

"When I'm Gone... You'll have Indestructible Joy!"

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Date: 05 March 2023

Preacher: Martin Ayers

[0 : 00] The Bible reading today comes from page 1084 in the Pew Bible. It's from John chapter 16, beginning in verse 16 and reading up to the end of the chapter.

So John chapter 16, starting in verse 16.

Jesus went on to say, in a little while you will see me no more, then after a little while you will see me. At this some of his disciples said to one another, what does he mean by saying, in a little while you will see me no more, then after a little while you will see me, and because I am going to the Father.

They kept asking, what does he mean by a little while? We don't understand what he is saying. Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, are you asking one another what I meant when I said, in a little while you will see me no more, then after a little while you will see me?

Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn when the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child is pain because her time has come, but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

[1 : 30] So with you, now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice. And no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything.

Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this type of language, but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name.

I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world.

Now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father. Then Jesus' disciples said, Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things, and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions.

[2 : 38] This makes us believe that you came from God. Do you now believe, Jesus replied. A time is coming, and in fact has come, when you will be scattered, each to your own home.

You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble.

But take heart, I have overcome the world. Thanks, David, for reading. It would be a help to me if you could keep your Bibles open at John chapter 16.

That would be great. And let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Let's pray. So, gracious Father, we thank you for Jesus' words, words to equip his disciples for life after he is gone.

We pray that you would give us ears to hear your word, heads that can understand, hands and hearts that are willing to change and follow you. For we ask in Jesus' name.

[3 : 45] Amen. We can find an outline inside the notice sheet, if you'd find that helpful. Most of us would agree that happiness is what we're after in life.

And the theme for this morning's Bible passage is joy. Joy is different to happiness, but they're not unrelated. It's just that you can be happy in a fleeting way.

You can be happy because you're at a party. You can be happy almost in a giddy way, because of how things are around you in the moment. Joy is something deeper, and something less affected by our situation and our circumstances.

So, in that sense, joy is actually more valuable than happiness. We all want to know where we can find joy for life. And it's important that we set our sights on the right things for our joy.

If you set your sight on something for your joy that then you could lose, then you're in a precarious situation. If you get your ultimate joy from running or from being in a sports team, and then you get injured or your knees pack in, it could be devastating.

[4 : 54] If you pin your ultimate hopes for joy on family, what do you do when there's family breakdown? Or a family member lets you down? Or there's a serious health issue? Lots of us set ourselves ambitions in life because we think achievement will give us joy.

But even for people who truly achieve everything they've always dreamed of, the joy can be fleeting. 20 years ago, England were actually better at rugby than Scotland back in those days, and they won the World Cup, and Johnny Wilkinson scored the key points to win it.

And he talked about the moment when the Hooter went to signal the end that full-time was gone, and he had the ball. So he knew as he kicked it out, that as the ball was in the air, that everything he'd always dreamed of had been achieved, that the next thing that would happen was the World Cup.

Then he says these extraordinary words. He says this, The problem with reaching the peak of the tallest mountain in your dreams is that the path can only wind down the other side further and further away from this idyllic moment.

Isn't that extraordinary? So if even reaching the very top leaves you with a brightness that fades, where will we find joy, lasting joy? Well, we've been in this series looking at how Jesus prepared his first 11 disciples for him leaving them.

[6 : 40] He equips them, he promises them his spirit who will come to be with them, and he urges them to line up their lives behind his agenda, bearing fruit as they connect as branches to him, the true vine.

And now he says that his disciples will experience true joy, joy filled full. In verse 20, he says the joy is inevitable. If you have a look, Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices.

You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. And this is a joy that can't be taken away by our circumstances.

Jesus has given lots of reasons why Christians should expect sadness and sorrow. There will be sadness at opposition from the world. Sadness at feeling you don't truly belong in the world.

In chapter 16, verse 2, he warned them that there would come a time when anyone who kills them would think they are offering a service to God. Then there's just the sadness of living in a profoundly broken world.

[7 : 46] Jesus promises a future where he will bring an end to all suffering and pain. But being a Christian is certainly no free pass from suffering in the world. Even though when you become a Christian, the sovereign God is for you, still anything that can happen to anyone in the world could happen to you as a Christian.

