

September 26/27, 2020

A Little While

These Things are Written that You May Believe Series

John 16: 16-33

Pastor Bryan Clark

“When will this service be over?” In...*a little while*. “When are we going to get there?” In...*a little while*. “When can I open my presents?” In...*a little while*. Three words we’re very familiar with. Sometimes, though, the questions are more difficult. “When will the pain ever stop?” “When will daddy come home?” “It feels like it’s been night for so long. When will the sun ever come up again?” Jesus offers three little words, that if we understand what He’s saying, it will give us what we need to get through the most difficult moments in life.

If you have a Bible, turn with us to the Gospel of John, Chapter 16. If you’re visiting with us, we’re working our way through the Gospel of John. The text this morning is really the last teaching text that Jesus will offer His disciples before He’s to be arrested and crucified. We pick it up in verse 16:

“A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me.” (*NASB, John 16:16)

Those words are so significant that they are repeated three times in a very short text. There are a few commentators that believe “...**you will no longer see me,**” is a reference to the ascension of Christ, and then, “...**you will see me again,**” to the return of Christ, but my opinion would be that makes no sense based on both the grammar and the context of the conversation. Almost all commentators agree it’s a reference to the arrest, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus, “...**you will no longer see me,**” and the resurrection of Jesus, “...**you will see me again.**” This is quite confusing to the disciples. Verse 17:

Some of His disciples then said to one another, “What is this thing He is telling 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’?” So they were saying, What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is talking about. (Vs. 17-18)

The grammar there would indicate this was something they were asking again, and again, and again. In other words, among themselves they kept saying, “We don’t know what He’s talking about.” You can hear the frustration in their words. They can’t make sense of what Jesus is saying. It’s not hard to understand this. The tension in Jerusalem must have been extremely high. Their lives were in so much danger. Jesus has said that He’s leaving. They’re fearful; they’re confused, and they cannot figure out, “What is He talking about?” We know the storyline. We know what’s coming. We know what’s coming is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, but they didn’t know that. As a matter of fact, they had no category to begin to process what was about to happen. They had no concept of a Messiah that was about to be arrested, that was about to be tortured, that was about to be executed, that would be buried, and in three days rise again. How could they possibly understand any of this? So they’re frustrated with what Jesus is saying. Verse 19:

Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me.’? Truly, truly, (We've learned in the Gospel of John that's the flag for, “Listen up; this is going to be really, really important.”) I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. (Vs. 19-20)

So Jesus tells them that in a little while, they **will weep and lament**, both very strong Greek words that have to do with grief over someone who has died. But He adds, “While you will be grieving and lamenting, **the world will rejoice.**” The **world** in this context refers to the *religious Jews*. It's difficult enough to deal with the loss of someone who is dearly loved. Can you imagine being in that level of grief, while at the same time others are cheering and celebrating that this one you have loved is dead? That's what Jesus is saying. But He tells them that their **grief will be turned to joy**. The language here is very important. He doesn't say, “You'll be grieving; then something else wonderful will happen, and you will be joyful.” The language is very precise: “*The very thing that's causing you to grieve will be the thing that causes you to rejoice.*” He then illustrates that in verse 21:

Whenever a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world.

So for a woman who is pregnant, **her hour has come** means it's time to deliver the child. It will require pain, but she will not remember the anguish when the child is born, **because of the joy that a child has been born into the world**. You can imagine this scene which is common of a woman in pain and agony, birthing a child. But suddenly, in a moment the child is born and laid on her chest, immediately she goes from deep anguish to unimaginable joy. Jesus says *she will remember the anguish no more because of the joy over a child that has been born into the world*. This is the only way any woman in this room would ever have more than one child (*laughter*) is that the joy of the child has replaced the anguish and the pain that was felt. Verse 22:

Therefore, you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

In a little while they will lament and weep. They will experience deep anguish. But a little while after that, they will see Him again, and what happened between when He leaves and He returns will be so utterly magnificent that the anguish will be replaced with a joy that is so *powerful no one can take it away*.

What Jesus was referring to is His disciples were so confused about what was happening. When Jesus would be arrested and tortured and crucified, they would be in such anguish, they would weep, and they would lament the horror of what has happened. But three days later, Jesus would rise from the dead, and He will explain to them, and for the first time they will finally understand, “This is what it's all been about.” In that *little while*, something would happen that would be the greatest moment in human history. It would be a moment that would change everything forever. And they would finally understand that the God of the universe had to take on human flesh in order

to die on a cross in payment of their sins, to be the fulfillment of the promise made thousands of years ago, to be the fulfillment of the old covenant, to be the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of the World. And they would finally, for the first time, understand that as a result of what has happened in that moment, they, as sinful men, would stand right before a holy God—that they would actually have the presence of the God of the universe within them. And Jesus now could fulfill to them the promise He had made of a future more magnificent than words could describe. The anguish has turned to unimaginable joy, *that no one can take away*.

