What is the logic of what Jesus is saying? Think of the crucifixion. What did it mean to the world that Jesus was crucified? It said to the world that Jesus was wrong, that He was in the wrong about Himself, He was wrong about His beliefs--that's what the crucifixion said to the world. And when Jesus rose from the dead and went to His Father, what is it that the Father was saying about the crucifixion? That Jesus was right; that He was in the right and Jesus is saying that when the Spirit comes He will convict of righteousness, of what is right and what is wrong. And as they behold Jesus going to the Father, they will see that they have been wrong and that Jesus was, in fact, right. And judgment, Jesus says, because the prince of this world is cast out. What does He mean? He has spoken before in John's gospel in chapter 12 and verse 31, "That the time has come for the prince of this world to be cast out."

As Jesus was crucified, it might appear for a moment as though the devil had gained a victory, but as Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to His Father, what was the sermon? What was the declaration? That Jesus has gained the victory over every hostile power, over the devil himself.

Now, in Acts 2, Peter seems to take up this verse and in the sermon that he preaches on the Day of Pentecost it looks as though he's been meditating on this verse, and expanding and expounding in that sermon that he preaches on the Day of Pentecost the Spirit brings us a sense of our need of a Savior. When He comes He will show us that we need Jesus Christ. "That's why My going away is to your advantage," Jesus is saying to the disciples. Because then you will understand, as you've never understood, before that the only way of salvation and the only way of rescue is by faith in Me and Me alone. When the Spirit comes, He will bring conviction.

II. The Spirit brings a revelation of the Son.

But secondly, Jesus says something about the revelation of the Son in verses 12-16, the revelation of the Son that will be given to the Church. These disciples are overcome by the fact that Jesus is saying, "I am going away." About ten times He seems to have said this, "I am going away." And they're despondent and it's understandable that they are despondent. But Jesus says, "It's only as I leave that you will come to know Me as I want you to know Me." Look at what He says in verse 12. "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." There's more about Me that you need to know, but you're not able to take it in just now, but when the Spirit comes He will guide you into all truth. Their great fear is that if Jesus goes away, they will know Him less, and Jesus is saying that it is the opposite because if I go away I will send My Spirit and actually, you will know Me better than you know Me now. What is He talking about? He's talking about the Scriptures. He's talking about the way the Holy Spirit will take some of these very disciples like John and Peter and James and through them will bring to the Church some of the gospels and some of the Epistles that we have been studying ever since we first came to Jesus Christ by faith, and as a consequence, have grown to know Him more and more. As a result of His going away, do you understand what He's saying because it takes your breath away. As a result of His going away, He would actually be nearer to them. I would love to have been there. Of all the places in all the world that I would have loved to have been present at—a little corner somewhere in the upper room, under the table, behind a curtain, anywhere—just to hear His voice to satisfy my curiosity about the inflection of His voice. What did He sound like? What kind of melody came forth as He spoke to the disciples? Of all the places in the world that you would want to be, it's in the upper room. And Jesus is saying to the disciples that there's a place that is far more significant to be in than the upper room, and do you know where that is? It's right here with this Book open before you, and its pages being opened up before you and expounded in your ears, and it takes your breath away. Jesus is saying you should prefer to have the Scriptures than to have Me present in your midst. That's what He's saying. Because as I go away it will be to your advantage. There is something better than even being in the upper room listening to Jesus speaking to the disciples and that is, Jesus says, having the New Testament, having the Bible open before us. Isn't that incredible?

I have to say to you as I thought about that, it was a major challenge to me because I would love to have been in the upper room. Jesus is saying that if you really want to know what I am like, then open your Bibles. Why aren't you more in the Scriptures? Why don't you love it more than you do? That is what Jesus seems to be saying. Why don't you love it more than talking and more than reading Lewis and more than reading Calvin? Yes, that's what He's saying because when the Spirit comes, He will reveal Me in ways that you've never even

thought of. He will bring, as we were thinking this morning, Saul of Tarsus to write those epistles “some of which contains things that are hard to be understood,” as Peter said--the astonishing revelation that God gives by His Spirit, of His Son in the pages of Scripture.

III. The Spirit brings the love of the Father for His children to His children.

The conviction that the Spirit brings, the revelation of the Son that He gives and thirdly, in verses 17-33, the love of the Father for all of His children. Now, in verse 17, they are agitated once again and Jesus is saying to them, “I want you to understand that for the moment you will go through sorrow, but then will come great joy.” In that day, and I don't think there that Jesus is speaking of a specific day, you will no longer need to ask questions. And they'd been asking a lot of questions. In that day you will no longer need to ask questions because My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. In that day you're going to discover something that you've never quite discovered yet. And do you know what that is? That My Father is going to be experienced by you as your Father.