At the same time, we hear this morning that the Christian life is not about just holding on tight, gritting your teeth through pain and misery and difficulty until we get to glory.

Rather, Jesus says here to his disciples in verse 22, you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy. That's the realistic expectation for the Christian life.

So how do we find this indestructible joy even in a world where we might find that we encounter great sorrow? Well, our first point is this. You can rejoice that Jesus died for you.

You can see the big idea in the first few verses is that Jesus will be gone for a little while. It's almost funny how much John uses the phrase. Just look at it again from verse 16. Jesus went on to say, in a little while, you will see me no more.

[9 : 02] And then after a little while, you will see me. At this, some of his disciples said to one another, what does he mean by saying, in a little while, you will see me no more. And then after a little while, you will see me.

And because I'm going to the Father, they kept asking, what does he mean by a little while? We don't understand what he's saying. Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this. So he said to them, are you asking one another what I meant when I said, in a little while, you will see me no more.

And then after a little while, you will see me. We get the big idea, John. He's going away for a little while. But what is the idea? Well, he's describing the gap between the next day, when he will face the humiliating nightmare and apparent defeat of crucifixion, and the third day, the Sunday, when

he will appear to his disciples again, victorious.

And the key for us, understanding what will cause their joy, is the language of verse 20, halfway through. In verse 20, he says, very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. So that's when he's killed. The world is the world standing against God. It's rejoicing at his death. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

[10:22] So it's not, you will grieve, but then something else will happen, and that will give you joy, and that joy will replace your grief. Rather, the very same event that causes you grief will become for you joy.

For when the disciples see Jesus again, he will say to them in John chapter 20, peace be with you. And with the help of the Spirit, whom he's promised he will send them, the 11 apostles start to piece together and grasp the significance of what his death and resurrection has achieved for them. There was a Christian writer some centuries ago, John Owen, who wrote of the death of death in the death of Christ. In other words, God used the death, the death of Jesus, to defeat death. How so? Well, death hangs over us as humanity. We live our lives in fear of death. We ignore death. We don't like people talking about death. If you talk about death a lot, people stop wanting to spend time with you.

But Jesus is the one man who has ever lived, who didn't deserve death. So when he died, the gate of the prison cell of this suffering world was flung open by him, leaving us able to follow him through and out, away from our captivity to the fear of death.

[11:40] And how did he break the chains of death? Well, the Bible says that death is a curse on our world because of sin. But when Jesus was lifted upon the cross, he bore the curse of God, the curse we deserve, so that that curse could be lifted from the world and we could have forgiveness and peace with God.

And on Wednesday morning, we'll have the funeral for Moira Campbell from our church who died last week. And when I walk into the room in front of the men carrying her coffin, I'm able to say the words that Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me will live even though he dies. And whoever believes in me will never die. And because Jesus has borne the penalty for our sin when he died for us on the cross, it means that the spiritual life that he has won for us starts right away.

He said in John chapter 5 verse 24, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life.

So the picture Jesus gives us of the disciples enduring the anguish of seeing their Savior die and then the joy over his death is the picture of having a baby in verse 21.

[13:03] If you just have a look. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come. But when her baby is born, she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

So again, we see it, don't we? The very same thing that brings the woman anguish, giving birth, then brings her joy. I've got three children.

I've been there at the birth of all three of them. I think we've got at least four quite expectant mums here. So I won't go into the details. But my goodness, seeing someone go through that amount of pain to push out a baby is a shocking thing.

It is shocking. And so was that grief for the disciples to see Judas Iscariot, who's been with them that evening at dinner, to see him later that night use a case to hand over the Savior who had done nothing but love them, to see Jesus, who will judge the world, be handed over to a courtroom that will commit injustice against him in a false trial, to see him, the peacemaker, before an angry mob, and then led in his human weakness to Golgotha, where they drove nails through his hands and feet.

But that agony for the disciples is turned into joy when they grasp that he did this for them and for you and me to offer us and win for us peace with God so that they discover that Good Friday really is good.

[14:49] It is good news of great joy that Jesus has died. And Jesus invites us to build on that joy of knowing he died for you by pressing into what he has won for us in access to God.

So if you look at verse 23, in that day, you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Until now, you have not asked for anything in my name. And I guess that's because Jesus has been with them. So they haven't prayed to God in his name because he's there. But when he's risen and ascended, verse 24, ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.

