

Easter Sunday
March 27, 2016
John 16:16-22

In Christ Jesus, our resurrected Lord and Savior, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

A few years back there was quite a popular song with the simple lyrics, "Don't worry. Be happy!" It has a catchy melody that was easy to sing along to. But did that song really make you happy. Perhaps for the moment. But could that song turn grief into joy? I doubt it.

Well today's lesson can be because it is our Savior's words that have the power to turn your grief, my grief into real, lasting joy. Or as someone said, "It will make your heart smile."

Our text this Easter morning is the last of our Savior's "I Tell You the Truth" statements. Our theme is this:

I TELL YOU THE TRUTH . . . YOUR SORROW WILL TURN TO JOY

Today is Easter. Of all the days of the year, our hearts ought to be grinning from artery to artery. The alleluias that have been removed for the six weeks of Lent have returned. Our mouths have been singing "Hallelujah, Hallelujah!" But does our heart always feel that way?

In our text Jesus told His disciples, **MOST ASSUREDLY, I TELL YOU THE TRUTH THAT YOU WILL WEEP AND LAMENT, BUT THE WORLD WILL REJOICE; AND YOU WILL BE SORROWFUL.**

Weep. Mourn. Grieve. Just a few hours after saying these words, that's exactly what Jesus sees going on among His followers. As Jesus stumbled to carry His cross, the daughters of Jerusalem wailed loudly and mourned for Him. When Jesus died we are told His followers beat their breasts in sorrow and went home. Mary Magdalene, that faithful follower of Jesus, where do we find her early Sunday morning? Wetting the empty tomb with her tears. Weeping uncontrollably, knowing that not only was Jesus dead, but now thinking someone had stolen and possibly desecrated His lifeless body. How did Jesus find the two disciples walking on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus? Sad, despairing, lost! How were the twelve doing on that Sunday? They were filled with fear and sadness behind locked doors.

Yes as our first point states:

I. YOU WILL WEEP, MOURN, AND GRIEVE FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

Why do the Scriptures show us such raw emotions? Because that's reality. If we ever have this delusion that the Christian life is one of carefree ease and happy all of the time, read the Scriptures and your delusion will soon be corrected. Christians hurt. We weep with sadness. We mourn over losses. We grieve over guilt. But the pages of Scripture don't have to tell us that, do they? No, in this case the pages of Scripture simply confirm what we already know and see in our own lives.

Your heart may be smiling today. You maybe woke up this morning and sang, "Awake, My Heart with Gladness" and "Welcome, Happy Morning!" But has that been the case every day since last Easter,

April 5, 2015? I can guarantee you, it won't be the case every day until next Easter.

What has caused our tears and sadness since last Easter? A loss of a job or a broken heart? The death of a grandparent or close friend? Are you still mourning over a loss from a few years back? What sin or guilt has caused you to grieve? The real question today isn't what pain we have or what's causing our grief and sadness. The question is, how will we deal with it?

Jesus had an answer for His disciples. Just prior to saying they would weep, mourn, and grieve, He said, **A LITTLE WHILE, AND YOU WILL NOT SEE ME; AND AGAIN A LITTLE WHILE, AND YOU WILL SEE ME, BECAUSE I GO TO THE FATHER.**" THEN *SOME* OF HIS DISCIPLES SAID AMONG THEMSELVES, "WHAT IS THIS THAT HE SAYS TO US, 'A LITTLE WHILE, AND YOU WILL NOT SEE ME; AND AGAIN A LITTLE WHILE, AND YOU WILL SEE ME'; AND, 'BECAUSE I GO TO THE FATHER?'" THEY SAID THEREFORE, "WHAT IS THIS THAT HE SAYS, 'A LITTLE WHILE'? WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HE IS SAYING." NOW JESUS KNEW THAT THEY DESIRED TO ASK HIM, AND HE SAID TO THEM, "ARE YOU INQUIRING AMONG YOURSELVES ABOUT WHAT I SAID, 'A LITTLE WHILE, AND YOU WILL NOT SEE ME; AND AGAIN A LITTLE WHILE, AND YOU WILL SEE ME'?"

Did you catch the key phrase? "**A LITTLE WHILE.**" Seven times within three verses the Holy Spirit inspires John to record those words: a little while. They must be pretty important. Jesus is telling them and us, "Take a step back. Look at the big picture. Whatever you've gone through; whatever you're going through; whatever you're going to go through, it won't last long. In a little while, it'll be over." That's not always easy to hear. We want immediate relief!

But Jesus has a different perspective than anyone else who's ever said those words. First of all, He's all-knowing. He knows how long our "little whiles" are going to be. For the disciples, He knew most of them wouldn't see Him after they abandoned Him in the garden. But He also knew He'd see them Sunday evening in the locked room. He knew exactly how long their little while would be. And He knows exactly how long our little whiles will be. He knows how long we'll suffer with our sickness. He knows how long our heart will ache. And He promises not to let us suffer beyond what we can bear. It will be just "a little while."

Not only is Jesus all-knowing, but He's also eternal, meaning He's got a much better grasp about how long our suffering really is in the whole scheme of things. An illness or suffering and pain may last 6 months, even a year or two, but in a lifetime of 75 to 80 years, that is less than 2% of one's life. Well, now consider our Savior's eternal perspective. He knows our troubles are light and momentary compared to the eternal glory that awaits us.

II. BUT YOUR SORROW WILL TURN TO JOY.

What a great ending to our text. **I TELL YOU THE TRUTH... BUT YOUR SORROW WILL BE TURNED INTO JOY.** That's how the passage ends. Not, "Your sorrow will be replaced by joy." But, "Your sorrow will be turned into joy." That is what Easter is all about. It takes a sad, seemingly hopeless situation and it turns it into joy. For the disciples, they mourned and grieved over the loss of their Savior. But when they saw Him again after that "little while" of sorrow and

grief, they realized that their Savior's death was a payment for their sins. In view of Easter, the cross and Jesus' death that caused them so much grief two days earlier turned into a source of joy for them.

Look what Easter does to the grave. There was Mary, crying at the tomb. But when her Savior stood next to her and called her by name, Easter turned that cold empty tomb into the rock of her faith, as it powerfully declared Jesus to be whom He claimed to be, the Son of God. Easter turned her grief into joy.

For the two Emmaus disciples seeing Jesus alive turned their saddened, grieving hearts into rejoicing hearts so that they ran all the way back to Jerusalem that night to tell the others.

But Easter didn't just change things for the disciples or Mary Magdalene and the other women at the tomb. It does it for you and for me also. Instead of the guilt and grief of seeing our sins nailed on the cross, Easter turns the cross into a gift as we are assured God accepted Christ's payment on our behalf. Instead of weeping at the grave of our believing loved ones, Easter turns our tears into drops that thank God for the blessings we enjoy on this earth and the sure assurance we have of being reunited with our loved ones where Jesus wipes away every tear from our eyes. Instead of lying awake at night fearing our own death, Easter turns our fears into a longing for a pleasant sleep where our souls enjoy heaven while we wait to be reunited with our glorified bodies on the Last Day. No matter how you look at it, Easter turns our sorrow into joy, just as Jesus said. Imagine that!

Jesus concludes our text with these words: **THEREFORE YOU NOW HAVE SORROW; BUT I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN AND YOUR HEART WILL REJOICE, AND YOUR JOY NO ONE WILL TAKE FROM YOU.** Nothing can take that joy away from us. Not our guilt over sin. Not our sorrow over loss. Not even death.

Christ is risen! May that put a smile in your heart today and always.

Hallelujah!

Amen.