

Part 3: The Orienting Hope of the Cross

Tyler Velin | John 16:16-33

April 4, 2021

Welcome to our first in person Easter service in almost two years.

To be honest, as much as last Easter season broke my heart as we preached and sang to an empty warehouse, this Easter season snuck up on me. By God's grace Holy Week had become a really special time for me and my family but in the pace of schools opening back up, a long winter finally melting away, a 24/7 news cycle and the pace of life these past days felt more like an obligation and canned celebration than it has in years past.

If there's one thing the past 12 months have shown us is that our world is broken on all sorts of levels. It has been a disorienting season politically, economically and perhaps for many of us, spiritually. It can leave us asking the real question: "Is this all it there is?"

Life in this world is so disorienting at times and this is no different than it was during the days of Jesus. Today Jesus is going to speak into the confusion his own disciples are having and he's going to give them astounding hopes to draw from when life in this world is difficult.

Today what we are going to see in John 16 is the immense hope and peace Jesus' resurrection gives us in a chaotic world.

These hopes are hopes we need today, but they are hopes which we only have because of the events of Easter Sunday and the empty tomb. Resurrection Sunday changes everything, if only you would see what Jesus wants you to see in it.

If you're familiar at all with Christianity you probably know some sort of equation which looks like this: Faith and Repentance in Jesus equals eternal life. This is wonderfully true. But what is the benefit of eternal life in this life? How does the gospel which triumphed over the grave on resurrection Sunday impart to us meaningful hope, help and peace in a world which is far from Heaven?

This is what Jesus is going to show us today in three ways: **In Jesus we have Unshakable Joy, In Jesus we have the Love of the Father, In Jesus we have Overcome the World.**

We are going to begin today by looking at the context of Jesus' words in **John 16:16-18**.

When I was in college I took Spanish classes and in my second semester the professor just stopped speaking English and would only talk to us in Spanish. I found this to be difficult because if I didn't understand Spanish 101 Spanish, I certainly wouldn't understand Spanish 201 Spanish. So what I would do is whenever she would call on me I would just nod my head, smile and say, "Si."

This is what the disciples are doing with Jesus at this point in the story. Time and time again Jesus has been hinting at and explicitly saying that he was going to be killed and then rise again. This is what he meant when he said, "A little while and you'll see me no longer, and then you'll see me again."

The disciples are simply nodding their heads at what Jesus is saying, but then among themselves they are like, “Do you know what he’s talking about?”

But this is part of why this passage is so helpful on Easter Sunday. In the narrative of the book of John, this scene happens before Jesus was crucified and resurrected for our sins. But something profound is happening here and that is that Jesus is teaching them about the hope they have, and how their world will be different after the events of Easter.

In a world which at the moment isn’t making sense for the disciples, Jesus is showing them how his death, burial and resurrection will give them clarity and hope. Isn’t this a wonderful picture into Jesus’ heart?

Sometimes our experience in this world seems to conflict with what we think following Jesus looks like, or who Jesus even is. But here we see Jesus doesn’t want faux disciples trying to squeeze out confidence when there is none. Instead he wants to speak into our confusion and our doubts with the enduring hope of the gospel.

The disciples here are at best confused, at worst fearful and anxious and yet the Jesus who knows their hearts wants to encourage them. He wants to help you and I make sense of things that don’t compute in our minds. How can we make sense of a world which seems so broken and painful? How can we make sense of a God who promises to be near to us but who seems to be far from us?

Jesus begins to answer these questions starting in: **John 16:19-22**.

So here we see our first reality of the resurrection this morning: **In Jesus we have Unshakeable Joy**.

The first paradox the death and resurrection answers is that God often uses incredible sorrow to produce incredible joy.

When we look at the events of the gospel we see that following Jesus not only means that we might encounter seasons of sorrow, in this case the disciples mourning over the death of Jesus. But it might also look like in the face of our sorrow, the world is profiting off of their own joy!

We might in our sorrow look and see the joy of the world and say, “What can I do to get that?”

This was the experience of the disciples at the death of Jesus. The disciples wept, lamented, and hid in the shadows as the world rejoiced.

The Jews delighted in the crucifixion of Jesus, even boasting in it. You can imagine what Satan himself thought of this event. He had finally killed the Son of God.

Sinful men and a scheming Satan delighted in the death of the one who was the friend of sinners. Meanwhile, Jesus disciples stood confused, mourning, and alone.

But then Jesus says that the sorrow of the disciples will be turned into joy.

To help his disciples understand this he uses the illustration of child birth.

I've been part of four child births. I don't mean to sensationalize any of the process, but I can define the labor portion of child birth as "not fun." And that's just from the guy holding the ice chips.

But despite how painful the experience is, we find the experience worthwhile. In fact many of us go back for seconds, and thirds, and in this church, sevenths. Why? Because there is life because of the pain.

Look at how Jesus puts it: "But when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish for joy that a human being has been born into this world."

