

John 16:16-33
(Isaiah 59:20-60:3; Ephesians 6:10-13)
“Take Heart; I Have Overcome the World”

Introduction

We come to the end of John’s record of the final teaching Jesus gave to his disciples before his arrest, trial, crucifixion and victory over death, and the teaching ends as it began: with the disciples confused and wondering what Jesus is talking about. In chapter fourteen, they asked, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (14:5). Now they ask, “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’? ... We do not know what he is talking about” (16:17-18).

They are sad and confused because he has told them that he is leaving and that where he is going, they cannot yet follow. But he has been insisting that it is better for them that he go away, because if he goes away, he will send his Spirit to live in them, uniting them to him in the same kind of union that he has with his Father, the living God. This is the essence of our salvation: union with Christ. The incarnation continues in God’s people, as we take up Jesus’ life and ministry, and give God skin in which to walk the earth and do his will.

If you are *not* yet a follower of Jesus because you think that he offers easy answers and easy times, then I would encourage you to listen carefully to this text. If you *are* a follower of Jesus because you think that he offers easy answers and easy times, I would also encourage you to listen to this text. Jesus always speaks truth: sometimes it is confusing, at times even frightening, but his words prepare us for life as we find it and as it finds us, sweeping us, sometimes in a single day, from the heights of joy to the depths of grief, swinging us from hope to despair and back again.

Jesus never minces words, never pretends that life will be easy or that those who follow him will get a free pass out of hard times. In fact, he promises suffering to those who follow him. But he also promises a life rich with meaning, a life where all that we do has eternal significance, a life of intimate loving friendship with the living God and with one another, and the promise of fellowship with him and one another in the new heavens and new earth of the age to come.

So here he answers their final question with three promises of God’s provision in the places of life where we are most tempted to turn away and reject his call to discipleship, three promises that don’t take us out of life or prevent us from facing the same struggles and cares that all humans face, but that offer to take the broken places and make them something beautiful for his glory and for our good.

Look with me this morning at the Jesus’ final lesson offered to his followers before he was “wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5).

Body

- 1. He promises us joy in the times of sorrow that will surely come (16:19-24).**

The key: Praying in union with Christ (16:24).

- 2. He promises us clarity in the times of confusion that will surely come (25-30).**

The key: Listening in union with Christ (16:25&27).

- 3. He promises us peace in the times of trouble that will surely come (16:31-33).**

The key: Living in union with Christ (16:33).

Conclusion

What is it that you are facing today that is holding you back from trusting and following Jesus?

Is it grief so deep and piercing that you think that life can never again be filled with joy and laughter? Hear the good news that Christ brings joy to wounded hearts, healing to those broken by life, a new start to those who have given up.

Or are you confused and wondering whether it is even worth asking the questions that rob you of your sleep and of your peace? Hear the good news that to those who ask their questions, not to try to keep God at arm's length, but because they long to know the truth, to them Christ brings the clarity given to those who have his Spirit living in them.

Or is it, rather, the trials and troubles that come from the world around you? Are you feeling harassed and helpless by a world that demands everything from you, but gives so little in return? Hear the good news that Christ has overcome the world, and if you are in Christ, his victory is yours as well, and the world will become for you the theater in which you experience the life of Christ flowing out through you, as you give your life, your talents, your possessions, for the life of the world.

Jesus' final word to us – before he turned to face his Father in prayer for us, and then turned to face his cross in sacrifice for us – was simply this: “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (16:33).

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