

Jubilate
8 May, Anno Domini 2022
St. John 16:16-22

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How quickly the joy and brightness of Easter seem to fade away. No sooner are the lilies taken down and the trumpets and flutes put back in their cases, then the thick, dark cloud of life seems to fill our minds again and the once bright and full Alleluias are muted and even choked out completely. We return to our petty arguments, our lies, and our self-absorbed lives. It seems almost impossible to really enjoy the resurrection of our Lord for anything more than a brief little while.

Jesus knew that. Jesus knows that every day is not Easter. Every day is not filled with hopefulness and peace. Jesus knew then the days of sorrow that you are suffering right now - devastating medical diagnoses; hours, days, and even weeks of debilitating mental darkness; embattled and shattered families; an economy that is worsening by the day; the demonic world using every imaginable means to drive or lure us and our children away from Christ; and the constant threat of death hanging over your heads. Jesus knew the darkness that was about to cover the earth when the light of His own life was snuffed out on Calvary. He knew the terror that His disciples were soon going to face as the soldiers dragged away their Lord. He knew the hopelessness and the sorrow that would fill them as He hung from the cross. And He knew how they would suffer persecution and martyrs' deaths after He ascended.

This is exactly why Jesus said "A little while and you will no longer see me and again a little while and you will see me." Your sorrow has an end. It is NOT eternal. You will NOT suffer forever. With those words God would give you hope - again and again and again. Isn't that our great fear? That there is no hope? That our lives will be nothing more than suffering and pain? When there remains the hope of victory, even though it might be a long way off, we find fresh strength to bear up under the burden. But when that hope is snuffed out, when we become convinced that we will never know anything but loss and suffering, then despair sets in.

Dearly beloved, you will see Jesus. Your sorrow will one day turn to joy. The birth pangs you are suffering now, the crosses that weigh so heavily on you, they will have their end. Christ's suffering was not eternal and so neither will yours be. Jesus' whole life was spent enduring the rejection of the world and suffering in every way you have. He suffered all even death, even the rejection of His Father. But it was not forever. God promised that His Holy One would not see decay. His Holy One would suffer and die, but the promise remained. Death would not be the end. Jesus would be vindicated. His cross and His sorrow would not be in vain. Easter Day dawned and in that day death and suffering and sorrow all met their end. That is the reality in which you live. Your Baptism says that you have already died and already risen because Jesus has.

Certainly, the world is having it's time of rejoicing. The enemies of Christ of having their little while believing that they have cast off the chains of God and are finally free to indulge the passions of the flesh. Every ounce of the sinful world's energy is being spent to silence the remaining preaching of Christ and to revel in wickedness and perversion. Who would have ever thought we would see the day when people were so viscerally and violently angry at even the thought of not being able to murder children in the womb. The sons of the slave woman are persecuting the sons of free woman in every imaginable way - mocking, cursing, gaslighting, imprisoning, even killing them if they are able. But it is all in vain. Their time will come to an end. One day they will look upon Him whom they have pierced. On that day, when Christ appears in all His glory, the good that you have done in faith and been mocked and slandered for will shine like the sun and they will have no choice but to give glory to God.

On that day, your hopes, the glorious promises of Christ, will all be fulfilled. The crosses you now endure, crosses that seem endlessly painful and impossibly heavy will be taken away and hope will give way to certainty because you too will look upon the face of your Savior, your Lord. The birth pangs will give way to indescribable joy, eternal joy beyond anything we can even begin to describe with human language. Never again will you taste sadness. Never again will there be death. Never again will the dark cloud of fear fall over you. Never again will you have to wrestle against temptation and never again will you taste the bitterness of guilt because you allowed your flesh to triumph.

But that little while isn't yet over. There are still crosses to bear. There are still tears that will be shed. There is still a battle to be fought and temptations to be resisted. There are still prayers of deliverance to be prayed because the appointed time hasn't come. Some of Christ's precious lambs are still outside the fold and need to be gathered in. And until that day you will suffer, you will be tempted to give in, to live as though Christ will not return. We who sojourn here will be tempted to give up the journey and settle down in the world and make this pit of death our home. The problem is that the way out of your current sufferings is easy. Just walk with the world. Enjoy the pleasures it hangs in front of you. The world doesn't ask you deny yourself, just Jesus. The world wants nothing more than for you to be happy and comfortable and have as much fun as you want. The world agrees, YOU are the most important. You shouldn't have to say no. You shouldn't have to sacrifice. "Doesn't God want you to be happy?"

No. God wants you to live with Him in eternity rather than suffer the eternal pains of hell prepared for those whose god is happiness. That's why He has called you AWAY from the world, to stop giving your money and energy and time to those who use them to attack Christ and the truth and you, to stop pretending as though the things of the world are not a threat to faith. That's why He walked the road that leads to eternal life before you, denying Himself and denying the easy road that led away from the suffering. That's why He always and only spoke the truth that binds you to God in order to drown out the lies that Satan and world fill your ears with even though it meant hatred and rejection. That's why He took up the cross and gladly bore it for you. He wanted you to see that precisely in your cross and suffering your heavenly Father is working out your salvation. That's why He has told you to put down the world's poisonous cup, the cup that is only filled with wrath and judgment. In its place He offers you the cup of His Blood that you might be saved.

Children of God, this is not your home. This world has no riches to offer you. Do not let your hearts and eyes deceive you. Your riches, your joy, your hope are all veiled under weakness and nothingness. Your treasures are safely seated with Christ in the heavens where moth and rust cannot destroy and thieves cannot break in and steal. Most certainly you will, you do, suffer in this life. But that suffering, that sadness will not endure forever. Your little time is coming to an end and then you will see with your eyes the object of your faith and your hope, your Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ who will return in power and glory to bring your sojourning to an end and give you an eternal home in the heavenly mansions which He Himself has prepared and is keeping for you. And that joy, the joy that you so desperately long for, will be yours forever. It will never be taken from you. The sufferings of this present hour, however bitter they may seem, will fade into nothingness in the presence of the risen Christ.

In the Name of +Jesus.