It would only be a few weeks later, after Jesus has risen from the dead and ascended to the Father, that the disciples would be proclaiming the message of Jesus, and they would be arrested; they would be imprisoned, and they would be threatened that if they weren't quiet, they'd be put to death. And the disciples would look the religious leaders in the eyes and say, "You can do to us whatever you want; we won't stop proclaiming Jesus." When they released the disciples, Peter actually said, "They rejoiced that they had been found worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ." The apostle Paul would actually write an entire New Testament letter from a prison cell about joy.

It's very interesting that from this moment on, there's nowhere in the New Testament where a New Testament writer dwells on the agony of the cross. There is no long, vivid description of the agony of what Jesus endured. It was horrible—but it's over—and Jesus has accomplished the mission. And the agony of the Cross has turned to the joy of what Jesus has done for us. This is very interesting to stop and think about. I have long contended that we, as a Christian community, do Good Friday much better than we do Easter Sunday. We get really good at going back through the horrors of the cross, and we beat ourselves up over our shame and our guilt. We're such losers that He had to do this for us, and we kind of get stuck there and struggle to move through that to the amazing joy of the resurrection—and what Jesus has done for us. We tend to maintain a view of God that feels kind of somber and oppressive, as if Jesus is still on the cross, that the horror is still happening, and we're just kind of hanging our heads, and we're sober, and we're somber, and we're such losers, that He would have to do this for us.

I've been to Israel several times, and there are these sacred sites, such as where they think Jesus was crucified, where they think the tomb was or, for example, where they think Jesus was born in Bethlehem. All of them have these massive cathedrals built over these sites. When you go in these places, it's very quiet...it's very sober...it's very somber. There are even signs that you're not supposed to talk; you're supposed to whisper. And everybody's shuffled through with their head bowed in a very somber spirit. And it raises an interesting question: What have we missed? What have we not understood? If what happened in these places actually happened, it should be the most joyful place on earth. Jesus Himself said, "*The anguish should turn to joy that no one can take away.*"

A couple of years ago my oldest daughter, Ashley, and I were in Munich, Germany, and we went to a couple of huge Catholic churches. They're absolutely magnificent structures, but I cannot tell you how many times we got shushed while walking through these buildings. "Shhhh!" What have we missed? What are we not understanding? Are we thinking Jesus is still hanging on the cross, that He is still suffering? Are we thinking the anguish is continuing? Are we not understanding that we should move from the anguish to unimaginable joy? That's what Jesus just said.

Think of it this way. Imagine that I run into a mom with three beautiful children, and I say to her, “Those are such beautiful children.” And she says, “Oh, the pain! Oh, the agony! (*laughter*) Oh, it was horrible! I can't even look at these kids. (*laughter*) Every time I look at them, all I remember is pain and anguish.” That isn't the way it is, is it? It's not *my* illustration; it's Jesus' illustration that, “*The anguish is remembered no more; for the joy that a child has been born into the world!*”

The disciples' anguish moved to unimaginable joy, for they had been born again. They understood that, based on what Jesus had done, they stand right before a holy God, that the very Spirit of Jesus would walk with them every step of the way, and no matter what happened, their future was absolutely glorious!

So let me ask you a question. The last six months have been frustrating for everybody. Wherever you land on this issue, it is frustrating. So can you say honestly, in your heart of hearts, that over the last six months, what has defined you is deep, soul-satisfying joy? If not, why not...why not? What happened? Where did it go? I'm not talking about some silly, superficial, temporary happiness like the world pursues. I'm talking about deep, soul-satisfying joy. My experience in life has been that it's often in the most difficult moments of life, I've experienced the most soul-satisfying joy, because suffering has a way of stripping things away, and you remember what matters. And in the midst of heartache and struggle, the clarity of what matters reminds me that because of what Jesus has done, I stand right before a holy God. My sins are forgiven! The very presence of God Himself is in me every step of the way, and no matter what happens, my future is so glorious, I can't even put it into words! And no matter what happens, you can't touch that. You cannot take it away...you can't! You can take away my freedoms. You can take away my job. You can take away my money. You can take away my bank account. You can take away my car. You can take away my house. You can take away Husker football. You can take away my health. You can take it all away, but you cannot have my joy. You can't! No politician...no government...no disease...no heartache. You can't have it, because I know what's true! And no matter what happens, I know I'm forgiven, and I know He walks with me. And I know my future is utterly magnificent.

