
A LITTLE WHILE
Sermon for the 5th Sunday of Easter, 2022
John 16:12-22

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel Reading read before John 16:12-22: **“I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot endure them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will lead you into the whole truth. For He will not speak on His own authority but will speak whatever He hears and will tell you what is coming. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and will tell it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. That is why I have said, ‘He takes from what is Mine and will tell it to you.’**

¹⁶ “A little while and you do not see Me any longer and, again, a little while, and you will see Me.”

¹⁷ Therefore, some of His disciples asked one another, “What does this mean that He is telling us, ‘A little while and you do not see Me and, again, a little while, and you will see Me’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father’?”

¹⁸ Therefore, they kept asking, “What does this mean that He is saying, ‘A little while’? We do not understand what He is saying.”

¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask Him. He said to them, “Are you trying to find out among yourselves about this thing that I said, ‘A little while and you do not see Me and, again, a little while and you will see Me’? ²⁰ Truly, truly, I tell you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. ²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come. However, when she has given birth to her child, she does not remember her anguish any longer, because of her joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² Therefore, you also have sorrow now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Sometimes, after you have heard someone speak, you are left scratching your head as you think to yourself, *“What was he talking about?”* This is how the disciples felt

today after Jesus had spoken to them. They wondered, “**What does this mean that He is telling us**”? What was it they were puzzled about?

It was this. Jesus had just told them, “**A little while and you do not see Me any longer and, again, a little while, and you will see Me.**” What was Jesus saying? They didn’t understand. Was He leaving them? Would He come back to them? He had also mentioned how He was going to the Father (verse 10). It would all happen in “**a little while.**” What did it mean?

It meant that Jesus would come again. He’s going away, and they won’t see Him. Then He’ll come again, and they will see Him. Still, it sounds like a bit of a riddle. “**A little while and you do not see Me any longer and, again, a little while, and you will see Me.**” We are not surprised if we imagine the puzzled looks on the disciples’ faces as they turn to one another and say, repeating His words, “**What does this mean that He is telling us, ‘A little while and you do not see Me and, again, a little while, and you will see Me’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father’?**” “What does He mean by ‘**a little while**’? We do not know what He is talking about.”

What does Jesus mean? Even now, it’s not the easiest thing to figure out. In a way, we could say that His saying has kind of a double meaning, or at least *a double application*, one to the disciples’ immediate situation, right at that time, and then to a broader, longer-range situation that fits our situation also. So let’s see what sense we can make of all this.

It helps us to know *when* Jesus was saying this. It was on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday during Holy Week, the night when Jesus was about to be betrayed and arrested before being taken to the cross the next day. That helps explain Jesus’ mysterious saying. It would be just for a little while longer that the disciples would see Him as they had seen Him for the past several years. It was a little while more, only a matter of hours. They had celebrated the Passover meal together, which Jesus ended by instituting the Lord’s Supper. Now He was talking to them about going away, going to His Father. Shortly they would go over to the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus would pray there. Then would come the betrayal and the arrest, and Jesus would be hauled off to a series of unjust trials through the night. In the morning, He would be taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. “Crucify!” the crowds would cry, and “Crucify!” is what they got. Golgotha. Crucifixion. Darkness. Death. Burial - All within 24 hours of the time when Jesus is saying this, His “**A little while and you do not see Me any longer.**” And that literally was the case for the disciples.

What was their response to Jesus being taken away from them? Their response would be just as Jesus describes here. They would have great sorrow. “**Truly, truly, I tell you that you will weep and mourn,**” Jesus tells them. “**You will be sorrowful.**”

Indeed, they were. They were crushed. Their Master, on whom they had pinned all their hopes - their beloved Master, their Teacher, the One they had correctly identified as the Christ, the Messiah - very soon He would be dead, and they would feel dead inside.

They had come so far, they thought, and now it was back to square one - or worse. What would happen to them now? The authorities had killed Jesus. What would they do now to His followers? It was a scary time. **“Truly, truly, I tell you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice.”** Think of how Jesus’ enemies had mocked Him when He was on the cross, laughing at Him and saying, *“You, who are going to tear down the Temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!”* (Matthew 27:40). They were rejoicing that Jesus was getting what was coming to Him. Who was He to call them to repentance? Who does He think He is, anyway? *“Look at Him dying there in shame!”* The world rejoiced whereas Jesus’ followers were weeping and sorrowful. Now those disciples had to worry about what might happen to them.

