

Joy in Painful Circumstances

March 8, 2020

John 16:13-22NLT

How many times has somebody said to you, "Everything's going to be alright"....at the wrong time and you basically wanted to slap them in their face?

I've been there more times than I count. I remember some of the most painful times in my life. One in particular was two weeks ago when I was laid out on a hospital bed, crying out in agony and pain, and every time the nurse came in the room and asked me to describe what my pain level was on a scale of 1 to 10, I very clearly responded ...12... to which she responded at one time, everything is going to be alright. And I looked her like....you better be glad i'm stuck in this bed. Because I'm laying there thinking, how do you know? They've run a million dollars worth of tests on me. Nobody has made it back with the pain meds yet. I've seen 4 doctors....at which point is everything going to be alright?

I mean we've all been there right? Ok, maybe yours wasn't physical pain, but maybe it was grief and it seems like the days aren't getting any better, or searching for a new job and no doors seem to be opening, or your marriage after you've tried and tried to make it work, or dealing with kids who seem to just not get it, or maybe you're in a situation where day after day you have to deal with difficult people and difficult environments, or maybe it's something completely different. The point is, we all have and have had some painful circumstances. And often, they seem to come out of nowhere right? Like where the heck did this come from? At least that's what I was thinking laying on the hospital bed two weeks ago. And in the midst of the dark dark moments, we just need a little light to shine.

So our text today finds us in John 16:13-22. Picture this. It's literally days before the crucifixion, which the disciples have no idea is about to happen, and Jesus their teacher and leader, keeps dropping these somewhat confusing nuggets of wisdom. I mean think about it, so far they've witnessed some pretty awesome stuff, turning water to wine, healing sick, raising the dead, feeding the multitude, and now it's Passover week, and they've made it to Bethany where he makes this triumphant entrance and the people are celebrating and waving palm branches, shouting "Hosanna" which literally means Thanks for saving us! This is the height of the ministry and the disciples are probably riding the wave of all of this awesomeness...and suddenly Jesus starts hinting around at his coming death, and doing all these sacred and sentimental acts like washing the disciples' feet and serving them dinner at the Passover meal. Then in chapter 14, He's like I'm going to prepare a place for you that where I am you can be too. Wait....what? You're going where? Things are going great. Where are you going? And Jesus says, but when I go I won't leave you without a comforter. They had to be thinking, who can comfort us if you're about to die and leave us?

And it picks up in our text in chapter 16 saying,
13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He will bring me glory by telling you

whatever he receives from me. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

Sadness Will Be Turned to Joy

16 "In a little while you won't see me anymore. But a little while after that, you will see me again."

17 Some of the disciples asked each other, "What does he mean when he says, 'In a little while you won't see me, but then you will see me,' and 'I am going to the Father'?" 18 And what does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand."

19 Jesus realized they wanted to ask him about it, so he said, "Are you asking yourselves what I meant? I said in a little while you won't see me, but a little while after that you will see me again. 20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. 21 It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. 22 So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.

The Word of God for the people of God, Thanks be to God.

Wow, Jesus says so much in these couple of paragraphs and I want to lift up just a couple of those things today.

1) Trouble and sadness will come, but it will not last.

V.20b you will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy.

Over and over we hear in the Bible that trouble is sure to come. And trust me, if you've been around any length of time, you don't need me to tell you that. But the bible says it to reassure us, that it's just not us. It's not just you, It's not just me, right? But there's an old proverb in Job that says, man born of a woman is but few days and full of trouble. In other words, just as sure as you've been born and are listening to my voice today, you will have some rough times in this journey called life. As a matter of fact, Jesus says it best in the close of this chapter when he says, "In this life, you will have troubles and tribulation...but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world". In other words, trouble may and will come, but it cannot last. Listen, no matter what problem you face, no matter what trial you have to go through, Jesus is greater than all of it. And the bible says, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!

The next thing he assures in the text is, I will be with you.

2) I will be with you.

V22a so you have sorrow now, but I will see you again.

Now in this particular text, Jesus is again preparing them for the crucifixion. But is comforting them saying, you're going to be hurt and sad by what's about to happen, but I am always with you, and even when you don't physically see me, my spirit is with me. Now, I know you're probably thinking, that's what they always say when people die, their spirit is with you. No Jesus is really promising that His Spirit, the Holy Spirit will always be with us. And he gives us this reassurance over and over again. In

chapter 14, when he says Let not your heart be troubled, and then later says when I go, I won't leave you without a Comforter. And again, after the resurrection, before He ascends into Heaven his final words, saying, Lo, I will be with you always, even unto the ends of the earth. He promises us over and over again, that though it may seem lonely, dark, and uncertain, my spirit is always always with you. To lead and guide you. To help you make decisions. To give you strength for the journey. To give you peace in the midst of your troubles and trials. To give you hope, when it seems like all hope is lost. The Spirit of the Lord is always there for us.

And the last thing I want to lift up today, is the promise that Jesus gives us in the close of verse 22.

3) No one can steal your joy. V22b No one can rob you of that joy.

Friends, I know that people, things, circumstances, can mess up your day. I love to smile, but I'm the first to admit that there have been some things that have quickly wiped the smile of your face. Matter of fact, some of us are probably thinking right now of something or someone that knows how to push the wrong button with us. Because that's life. That's what trouble is. They wouldn't call them bad days if they made us feel all warm and fuzzy inside. But joy is not just a smile on your face. Joy is not just the thing you feel when someone cooks your favorite meal. Joy is an understanding. That no matter what happens, nothing will come between me and Jesus. Days do get tough, but Jesus says, and lo, I will be with you. Sometimes we have to face really hard circumstances and through trials and struggles that seem endless. But Jesus says, I will be with you. Sometimes the nights seem long, and it seems like morning will never come, but Jesus says hang in there. And I'll hang in there with you.

So there I am, two Wednesdays ago, laying on that hospital bed waiting to be wheeled off to surgery, still in agonizing pain. I called Mom and Dad to pray for me and Dad didn't answer. So I said, "Mom, you gotta pray". And she starts of prayer with tears in her eyes, and says, "Dear Heavenly Father, Thank You." Now i'm in pain, she's scared because she's 700 miles away while her youngest child is in the hospital, and the first thing she says to God is Thank You.

Friends, that is joy. Because in the midst of this scary situation, she says, "Thank You Father, for this chance to be healed by You." And that's what joy is all about it. It's not about smiling and faking it til you make it while you pretend that nothing is wrong, and everything is going to be okay. Joy, is knowing that no matter what happens, God's got you. And there's nothing and nobody, can do a thing to change that. No one steal that joy, that blessed assurance from you.

So the question is what will you do? Will you weep as those who have no hope? Or will you go through what you have to go through in this life, knowing that you've got Jesus, and He's got you.

This is the word from God, for the people of God. Thanks be to God.