So this isn't a free pass to ask for anything we might want for our own agenda. The prayers we're urged to pray are framed by asking for things in Jesus' name.

And that's more than just a kind of pattern or a phrase to just habitually add to the end of our prayer. It's about praying in light of who Jesus is, in light of his will, praying in light of his character and what he has revealed about his mission for the world.

[16:04] So from what we've seen in recent weeks, we could be encouraged by Jesus' promise here to ask the Father boldly for others and for ourselves that God would be at work in our lives fulfilling his purposes.

That he would keep me in the vine, help me to remain in Jesus. That he would grow fruit on us, the fruit of joyful obedience.

That he would help us keep Jesus' words in us so that we bear fruit. And clearly, Jesus wants to raise our expectations for the effectiveness of a praying life here.

He's very bold, isn't he? That we should pray in Jesus' name. We don't leave things to God and think, well, he's sovereign and he'll just do what he'll do. What's the point in praying?

Rather, in some mysterious way, God has ordained it so that we, his people, moved by his spirit to pray in line with his will, will pray prayers to God continually that he will respond to with action, with answered prayer, that will change things because we prayed.

[17:20] And he links that life of prayer to our joy at the end of verse 24. Jesus says to us, to them and to us, ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.

The privilege has been earned for us by his death for us. So that's our first point. You can rejoice that Jesus died for you. Secondly, Jesus says, you can rejoice that the Father loves you.

From verse 25, the theme of Jesus' words changes to talking about his Father. Just look at that with me. Verse 25, he says at the end there, I will tell you plainly about my Father.

Verse 26, he says, I will ask the Father. And then in verse 27, the Father himself. Verse 28, I came from the Father and now I'm leaving the world and going back to the Father.

What does Jesus want us to know about the Father that will be a source of joy? It's the Father's love. Let's pick things up again in verse 25. Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language, but will tell you plainly about my Father.

[18:36] In that day, you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.

So look at the precious clarity here. Verse 27, know the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

Sometimes we can feel confident of Jesus' love for us. He came into the world. He died for us. But we might fail to connect that revelation of God's character to the Father and how he looks on us. Instead, we maybe fall into having a view of God the Father as disappointed with us. Or worse, what if the Father's still raging at us?

But we're okay because if we hide behind Jesus, Jesus might be able to calm the Father down. And Jesus says here, no, the Father himself loves you.

[19:41] We've had situations at home where the kids want something and they think I'll say no, so they go and ask their mom. It's not always that way around. But you see that with children, don't you, sometimes, that they'll pick who they ask for something because they think, well, one parent won't want to give that to me, but the other one is a bit more generous, so I'll ask them.

Sometimes, do we think of Jesus and the Father like that? Jesus is the generous one. He understands me. He's sympathetic. Look how he treated people. If I talk to him, he might be able to just talk around that harsh father and the father might give in.

Well, Jesus anticipates that we will think like that about his father and so he gives us the glorious clarity of verse 26. I'm not saying that I will ask the father on your behalf.

No, the father himself loves you. He loves you because you've loved me and believe that I came from God. And in the wider picture, we love and believe in Jesus because the father loves us.

That may even be what Jesus means there when he says the father loves you because you've loved me. In the wider picture, the reason we love Jesus is because the father loved us first and he sent Jesus and he sent the spirit that we might believe in Jesus.

[21 : 07] The father loved us before we loved him. He set his love on us. And it means if you're a Christian, whatever happens, God the father loves you.

We shouldn't be surprised to see that it's news like that that would bring us true joy in the world. There's been a major research study led by Harvard University over many years and they published findings in January just a few weeks ago.

It was about what leads to happiness. And as they published the findings, obviously there are some material factors that can lead to happiness. There are happier places to live like Galashiels, apparently, Hexham, even Perth and Stirling, apparently, in Scotland.

But the years of thorough research say that ultimately the single biggest impact on our human happiness is the quality of our relationships.

The authors wrote this, good relationships keep us happier, healthier, and help us live longer. This is true across the lifespan and across cultures.

[22 : 17] You want to be happy? You need a relationship in your life that is consistent, trusted, deep, loving, dependable. But what a difference it makes to really take hold of the promise here that if I trust Jesus today, God the Father loves me.