Do you remember how Jesus would put that in a few days from now in one of those resurrection appearances to Mary? You remember when He had said, “Don't touch Me because I am not yet risen to My God and your God and My Father and your Father.” And interpreters have done something with that text which is almost unforgivable and that is to say that Jesus was distinguishing His Father from your Father and Jesus seems to be doing the very opposite. He's saying, that as a consequence of His rising from the dead, “My Father in heaven is your Father. My God is your God.” And in verses 25-28, especially, Jesus seems to be underlining the sheer privilege of what it is to know God as your Father. You will not be left here as orphans. I'm not going to leave you here as orphans because when I go the Spirit will come and He will assure you of your relationship with God as a relationship of a child to a father. You'll understand that the Father loves you because you love the Son. Isn't that the gospel? That we are reconciled to the Father and we come to understand that He loves us as we love His Son. That in coming to Jesus and embracing Jesus we come to know God as our Father in heaven. “That the terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do; My Savior's obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view.” Jesus is saying, “When I go away the Spirit will come and this is what He'll do. He'll take you by the hand and He'll introduce you to My Father, and He'll say, ‘This is your Father,’” so that our fellowship, as John would write in one of his epistles, is with the Son and with the Father and through the Holy Spirit.

And right in the middle of all of that in verse 22, He says to His disciples. “You have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take that joy from you.” What did Jesus mean by that? He's saying something of immense significance. He's saying that as a consequence of His resurrection,

they are going to understand something. They are going to appreciate something that is going to bring into their hearts and into their souls a joy, not some fleeting emotional passing joy, but the solid joys and lasting treasures which none but Zion's children know as a consequence of Jesus' resurrection, you will know something of a joy in your heart that no one and nothing can take away. They will understand something. What is it that they will understand? They will understand that Jesus is who He says He is. That death has no power on Him, that He introduces us to God as He says, "Meet your Father in heaven"; that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. That having begun a good work He will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Yes, troubles will come. Yes, disease may strike. Yes, disappointments may unfold, but nobody can take this away. Nobody can take this away. I am the Lord and He is mine forever and forever. Think of John, the writer of this gospel, who was banished to an island eight miles by four miles wide, some fifty miles off the coast of Ephesus—Patmos, during the reign of Domitian in the early nineties. At least, that what Irenaeus said, and Irenaeus knew Polycarp and Polycarp knew John, so he should know what he's talking about. A few days before Domitian's forty-fifth birthday, he was murdered through a plot that involved his wife, and John had been banished there. And what did John do when he was there? Can you imagine being banished to this inhospitable rocky island? He wrote the Book of Revelation. What's the Book of Revelation about? Well, I haven't time to tell you what the Book of Revelation is about, but as one professor at Reformed Seminary keeps on saying, "It's about this: that Jesus is victorious." That's what it is about—that Jesus reigns. That Jesus is in control of all of history and of my life. So, you can banish someone to an island but you can't take that joy away, and you can't take that certainty away from him.

Do you know the story of the two Margarets? In 1685, there was Margaret McLoughlin, a 63 year-old widow and Margaret Wilson, a young girl of 18, and both of them had refused to bow to the *order* that they should worship according to Episcopalian rules. They just simply wouldn't do that and Margaret McLaughlin had taken every opportunity to go and hear Presbyterian ministers preaching the gospel, and for which she was put in prison with no bed and no fire to keep her warm. When the Abduration Oath was put to them, they refused it and were found guilty "and the sentence was that upon the 11th of May, instant, both of them should be tied to stakes fixed within the flood mark of the water near of Bladnoch near Wigtown where the sea flows at high water, there to be drowned. The two women were brought from Wigtown with a numerous crowd of spectators to so extraordinary and execution. Major Windram with some soldiers guarded them to the place of execution. The old woman's stake was a good way in beyond the other, and she was first dispatched in order to terrify the other to a compliance with such oaths and conditions as they required; but in vain, for she had adhered to her principles with an unshaken steadfastness. When the water was overflowing her fellow martyr, some about Margaret Wilson asked her what she thought of the other now struggling with the pangs of death. She answered,

