

Jubilate
11 May, Anno Domini 2025
St. John 16:16-22

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

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Beloved saints of God,

Probably on a daily basis we make a habit of assuming we will see someone again. "See ya later." "I'll talk to you tomorrow." "See you in the morning." And then the day comes when we don't. A sudden fall. A collision on 75. A heart attack in the middle of the night. A final breath at the end of months or even years of agony and weakness. How many parents kiss their children goodnight only to lose them in a barrage of missiles?

The disciples would soon watch as their Lord was led away, put to death by men who were experts at snuffing out life, and laid limp and lifeless in the cold damp tomb. Who would have imagined such a day would come? Who would have thought the same Lord who had healed and helped so many would be suddenly murdered and for crimes He never committed? It was simply over. It seemed all hope was lost and they would never look upon their teacher, their master, their friend, and their Lord ever again. It seemed that everything He had preached and done had come to nothing.

Sure, they knew what Jesus had said, "I will see you again", but death is death. It is permanent. It is final. There is no escaping it. Or so it would seem. It is why we mourn when friends and family die. They are lost to us. We won't be able to call them on the phone anymore and share stories. We won't be able to sit around the family table and give each other a hard time. Suddenly all the reasons that we never shared the Word of God with them become empty and haunt us. How many have been tormented by grief and guilt because they always thought they had time to set things right and say "I'm sorry," or "I love you"? How many children estranged from their parents or their siblings find themselves in the midst of horribly bitter sadness because they waited too long and now the opportunity has been taken away from them forever?

But still none of this gets to the real pain of death or the real reason that death

causes so much fear for even the bravest among us. The real terror of death is in the fear, not that we won't see our loved ones again, but that we won't see Jesus again. There is nothing more frightening than the thought that death will forever separate us from the love of God. This is the terror that is felt by the conscience pricked by its guilt, confronted with how completely and impossibly short of perfection it has fallen. This is the fear and desperation felt by the sinner who honestly considers his life in light of the Ten Commandments and is forced to acknowledge that if even if eternal life actually was given on the basis of works and merits, to the good people, he would stand no chance before the judgment seat of God because he knows that he is anything but good. "Will God reject me? Will he hold my anger and my crude jokes against me? The Lord knows how I have so often failed to pray either because I was too lazy, because I didn't really think I needed to, or because I just didn't believe that God could or would help. What if He holds me accountable for the countless promises of reform that I have made and broken? He has seen and taken notice of all the times that my seat in His house has been empty because I have been too busy indulging myself on worldly worthless things. He has heard the deafening silence when I failed to speak His Word of truth in the midst of the world's lies. Do I have any reason to think that I will see Jesus again?"

"I will see you again." These are absolutely incredible words from our Lord. Though our lives are filled with sorrow and sadness, though we are surrounded by death and the devil's relentless harassments, though every day seems little more than a struggle just to get by, Jesus promises you, us, His children, that we will see Him again. Jesus was certainly taken away from His disciples but only for a little while. Precisely because He was taken from them, burdened with your guilt and your sin, and put to death you have the great assurance that you will see Him again. In Holy Baptism you went with Jesus through death only to rise with Him to new life that first Easter morning. Your sins are forgiven. Your heavenly Father will not hold them against you because He has already held them against His Son. And now His Son, your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ lives. That is why you will see Jesus again. That is why you will look upon His face for all of eternity – not because you're a nice person (because you're not), not because everyone who dies goes to heaven (because they don't), not because you have been a perfect mother (because you haven't). You will see Jesus again because He has saved you, because He has loved you and given His life for you.

No doubt, there are days when it seems as though the Good Shepherd has finally given up on us and forsaken us. But, as faithless and as weak as we are, He is faithful and strong to save. And even though the very shadow of death itself may

seem to veil His face from us, we will see Him again. It is precisely for the weak and the struggling, for those sick with the pain and guilt of their sin, for those battered about by the hatred of the world, for those whose own flesh betrays them, that Jesus has died and risen again from the tomb. None of those things actually have power over us. None of them have the power to destroy us. The death of Jesus has atoned for your sin. It no longer stands against you to condemn you. Its accusations have been eternally silenced. But Jesus' work for you didn't end on the cross. Jesus didn't die only to then leave you dead in the tomb. He rose again to everlasting life so that you are not only delivered from death but now take peace and solace in the resurrection to eternal life promised to all whose hope and trust are in Him. He has assured you not just of tomorrow but an eternity of tomorrows spent with Him and the whole Church Triumphant who themselves have passed through their own time of sorrow and have closed their eyes in death only to open them to see Jesus, face to face.

That is the joy to which we look forward. But we have not yet attained it. Like those who have gone before us, we must endure our time of sorrow. Surrounded by so many and great enemies, all eager to destroy us, we lament. We lament our sin. We lament the pain and suffering of our neighbor. We lament the unbelief that seems to be gaining the upper hand throughout the world, in our own country, in our communities, and in our families. We definitely do have sorrow now and the world seems to be having its time of rejoicing.

But the same Jesus who promised that He would see us again, also promised us that He would never leave or forsake His children. He hasn't simply left you to wander through this barren wasteland alone. He, your Shepherd, leads you on right and safe paths by His Word. He shows you what is evil and harmful and lights the way that is safe. He feeds you His Body and Blood, assuring you of His love and His forgiveness to strengthen you in the hour of temptation and satisfy you with His grace. He fills your ears with the words of absolution so that you do not fall into unbelief, despair, or other great shame or vice. Your way, your sorrow, your pain are not hidden from your Lord. Rejoice for you will see Jesus again, and with Him the whole host of those who have gone before you in faith and see Him even today.

In the Name of +Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your

hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.