So that when we want to pray, we're not walking into the room where God is, hiding behind Jesus, saying, will you ask Him? He won't want to see me. He doesn't think much of me.

No, God the Father really loves you. He loved you before you loved Him. And He loved you knowing every way you would ever fall short. What could you do with that assurance from Jesus this week?

What about when you wake up in the morning and you feel in despair? Or you wake up in the early hours of the morning, worried, or burdened, or angry?

What about saying to yourself your own name? God the Father made you. He planned for you.

[23 : 27] And He really does love you. I don't know what kind of experience you've had of fatherhood from your own dad. I don't know whether it's been a very positive influence in your life, or it's been a disappointing, painful relationship, or it's been an absence and you've not known your own dad.

But whatever that experience has been, it is wonderful to find Jesus assures us if you trust in Him, His eternal Father is your heavenly Father and He loves you with a strong, dependable love.

So we've heard that when you trust in Christ, you can rejoice that Jesus died for you. You can rejoice that the Father loves you. Thirdly, and more briefly, you can rejoice that Jesus' victory covers all your failings.

The disciples get this sudden light bulb moment and it gives them this self-confidence. If you have a look at verse 30, He just said to them, there will come a time when I'll speak to you plainly and not figuratively.

And then they say in verse 29, now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Verse 30, now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions.

[24 : 48] This makes us believe that you came from God. So they sound as if they're saying, Jesus, we're all set. We've got it. We've heard these four chapters of teaching. We can go and be your warriors now.

You can depend on us, Jesus. But within hours, they will be brought face to face with the reality of their own failings. They won't even be able to stay awake when Jesus prays in agony in the garden. And He has to walk this road without them. So look at verse 31. Do you now believe? Jesus replied. A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered.

Each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone for my Father is with me. And we see that happen.

It was promised through the prophet Zechariah 500 years before. They will be scattered. When the men come with torches to arrest the light of the world, His disciples flee into the darkness.

[25 : 53] But then He says, verse 33, I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. So why is this news in particular a source of peace?

Well if Jesus hadn't told them here that they would desert Him, they might think after they fail they've burnt their bridges. There's no way back because they denied Him.

But Jesus wants them to know that He always knew that that's what they would do. He always knew that this rescue mission is a mission that only He and the Father will do. He knew it when He chose

them.

He knew it when He said to them, go and bear fruit. And that news reassures them and us because it reminds us that the rescue mission of the Father, sending the Son to the cross is something that we do not add anything to.

It's not like the Scottish Help to Buy scheme where the government says we'll give you this much to help you and you have to pull something together and make up the rest. That's often what people on the outside of church think that this is all about the Christian life that we believe that God has taken things so far and we've got to make up the rest.

[27 : 10] But Jesus is helping us rejoice in knowing that our peace with God is His work from beginning to end and we contribute nothing because it means we can't mess it up.

We heard earlier from Malcolm and Chris didn't we what that's meant to them that both of them came to a point of recognizing that they fell short even of their own standards let alone God's standards that their best efforts to be good enough for God had failed and then they came to see Jesus' death on the cross as great joy because they saw it's a comprehensive victory over sin that rescues me and I contribute nothing.

So Jesus ends with a summary in verse 33 I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace in this world you will have trouble we heard about that trouble two weeks ago the trouble of the world against Jesus persecuting His people but take heart I have overcome the world and we can take heart because it's wonderful news news that brings great joy that by Jesus' death and resurrection and sending His Spirit you can rejoice that Jesus died because He died for you giving you access to God in prayer you can rejoice that the Father really does love you He loved you before you loved Him He loves you today whatever you carried with you as you came into church and He will love you whatever happens and you can rejoice that Jesus' victory as He was lifted upon that cross is a victory that He and His Father won to which you contribute nothing and it means you can't blow it well let's have a moment of quiet to reflect on God's words and then I'll pray Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Loving Heavenly Father we come to you in prayer reassured by Jesus of your love and we ask in His name that His words this morning will remain in us may our grasp of them deepen so that even when there is sadness and sorrow in our lives we, your people will be marked by joy deep, lasting overflowing joy that Jesus died and rose for us that you love us and that nothing can thwart your rescue plan and we ask for this joy not just for our good but for your glory
Amen