

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 302  
Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21  
Today's verses: John 16:16-22  
Today's Topic: Sorrow Is Turned To Joy!  
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**John 16:16-22 MKJV** 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. (17) Then His disciples said to one another, What is this that He says to us, A little *while* and you will not see Me, and again a little and you will see Me? And, Because I go to the Father? (18) Therefore they said, What is this that He says, A little *while*? We do not know what He is saying. (19) Then Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and said to them, Do you seek answers with one another concerning this, because I said, A little *while* and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me? (20) Truly, truly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. And you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. (21) The woman has grief when she bears, because her hour has come. But when she brings forth the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, because of the joy that a man is born into the world. (22) And therefore you now have sorrow. But I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

The disciples were baffled by the cross. Jesus would vanish from their sight and their hopes as, within twelve hours of this Passover speech at the Last Supper, He would be tried and executed. Then a few days later He would rise from the dead.

Death followed by resurrection, sorrow followed by joy. This is often the Christian path. And the confusion of the disciples is mirrored in the confusion of "Everyman" - the common Christian believer.

We have this idea that life should keep on going up, from blessing to blessings, whereas it actually proceeds "from faith to faith". When life suddenly becomes sorrowful, when tragedy strikes, when confusion and loss overcome us - we are astounded. And that is normal. That is one thing about the disciples - they were very real and honest and in many respects were just normal human beings.

The betrayal by Judas, and the horrible death of their Master would be double blows to the heart - but in the end they would rejoice. Jesus plan for our lives is that in the end we will rejoice and that we will rejoice so greatly that all our sorrows will be forgotten. This is what He meant when He said:

"The woman has grief when she bears, because her hour has come. But when she brings forth the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, because of the joy that a man is born into the world. And therefore you now have sorrow. But I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

The death of Jesus would seem permanent but Jesus says "I will see you again" . Few tragedies are permanent - for we will see our loved ones in Christ again. Even our own death is not permanent - for we shall go to be with Christ and receive a spiritual body at the resurrection. Believers have passed from death to life. Thus faith in Christ makes all tragedies temporary and ensures that joy will win in the end.

Some human hurts are so deep that it does not seem possible that joy will win out in the end. But few griefs could be deeper than that of Mary at the cross. Yet she rejoiced in the end! An

illness, a divorce, a terrible injustice or a broken engagement can seem like a permanent and abiding sorrow but we must take even these to Jesus and ask Him to bring joy to us in the end.

It is possible to make an idol out our pain, to enshrine it within us, and to derive our meaning and sense of personhood from it and to make it the defining event or characteristic of our life. By taking their pain seriously the person feels as if they are taking themselves seriously and thus conferring honor on their existence. Yet this enshrining of pain can become emotionally crippling as well as socially deleterious.

The cure for this is true Christ-centered worship. Lets briefly look at Psalm 73:

**Psalms 73:1-28 CEV** (A psalm by Asaph.) God is truly good to Israel, especially to everyone with a pure heart. (2) But I almost stumbled and fell, (3) because it made me jealous to see proud and evil people and to watch them prosper. (4) They never have to suffer, they stay healthy, (5) and they don't have troubles like everyone else. (6) Their pride is like a necklace, and they commit sin more often than they dress themselves. (7) Their eyes poke out with fat, and their minds are flooded with foolish thoughts. (8) They sneer and say cruel things, and because of their pride, they make violent threats. (9) They dare to speak against God and to order others around. (10) God will bring his people back, and they will drink the water he so freely gives. (11) Only evil people would say, "God Most High cannot know everything!" (12) Yet all goes well for them, and they live in peace. (13) What good did it do me to keep my thoughts pure and refuse to do wrong? (14) I am sick all day, and I am punished each morning. (15) If I had said evil things, I would not have been loyal to your people. (16) It was hard for me to understand all this! (17) Then I went to your temple, and there I understood what will happen to my enemies. (18) You will make them stumble, never to get up again. (19) They will be terrified, suddenly swept away and no longer there. (20) They will disappear, Lord, despised like a bad dream the morning after. (21) Once I was bitter and brokenhearted. (22) I was stupid and ignorant, and I treated you as a wild animal would. (23) But I never really left you, and you hold my right hand. (24) Your advice has been my guide, and later you will welcome me in glory. (25) In heaven I have only you, and on this earth you are all I want. (26) My body and mind may fail, but you are my strength and my choice forever. (27) Powerful LORD God, all who stay far from you will be lost, and you will destroy those who are unfaithful. (28) It is good for me to be near you. I choose you as my protector, and I will tell about your wonderful deeds.

The Psalm writer - Asaph was deeply wounded in heart and so full of pain at the injustice of life that he says: "Once I was bitter and brokenhearted. I was stupid and ignorant, and I treated you as a wild animal would." So deep was his pain that he "almost stumbled and fell." But Asaph then goes to the Temple and suddenly realizes the fate of God's enemies and sees that they will be swept away and become "like a bad dream the morning after." Refocusing on God cured the pain of his heart!

In the end, after complaining long and loud about God's unfairness Asaph gets a new perspective and writes: "It is good for me to be near you. I choose you as my protector, and I will tell about your wonderful deeds.

Life is sometimes sad and confusing but God has not planned for it to remain that way forever. He will turn our sorrow into joy. Meanwhile we can move out of many of our sorrows by moving the focus off ourselves and onto Christ in true Christ-centered worship.

Blessings,

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