

Many members. One body united in Christ.

Cantate

St. John 16:5-15

3 May, Anno Domini 2026

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Beloved in Christ,

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

It might seem at first that Jesus is being a little callous with the disciples. Shouldn't they be sad that their friend, master, and teacher has now told them that He is going away? Aren't we sad when visiting relatives finally have to go home or when our spouse closes his or her eyes for the last time in this world? Isn't our sorrow over their departure a fruit of our love and desire to be with them? Most certainly.

But Jesus isn't just a friend or a spouse. He didn't leave His throne on high and clothe Himself in human flesh for a little visit to say "Hi" and catch up. The Son of God left His heavenly home without our flesh for the sole purpose of returning in our flesh as our brother who had made atonement for the sins of the whole world and reconciled us to the Father so that we too could go away to the Father and be received as beloved children.

The disciples' sorrow was not rooted in truth. It was rooted in selfishness. They could think of nothing more than their immediate comfort. So, as Jesus spoke to them of going away and preparing a place for them, of not leaving them as orphans but sending the Holy Spirit, and of the hatred of the world which would be poured out upon them just as it was poured out against Him, their faces fell in disappointment. They still didn't comprehend that Jesus' going away and returning to the Father was His death to sin, His bursting open the iron bars of the grave, and His ascension to receive all power and authority so as to rule over all things in heaven and on earth on our behalf and for our good.

If Jesus had submitted Himself to their misplaced sorrow, all of humanity would remain condemned under the wrath of God and have only eternal punishment to look forward to. If Jesus had not gone away, the Holy Spirit who brings life through the forgiveness of sins which Jesus obtained through His death, would not have been sent. There would be no life to give to men. The faith of the Old Testa-

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ment saints, their afflictions, and their martyrdoms would have been in vain because the mercy and atonement of God foreshadowed by the temple and the ark of the covenant and the sacrifices would never have saved us. Those things were given to point forward to the the promised Messiah who would shed His Blood once for all and enter into the Holy of Holies as the true and great and eternal High Priest placing before God His Blood which was poured out on Calvary in payment for our sin. The faithful of the Old Testament were waiting for a Messiah who would be lifted up like the bronze serpent and die to atone for their sin.

Jesus' going away is, in truth, the answer to all our sorrow. Jesus' going away is the conquering of that most terrible and ancient enemy, the devil. Because Jesus did go away rather than indulge the disciples' self-pity the bitter consequence of your sin and rebellion against God, the eternal punishment and torment of your body and soul in the fires of hell, has already been suffered on your behalf. And if Jesus had not defeated these enemies, then, indeed, all of our anger against each other, our fear of poverty and loneliness and evil rulers, our chasing after pleasure and the praises of men and the riches of the world would all be completely justified. The world would descend into utter madness and chaos because there would be no cause for hope or mercy or love. Everyone would be left to simply fight it out to get whatever enjoyment they could now regardless of who it hurt or what it cost, because there would be nothing to look forward to after death.

But Jesus did go away because He knew full well that His death, and only His death, unleashed the flood of God's mercy and crushed the head of Satan, the tyrant of hell whose only desire is to see each and every one of us enslaved to sin and destroyed in death. Jesus knew that only if He died as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, could the Holy Spirit be sent to bring life and salvation to sinners by exposing and convicting the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. Only because Jesus died is there good news to be declared from the Father. Only because Jesus did go away is your pastor able to forgive your sins in the stead and by the command of your Lord Jesus Christ. Only because Jesus went away are we able to rejoice and have hope in the midst of our tears at the funeral of one who has fallen asleep in Christ. Only because Jesus went away are the waters of the font a washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit and the means by which God adopts poor miserable sinners and makes them His dear children. Only because Jesus went away is this feast spread before you on this altar so that you may receive as true food the true Body and Blood of your Savior for the forgiveness of yours sins and the strengthening of your faith week after week as the devil, the world, and your own flesh seek to fill you with sorrow and despair over your sin and the wickedness and hardship that swirls all around you.

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Dear children of God, your hearts do not need to be filled with sorrow or hopelessness. Your brother and Savior has gone away through the cross of redemption, through the gates of hell, through the tomb's dark portal. Sin, hell, and death are defeated. The chains of your slavery to judgment that you would never be able to break, have been shattered. You are free - free from sin, free from pouring out time and money in an attempt to find good and pleasure and joy and happiness in anything that this world has to offer, free instead to love what God commands and desire what He promises because these alone bring life, peace, and joy now and for all eternity.

This is the new song that we sing, the song of our salvation which Jesus has won for us on Calvary, which the Holy Spirit has declared to us through the preaching of God's Word and bestowed upon us through the gifts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The world has no such thing to sing about, no such cause for joy, no such comfort in the midst of its sorrows. How can you when your god is your belly and when you believe that you are no more than a random, meaningless product of chance and time? Don't fall for such lies. They are demonic and are sent only to drag you back into the eternal sorrow from which Christ Jesus died to set you free. Instead, let our mouths be filled every day with songs of triumph and joy because Christ who went away to the cross stands again in our midst freely bestowing life and salvation upon all who trust in Him and hunger for the eternal gifts which He brings.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.