Jesus is acknowledging the pain that he will experience, he's acknowledging the pain that his disciples will experience, but his promise to them is that at the end there is joy in the life which will follow.

Part of the curse Adam and Eve received on account of their sin was pain in child birth. Every pain you hear about in the delivery room is a reminder that this world and life in it is painful. It is difficult. It is in need of redemption.

And here, in real time are the labor pains of the cross which promise the redemption our discomfort and sorrow demand.

Here Jesus Christ is going to die, and he's going to die an account of our death. We are dead in our sins, every one of us. Just as a child in the womb has no chance of being born without the labor of the mother, so too will we never be made alive apart from these labor pains of Christ Jesus.

Jesus died because our sins demand us to die. He died because we deserved death. He was going to die and rise again for the sake of bringing back new life to all who would believe in him.

Look at what Jesus has said he would do: **John 10:10**, look at the promise of the Apostle Paul, **2 Corinthians 5:17**, or **Ephesians 2:4-5**.

The paradox of the gospel is backwards of the paradox of the world. World says that joy must come first and fast. How backwards a life of sin is from what Jesus promises in the gospel?

For those of you reading in our Bible reading plan this week we encountered the tragic story of Ammon and Tamar. Ammon was so infatuated with Tamar that it made him sick, all he could think about, the only thing that promised joy was to have her in an intimate way. But when he deceitfully and violently acts to get his way with her he is not left with satisfaction and joy but instead emptiness, hatred and keen sense that everything he thought sex would provide him still stood laughing at him in the distance. He had his joy for but a moment but it left him empty.

Such is the promise of sin. But the promise of the gospel is sorrow and then joy.

The gospel starts with a keen realization that there is a God and it's not you. The gospel starts with a close sense of your sin and the depth of darkness in your heart. The gospel starts with you realizing that you have spent all the days prior to that moment of conversion living for a glory that will die and a joy that fades. Sorrow of worship not offered, obedience not cherished and Christ not treasured. Sorrow that nothing you could ever do could change that reality.

But joy that everything Jesus did can change that reality. Joy that in this Christ who went away and returned that you can not only have your sins dealt with but on the other side of this atonement is life. New life! Abundant life! Unending life! Joyful life!

Look at what Jesus says again in **John 16:22**.

You will have sorrow, but what you will see in Jesus brings you a joy which no one can take away from you. Think of how fragile many of our joys are in this world. But here is an eternally un-loseable joy which comes when you see Jesus for who he really is.

So the question is: “When is the time when the disciples will see Jesus like this and have this joy?” At this point in the narrative it is some future event. If you pick up a commentary on this text many scholars debate which moment of infinite happiness this is.

Is it when Jesus rises again and shows himself to Mary? Is it when the resurrected Jesus shows himself to the majority of the disciples in a home, or a smaller group of them on the shore of Tiberius? Is it when he presents his resurrected body to 500 witnesses at once? Is it when he commissioned his followers and ascended into heaven? Is it when he sent his Holy Spirit at Pentecost? Is it when he comes again to establish his kingdom and finally save those who are his?

The privileged problem of Christianity is having to choose which death destroying, life giving, joy sustaining event is the one which causes us to rejoice abidingly. When we see the implications of new life flowing from Christ’s death in our place, we have seen Jesus like this. From that point on every encounter we have with Jesus is this kind of encounter.

The Christian life is a life buoyed by joy. Joy seen first in the kernel of Christ which fell and died and seen ultimately in the Kingdom which has grown across languages, continents, pandemics, catastrophes and centuries.

Yet despite this joy which cannot be taken away, we wrestle still with life in a difficult and often joyless world don't we?

This is why Jesus teaches the disciples his about his next resurrection gift: **In Jesus we have the Love of the Father.**

Read with me **John 16:23-28**.

So Jesus begins with a bit of a theology lesson for the disciples. Up until this point Jesus has not taught or asked his disciples to pray in his name. Why is that? Well, because they can just talk to Jesus. He's right there.

But because Jesus will come back to life, and then ascend to the Father, there will be a day where we will pray in Jesus name because he will be with the Father.

Which here we see a core truth affirmed again that Jesus is himself God. Jesus is not God the Father, and God the Father is not Jesus, but Jesus and the Father are equally God.

To pray in Jesus name, is to pray in the name of God. In a world where we often feel alone this is a central truth. This is a truth which is surrounded by the whole ecosystem of the Trinity. Right before this passage Jesus tells his disciples that he's going away so that they might be filled with the Holy Spirit, and here he tells them that on account of his work they also have direct access through him to God the Father.

You see the Israelites and Jews always had to approach God through some sort of intermediary whether it was a priest, or a sacrifice, or the temple structure itself. But now that Jesus has come, died, and rose again to the Father, Jesus becomes our forever intermediary who is God himself.

That's why Jesus says that odd qualifier that when you pray, it's not that I'm going to hear your prayer and then ask the Father on your behalf. That would imply that prayer to Jesus is distinct from praying to the Father. But instead we see this immensely profound truth in **John 16:27**.