But here in our text, Jesus assures them that even though things will seem grim, very intensely grim, that would not be the end of the story. **“A little while and you do not see Me any longer and, again, a little while, and you will see Me.”** There’s another “little while” coming, and then again, they will see Jesus once more. It’s the *resurrection* Jesus is referring to here, in the immediate context. After Christ’s crucifixion and burial on Friday, it would be only a little while - on Sunday - until they would see Him again, with their own eyes. Follow the sequence: Jesus with the disciples, talking to them here on Thursday evening. Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, taken from the disciples on Friday. Then the resurrected and living Jesus showed Himself alive to the disciples’ on Sunday. All within a few days. A little while, and a little while.

And when Jesus is raised, their spirits will also be raised. **“You will be sorrowful,”** Jesus tells them, **“but your sorrow will be turned to joy.”** Their sorrow would turn to joy because of Jesus’ resurrection. From death to life, and life equals joy.

Jesus compares it to a woman giving birth. Like an expectant mother soon to give birth, the disciples were beginning to feel pain at Jesus’ words and would feel it acutely in a short time with His crucifixion and death. But they would see Him alive again. Their anguish, while intense, *would only last for a relatively short time.* It would give way to a surpassingly wonderful joy, which would far outweigh the pain felt just a short time earlier. Like a woman having a baby, the joy lasts much longer than the pain because now a new life has come into the world. And so, Jesus concludes, **“Therefore, you also have sorrow now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”**

How the disciples rejoiced when they saw Jesus alive on Easter Day! Not only was their Master alive, but they also began to understand why He had to die. The marks in His hands and His side - that began to tell them. Jesus then opened their minds to understand the Scriptures¹ - now it was becoming clear. This was all part of God's plan! It was necessary for Christ to suffer and die for sinful humanity. It was the only way for our sins to be atoned for, the only way for death to be overcome. God's holy Son must die for sinners like you and me and those disciples, or else we would be lost forever. But now, the risen Lord shows us that His rescue mission was successful and complete. Sins forgiven; death conquered. New life, resurrection life, given and received. Good Friday and Easter - together, they do all that. From death to life. From sorrow to joy. A little while, and a lot of joy.

Dear friends, Christ gives us a joy that no one can take from us. It is a joy that runs deeper than our circumstances. The world will hate us, and we see evidence of that all around us these days. The world's hostility against the Christian church continues to grow. The world will hate us, even as they hated Jesus. The world will rejoice at the church's misfortunes. But no one can take our joy - a real, true joy - no one will take our joy in Jesus from us. It's too great and too deep for them to touch. For we know that the Holy Spirit has embedded this faith *in our hearts*. We know that our Redeemer lives and what sweet joy this sentence gives! He lives, and because He lives, we shall live also. We live as God's dearly loved children. We live - our lives joined to Jesus forever in Holy Baptism. The bond is too strong to break. Our salvation is secure, come what may.

Sure, tests and trials and troubles will come. In this world, in this life, we shall have tribulation. For one thing, our sinful tendencies have not totally vanished. We still stumble and fall, and we need to be picked up and set back on the right road. Our own sin perplexes us. The world around us will persecute us, mock us, make fun of us Christians, and speak evil against us. On top of that, the devil will tempt us and try to draw us away from Christ - through the desires of the flesh, through the deceitfulness of the world's false values, and through the discouragement that comes when we think God doesn't care for us. So there is this battle we must fight now for a little while.

“A little while.” There it is again. Like the disciples, we endure a “little while” of anguish and sorrow as we await our Lord's return. For Christ has ascended and gone back to the Father, and we don't see Him here with us right now. That doesn't mean He isn't with us - He is. It's just that *we don't see Him with our eyes*. And our life doesn't look all that magnificently perfect either. So we have a little while of our own that we must go through.

¹ Luke 24:45

But it is just a little while, relatively speaking. The suffering and the sorrow may be intense; there's no denying that. But in the big scheme of things, when compared to the eternal future that lies before us, the sorrowful now is just a little while. The better time is coming - Jesus Himself is coming. He is coming again - when everything will be restored and made much better than it is now. "*Look! I am making all things new,*" our returning Lord declares (Rev. 21:5).

