

## "Minor Sorrow, Massive Joy" John 16:16-23 Jubilate 2021

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This morning I want to begin by reminding all of you who have been parents of the reality of parenting. Parenting bears a certain similarity to our theme, this morning: a little sorrow, and a lot of joy. Children can be a challenge, and heartbreak, and an opportunity for unneeded and unwanted worry. But I have met remarkably few parents who would trade their children to avoid or eliminate the little bit of sorrow that their children occasion. Children can bring us a little sorrow, but they also bring us a whole lot of joy!

Our text holds just such a thing before our eyes this morning. For the Disciples, the little sorrow was seeing Jesus die. The "lot" of joy was seeing Him alive again. That was then. Later, it became something else for them, as it is something else for us. Let us consider the words of Jesus in our Gospel lesson this morning and measure a little sorrow, a lot of joy.

Jesus didn't always make sense to those who were listening. Jesus said, "A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." We don't always follow what God is telling us or understand what He is doing with us. On this day, the Disciples didn't understand too well or too consistently either - until God made it clear to them by special enlightening after Jesus rose from the dead.

Jesus was speaking to them about His approaching crucifixion and His subsequent resurrection. They were not ready to hear about the approaching crucifixion so they were not going to understand what Jesus was saying. That's okay, of course. Jesus used the same principle with His Disciples that we use in Catechetical Instruction leading to Confirmation. He taught them the stuff now and figured that it would make more sense later - when they were ready and the circumstances

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were right. We make our adolescent students memorize facts and doctrines and Bible passages now, and we know that they will spend an entire lifetime saying, "OH!! So that's what that passage meant! – Now I understand!" Of course, if they had never learned them, that sort of discovery would never happen.

The Disciples were learning at this point in the work of Jesus what would only make sense to them later. Jesus was preparing them, just as He prepares us. He described their pain and sorrow that they would experience when He died – and the joy that the world would have at the same event. The unbelieving world was almost giddy with delight when Jesus died. Not everyone, of course. Not everyone knew. But the Jews who knew who Jesus was and hated Him anyhow were thrilled. They stood at His cross while He was suffering and mocked Him. At the same time, His Disciples were bewildered, terrified, and horror-stricken.

But it was only for a time, Jesus said, as the labour pains of a woman giving birth to her child. Sort of like the woman who swears she will never have another child, while she is in labour, but two months after the baby is born – or two years later for some of you – she says she wants to have another, or even a whole bunch of them! The deeper their sorrow, the brighter the joy of the Disciples on Easter when their Lord and Savior was risen, and alive again!

Of course, that is not what Jesus was talking about. It fits, except that the Disciples did ask questions of Jesus after the resurrection. The Bible tells us about them. And Jesus said that on that day they would ask Him no questions. Besides, if that were all this text was about, then it would be about them, way back then, and have nothing to do with us. But it does have to do with us. We live in that "little while" and endure that little sorrow right now.

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The pains and troubles of our lives are the sorrows that Jesus was referring to. The world is delighted to see us suffer. Society is pleased when life gives us no immediate evidence to support the existence of God, or we fail to perceive for a time His goodness and gracious guidance in our lives. When illness strikes, when sorrow comes a'calling, when hardship knocks on our door – the world tells us to keep a stiff upper lip, to tough it out - and reminds us that if God were real, if He really loved us, we wouldn't be suffering like this. And sometimes we are strongly tempted to believe it.

We sorrow. We groan. We pray. We cry out in pain at what we see and must endure, and our world plays and sings and says everything is just fine. This is nothing new. Lot experienced it. Peter wrote in His second epistle, about righteous Lot who was oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men in his society, saying for by what he saw and heard that righteous man while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds. Like Lot, we often feel almost physically assaulted by the growing corruption around us.

But it is only for a short time. On the scale of humanity, in the time of this world, our lives are short. They seem long, at least when we are in pain. Pain always seems long, too long. But God has promised that our sufferings have a limit. However long they may seem, or however great they may appear as we endure them, they are soon over – and God has something wonderful for us. It is so good that Paul, writing on this same topic says by God's inspiration, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Jesus said that we would weep and lament, that we would be sorrowful, but that our sorrow would be turned into joy! He has already

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accomplished that on Calvary! He has taken our sins and the causes of our sorrows and sicknesses and borne them to the cross. There He died for us – the death that we have earned, and the death that we should have died. And God the Father raised Him from the grave to declare to us that His death was a sufficient substitute, and that our sins have been forgiven. The answer to sorrow and pain and sickness and even death is Jesus Christ. He is our hope and our joy. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

Of course, in this world that is so hard to see. When a loved one dies in the flesh this good news does not stop our tears or our sorrows. It is a comfort, yes! But we still cry and we still sigh and we still suffer the torment of this world.

That is why the words of Jesus are so precious here! Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you. And on that day you will ask Me no question. That is the day that Jesus was pointing His Disciples toward. That is the day they were waiting for – the day when they would finally see Him again, with the vision that will not dim and the sight that will not go away. That is the day we wait for. The day of the full victory of Christ, and the last enemy to be destroyed will be death itself. That is the day when we will see that the sorrow has been little – by comparison – and the joy will be a lot.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.