When we believe in the name of Jesus, and we pray in the name of Jesus we are heard by the Father himself and he will delight to answer us why? Because he loves us.

Growing up did you ever have a friend which you often brought into your home that you knew your parents only tolerated? They let them come and eat at the table even though they were often obnoxious, rude or disrespectful? But they let them come because they loved you, their child.

This might seem like how we approach God through Jesus. But the reality in this text is actually far more astounding. God loves those who come with his son. Why? Because the Son has given his brothers and sisters his own righteousness. God loves us as his son because we are robed in the riches of his son. God loves us as his son because we see in John that all who come to his Son are also given to the Son by the Father himself.

To come to God through the person of Jesus is to come fully loved and cherished by the Father himself. John Calvin comments on this astounding truth when he says this: **"This is a remarkable passage, by which we are taught that we have the heart of the Heavenly Father, as soon as we have placed before him the name of the Son."**

This is the beauty of the gospel, we entered into the love of the Father by the grace of faith in the Son.

So what do we do with this love when things are difficult? We get to ask of the Father. Not only does God love us like his son, but just as any parent is for their own child, God the Father is for us. He desires to show his love for us by answering our prayers according to his will.

Jesus says, "Ask in my name so that your joy may be full!" When life is hard prayer exists for our joy to carry our needs to this loving Father and to make our requests known to him.

In the day where we see Jesus and the life he give to us we also see the love of the Father and the way in which he desires to help us in our weaknesses.

At this the disciples think they understand the formula. Jesus gives them life, they now can get everything they want from the Father so life is good. That's what they imply in their answer to Jesus: **John 16:29-30**.

But Jesus knows the fight for joy is not always easy. He knows that there will be times where joy seems like an eternity away. There will be times where it seems the loving Father is refusing to give us what we need. And in those moments Jesus wants to remind his disciples, that even in the face of such tribulation, there is still peace.

This is Jesus' final teaching on the resurrection in this text: **In Jesus we have Overcome the World.**

Read with me: **John 16:31-33.**

Jesus challenges the confidence of his disciples by saying that even though they believe, in the hours which will come they will scatter.

In other words Jesus almost says to them: "I know you think you believe this, but there will be a time in the next few hours where your belief in this will be put to the test. But now I'm teaching you this so that in these moments where it feels like your faith might fail you, you will have peace in me."

Jesus in fact predicted what is going to immediately follow in John 18 where he is arrested and his disciples abandon him. But what's profound here is that Jesus says, I will not be alone, for the Father is with me.

Even when Jesus walked into the most painful and isolating experience in the history of our world, he knew he was not alone. He knew that God the Father was with him. Near to him. In love with him.

But then Jesus turns and extends that hope to his disciples. He says, "I say these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world."

In this world we will have trial, we will have tribulation. We will have seasons where it seems we might abandon Jesus or that Jesus has abandoned us. We might feel that the world is all the joy of the sinner and only the sorrow of the saint. But here Jesus wants you to take heart, he wants you to be encouraged he wants you to find peace in him.

Peace in that he has overcome the world.

We can look at this in two ways. First, the same way in which Jesus was never alone in the moment he was most alone is now true for us who are in Christ Jesus. The work of Jesus has overcome your sinful separation to God the Father so that your loving God is always with you.

In your wrestling with doubt and growth, God is with you. In your fight against sin, God is with you. In the challenge of your home, God is with you. In your frantic pace of your job, God is with you.

But secondly, we know that in Jesus, and in the face of tribulation, the resurrection shows that Jesus has indeed overcome the world.

What does this mean? It means that we know for those who hope in Christ Jesus sorrow, tribulation and pain in this world will one day finally and ultimately end. It means our greatest problem has been finally, ultimately, and eternally solved when Jesus took the punishment for our sins. It means that even we experience searing loss and death itself we will have lost nothing for the things of this world have been overcome in Jesus Christ.

This week I felt the weight of the world. This week on social media I saw slanderous and terrible things written about Christ and his followers. I saw a public figure in the secular space post a Good Friday tweet and the comments below it were offensive and harsh. This week I wrestled with being downcast and temptations in my own heart. This week my wife had a conversation with a conservative, Christian, Asian-American friend who is looking to move to Missoula but whose first question was: How will people treat my Asian looking kids. This week four people including a nine-year old boy were shot and killed in California. This week the remains of a kidnapped and murdered missionary were found Mali. This week a police officer in our Nation's Capital was killed and the Capital locked down due to a gunman.

Brothers and sisters if our joy is limited to the rejoicing of this world without the labor pains of Christ we have so much sorrow and no promise of joy.

But look at the hope we have in the overcoming of Christ, hope which gives us deep joy in the face of painful tribulation:

2 Timothy 1:10: “Which has now been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

1 Corinthians 15:53-56, “For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality then shall come to pass what is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:4, For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Revelation 21:1-5.

In this gospel of Jesus' and his resurrection we have deep wells of joy. The tomb is empty so that our hope may not be. So let us together see Jesus with eyes of faith and take heart in him.