And so for now, we have our "little while." But it's a little while that leads to a lot of joy! Because even now, we have that joy, a significant taste of it - Easter joy, and that's a joy that no one can take from us. It's the joy of sins forgiven. It's the joy of knowing our Saviour is risen and lives forever. It's the joy Jesus gives us through the Holy Spirit, our Lord's "going-away present," so to speak, the Spirit testifying to our Spirit that we are indeed God's children. And it's the joy of knowing that Christ will come again to take us home. A little while, a lot of joy. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have sent Jesus, Your holy Servant, into the world, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life to redeem all people. After He had offered His life as the one sacrifice for all sins for ever, You raised Him from the dead by Your glorious power. Give us a living faith in Him, so that we may possess the sure hope of eternal life through Him.

We thank You for all Your kindness in our lives. We praise You for every blessing that You give us, and that Your mercy is never-ending.

We thank You, O Father of all light, for taking away the darkness of our minds and spirits, and for revealing to us Your Word of truth in Jesus Christ. Pour out Your Spirit on us, that He may continually plant Your Word in our hearts. Increase our willingness to study the Scriptures, and our understanding of them.

We thank You for the fellowship of believers in Your church. Keep us all in the unity that the Spirit gives, and in the peace that binds your children together. Keep us in faith in Christ Jesus, in joyful obedience, and in loyalty to Your infallible Word. Bless Your church everywhere, protect it from all its enemies, and give it success in all the work that believers do in Jesus' name.

We thank You for our Christian homes. Surround every family with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, that love, peace, forgiveness, comfort, joy, and moral purity may fill their lives.

We thank You, Lord, for the blessings that we enjoy in our rich land. Defend it, both within and without, from all who would harm it by sin, undermine it by strife and rebellion, or destroy it by war.

Strengthen the faith of those in our midst who are suffering illness, who are bereaved, and who are lonely, or depressed in any other ways.

We thank You for health and healing, education and social joys, friends and companions, and all the beauties and wonders of Your creation. Fill us with gratitude for Your goodness, and give us opportunities to use what You give us to serve you.

Surround us all with Your love, and finally receive us into perfect, unbroken fellowship with You and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Hear these prayers in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 11:1-18

¹ The apostles and other fellow-disciples throughout Judea heard that even the Gentiles had received the Word of God. ² However, when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those who belonged to the circumcision disputed with him. ³ They said, "Why have you gone to visit uncircumcised men and eaten with them?"

⁴ Then Peter began and explained it to them point by point. He said, ⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying and, in a trance, I saw a vision. An object like a large linen sheet was coming down, being lowered by its four corners out of heaven and came right down to me.

⁶ When I looked at it intently, I examined it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, reptiles and birds of the sky. ⁷ I also heard a voice telling me, 'Get up, Peter! Kill and eat.' ⁸ However, I answered, 'Surely not, Lord! For nothing defiled or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ A voice spoke

from heaven a second time, 'Stop regarding as unclean the things that God has declared clean!' ¹⁰ This happened three times. Then it was all drawn up into heaven again. ¹¹ At that very moment three men stood at the house where we were, the ones who had been sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² The Spirit told me to go with them without making any distinction. These six fellow-disciples also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ He reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and ask Simon, who is also called "Peter," to come!' ¹⁴ He will speak a message to you by which you and all your family will be saved.'

¹⁵ "When I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them as He also did on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered the Word of the Lord, how He used to say: 'John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ Therefore, if God has given to them the same gift as

He gave to us too when we became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?"

¹⁸ When they had heard this, they became silent and began to glorify God, saying, "Therefore, God has given repentance to life even to the Gentiles."

Revelation 21:1-7

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. ³ I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying: "Look! The Tabernacle of God is among human beings. He will dwell with them, they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death. There will not be any more grief, crying or pain, because the former things have passed away."

⁵ The One who was sitting on the throne said: "Look! I am making all things new." He also said: "Write this down! For these Words are trustworthy and genuine."

⁶ Then He said to me: "Everything has taken place. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I shall give to him who is thirsty water from the fountain of the water of life, without cost. ⁷ The one who wins the victory will inherit these things, and I

shall be his God, and he will be My son."

John 16:12-22

¹² "I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot endure them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will lead you into the whole truth. For He will not speak on His own authority but will speak whatever He hears and will tell you what is coming. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and will tell it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. That is why I have said, 'He takes from what is Mine and will tell it to you.'

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will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy.²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come. However, when she has given birth to her child, she does not remember her anguish any longer, because of her joy that a human being has been born into the world.²² Therefore, you also have sorrow now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”