“What do I see but Christ wrestling there? Think you that we are the sufferers? No, it is Christ in us for He sends none a warfare upon their own charges.” And Margaret Wilson was at the stake and she sang the 25th Psalm from verse 7 downward a good way and read the eighth chapter of Romans with a great deal of cheerfulness and then prayed. And while at prayer, the water covered her, but before she was quite dead they pulled her up and held her out of the water until she was recovered and able to speak and then by Major Windram's orders she was asked if she would pray for the king. She answered she wished the salvation of all men and the damnation of none. One deeply affected with the death of the other and her case said, “Dear Margaret, say ‘God save the king,’ and she answered in the greatest steadiness and composure, “God save him, if He will for it is his salvation I desire.” Whereupon some of the relations nearby, desirous to have her life spared if possible, called out to Major Windram, “Sir, she hath said it, she hath said it!” Whereupon the Major came near and offered to her the abduration charging her instantly to swear it, otherwise returning her to the water. Most deliberately she refused and said, “I will not. I am one of Christ's children. Let me go.” Upon which she was thrust down again into the water where she finished her course with joy.

Those are very different times. Those are extraordinary times, but even in that extremity there was joy that none could take away. May God help us in our witness and our discipleship to witness to that joy of the Holy Spirit that lies within our hearts by faith in Jesus Christ. Let's pray together.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for Your word. We're convicted by it. Help us to love the Bible more than we do. Help us in this week that lies before us to be much in the Scriptures, and give us a love for Christ that the world may behold and the joy in our hearts for the things of God that the world may behold, and we ask it with a forgiveness for all of our sins. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Guide to the Evening Service

Thoughts on Worship: *LOOKING UNTO JESUS*

It is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, “Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you will never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of His children; you have such a wavering hold of Jesus.” All these are thoughts about self, and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within.

But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self: He tells us that we are nothing, but that “Christ is all in all.” Remember, therefore, it is not thy hold of Christ that saves thee – it is Christ; it is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee – it is

Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument – it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, look not so much to thy hand with which thou art grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to thy hope, but to Jesus, the source of thy hope; look not to thy faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith.

We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by “looking unto Jesus.” Keep thine eye simply on Him; let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession, be fresh upon thy mind; when thou wakest in the morning look to Him; when thou liest down at night look to Him. Oh! let not thy hopes or fears come between thee and Jesus; follow hard after Him, and He will never fail thee. “My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness: I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus’ name” [from the hymn by Edward Mote]. (C.H. Spurgeon)

The Hymns and Psalm

God, All Nature Sings Thy Glory

A familiar tune and an excellent text, with a solid expression of biblical teaching about general revelation, our depravity, and common and special grace. We’ll be accompanied by strings on our hymns tonight!

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (Psalm 103)

Henry Lyte's free paraphrase of Psalm 103 is one of our very favorite songs. Sing it like you mean it.

Amazing Grace

Perhaps the best-known hymn in the English-speaking world at the moment. Written, it should be said, by a Calvinist!

Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts

It is staggering and humbling that our burdened Savior would care for our joy in the hour of His death. Let's praise Him for it, in preparation for the message. And let us be sure that He is indeed *the* joy of our hearts.

The Sermon

Jesus continues to minister to His disciples in the Upper Room here in chapter 16. Yes, some commentators assume that they have left the Upper Room and

are on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane by now (because He tells them to rise at the close of chapter 14. As I explained when we looked at that chapter, I don't think it's essential to interpret things that way. Let's assume then, that are still in the Upper Room. What are the concerns on Jesus mind? Remember He is only a few hours away from being arrested – an incident that will lead to His death! You might think it would be Himself, but no! He is thinking of the disciples and their *joy!* Yes, *joy!* “Your sorrow will turn into joy” (16:20). And then two verses later, “And no one will take this joy from you” (16:22).

And how will this be? It is, as Jesus explains, “I will see you again.” Folk who have no joy in the presence of Jesus now can never understand how meeting Jesus again will bring joy! If Jesus says to you this evening, “I will see you again,” and your heart does not rejoice in being with Him, then this text is not a promise for you, it's an invitation. It's an invitation to love Jesus. Because if you don't enjoy Jesus, your joy will be taken from you. Jesus is the only permanent joy.

Even the Holy Spirit Himself seems to be taken up entirely with Jesus! “He will not speak on his own” (16:13). As Sinclair Ferguson comments: “He will not be known as he is in himself apart from Christ. Before the Spirit rests permanently on all the faithful children of God, he first must rest on the uniquely faithful Son of God.” (*The Holy Spirit*, 30). *What a friend we have in Jesus!*

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