For some of you, you're thinking, “This is just preacher talk.” Really? I wish you could have been in this room yesterday morning when we did the funeral service for Carol Damkroger. It's quite a remarkable story. Over the last ten months she battled brain cancer. And, yes, the brain cancer took a lot away. But it did not touch her joy. She was a beautiful example of what Jesus said. I can assure you the brain cancer didn't win. It could not touch her joy. It's a choice; it's a choice we make every day. I can't tell you how many times over the last six months, I've had this conversation with people. “Yes, it's frustrating; we're all frustrated. But don't ever forget that every day of this is a day you'll never get back. Don't waste it.” Jesus says, verse 23:

“In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now, you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language but will tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you

have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father. (Vs. 23-28)

What Jesus said is, **“In that day”**—meaning in a little while—when they see Him again, they will understand then what Jesus has done for them. For the first time in human history, they will go directly into the presence of the Father themselves. Jesus said, “Up till now, you have not gone directly to the Father, in My name.” We take all this for granted, but for someone who had been raised in the old covenant, to get to God meant you went through layer, after layer, after layer of the sacrificial system, and the temple, and the priests, and God was way back in there in the Holy of Holies. But now, as a result of this amazing moment in history, Jesus would do something to make it possible that on that day, when they saw Him again, they would go directly into the presence of the Father Himself. The veil has been torn in two in the name of Jesus, meaning based on what Jesus did for you. And they would do so because the Father loves them, because they have loved Jesus and believed in Him. As a result of what would happen between when they would no longer see Him and when they would see Him again, everything would change. It was the greatest moment in human history! Verse 29:

His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this, we believe that You came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (Vs. 29-33)

Verse 28 was kind of a summary. Jesus came from the Father into the world. Mission accomplished, back to the Father. So they're hearing that, “Oh, so that's what's happening. You came. You accomplished Your mission. Now You're going back. Now we get it.” To which Jesus replies, “Really? You think you get it? You have no idea what's coming. What's coming is so horrific, you will scatter and flee. You will run back to your homes and you will hide. And I will go through this all by Myself with only the Father.” Jesus reminds them that in this world there will be tribulation.

I think verse 33 is a summary for chapters 15 and 16. *“I've told you all these things so that you know what's coming in order for you to experience peace.”* But He's told them all along, “It's going to be hard. It's going to be really hard. You're going to have **tribulation**; you're going to have trials; you're going to be hated; you're going to be persecuted.” I would suggest to you no matter what, this world is hard. It's going to break your heart again, and again, and again. But what Jesus is saying is for the Christ follower, it's harder still, because we don't fit; we don't belong. In addition to what everybody else goes through, we will be persecuted. We'll be mocked...we will be hated...we will be laughed at...we will be bullied for the cause of Christ. To which we might ask, “Wow, how long?” A little while...a little while.

But because I understand what happened in that moment in history that changed everything, I know I stand right before God. I know He walks with me every step of the way, and I know my future is more glorious than I can describe! You can take everything that I have in this world; you can take it away, but—you can't take my joy. You can't...you can't! And that will give me what I need to get through the most difficult moments in life for...*a little while*.

Our Father, we're thankful that when we were lost and dead in our sin, You sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. In those hours just ahead for these disciples, You would do that which would change the world forever. And You would make it possible for sinful men and women to stand right before a holy God, both now and forever. Lord, it was anguish, but the anguish has turned to joy, for we have experienced new life! For that we give You thanks. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2020 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.



Fall 2020 // WEEK 3

Life Group Questions

That You May Believe, John // September 26-27, 2020

A Little While // John 16:16-33

Introduction

Welcome to week three of the Fall Session!

This week Jesus discusses his coming departure with his disciples. They are confused and struggle to understand and believe what He is saying. In some ways this can be how we experience following Jesus in our own lives. We pray that as you process through these questions this week that the Holy Spirit will speak into your life and grow your faith.

Getting to Know Each Other *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

Here are some suggestions to get your conversation started:

1. What's the best or funniest commercial you've ever seen?

2. What are 3 things you wish you knew when you were younger?

Getting Started

Begin to transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For openness to what you're learning together
 - c. For friendships to deepen and grow
 - 2) Invite someone (or a couple of people) to read John 16:16-33 to the group.
-

- 5) In verses 27-33, we see several statements about the disciple's belief. In verse 27, Jesus says they have believed that He came from the Father. In verse 30, the disciples make the same claim. Yet in verse 31, Jesus questions that claim and predicts their desertion of Him. Compare these verses to Mark 1:14-29. **What is happening in your life right now, where you need Jesus to help your unbelief?**

Prayer *(Suggested time: 10 min)*

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request.

A significant part of relying on the Spirit is following His leading even when it is scary or uncomfortable. Praying with a group of people may be a new experience for you, or it may be familiar. Try trusting the Spirit if He is leading you to share. Either way, whether you feel led to verbalize your prayer or not, you can pray for both yourself and your group throughout the week.