

## John 82 – No One Will Take Your Joy

03/29/2026

### Scripture 1: (Jn. 16:16-33 ESV)

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me."

So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about."

Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

"I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God."

Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

### Sermon:

After again asserting His equality with God the Father, as God the Son, and after prophesying His imminent death, Jesus next said something that confused everyone present, "*A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.*". It was confusing because:

- "*A little while*" is a very vague and indeterminate period of time;
- We would expect that by Jesus saying, "*you will see me no longer*", He was referring to His prophesied death;
- but, then saying, "*...and again a little while, and you will see me.*", seems to be more suggestive of going on a trip of unknown duration, yet one which is expected to be short.

Earlier, when Jesus spoke to the Jews similarly (John 7:33-36), they thought that He was suggesting that He was going to leave Judea to teach the Jews of the Diaspora, living among the Greeks and Romans. But, now that Jesus has just made it plainly clear to them that He was about to be killed (13:21+26; 15:13; 16:5-6), with His disciples finally understanding and accepting that fact, He said this which feels completely contradictory. So, it

is no wonder that His "...disciples said to one another, 'What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?'". Clearly they were confused and, if we are honest, we would have been confused too. They said, "'What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about.'" and it was no shame for them to admit this, and we should feel no shame for us to admit it either.

We should never feel ashamed to admit when we do not understand something that we have read or heard from Scripture. We each stand in a long line of people before us who misunderstood, misinterpreted, or misapplied Scripture. This is why we each need to continue to study Scripture and theology ourselves, both on our own and in groups, and this is also a benefit that we receive in (and from) our time gathered for Sunday worship. The only time we should feel ashamed is if we choose to stop learning and growing in our understanding of God's Truth, or when we stubbornly refuse to admit our proven errors, or acknowledge the possibility that we might be wrong.

- Such hubris is shameful because it implies that you believe that you already know and understand everything that there is to know or understand about Scripture.
- Such hubris is shameful because it suggests you have a functional belief in your own omniscience.
- Such hubris is very shameful because it is a public expression of your idolatry of self; of unrepentant and prideful self idolatry. That is what Solomon was warning against when he inscribed the proverb, "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*" (Prov. 16:18 ESV), since "*a haughty spirit*" certainly describes such hubris.

But on the other hand, a person who admits their ignorance and their lack of understanding is acting more righteous than those who just assume something that ends up being proven wrong.

Meanwhile, Jesus knew the confusion which was running through their minds. He understood that they were afraid to ask Him and therefore, admit their ignorance in front of everyone else. So, He "addressed the elephant in the room" for them, saying "*Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?*". Doing so, Jesus reminded them (and the evangelist reminds us) of how well He knows people (John 2:24); how well He understands what (and how) we think. Then He began to address their unspoken questions.

Jesus answered them, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.*".

- His answer should have put to rest any doubt about Jesus's expectation to die soon.
- His answer should have put to rest any doubt about the love and concern that Jesus was feeling from His disciples.
- His answer should have put to rest any doubt about Jesus' awareness of how "out of step" He was from the rest of the world; how His doctrine and teaching was contrary and opposed to that of "the Jews" (the religious establishment).
- His answer should have put to rest any doubt about Jesus knowing that, despite the glorious welcome He had received just a few days before {on "Palm Sunday"} (John 12), the world (and the worldly) still hated and feared Him, so very much.

But, Jesus' answer was not meant to leave them at the point of despair. He also offered a confident hope for them to believe in, telling them "...*your sorrow will turn into joy.*". Yet also, until this moment in the

conversation (this moment in His teaching), Jesus had been focusing on helping them understand His impending death. He had not said much to help prepare them for what comes after that: His resurrection.

However, looking back, using the hindsight that we have on this side of “the empty tomb”, we may identify some subtle hints about the resurrection. Jesus had just said:

- *“In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”* (Jn. 14:2-3 ESV)
  - This was probably understood in relation to the generally expected “*resurrection of the just*” on the day of judgment (John 5:28-29).
- *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.”* (Jn. 14:18-19 ESV)
  - He said this immediately after telling them that the Holy Spirit, “*the spirit of truth*”, would come to dwell with and within them, after having just identified Himself with this same Spirit, so this was likely understood in the spiritual sense, only.
- *“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”* (Jn. 14:21 ESV)
  - The Greek term translated as “manifest”: *emphanizo*; is a term which means to “make something visible” or “cause something to appear”. So, this would also have been understood in a spiritual sense; perhaps even in a ghostly sense {a contemporary idea demonstrated by the other Gospel writers (Matthew 14:26; Mark 6:49) and a reason for Thomas's disbelief and Jesus's repeated demonstration of His physicality, post-resurrection; an idea later promoted in the Docetist heresy, which suggested that Jesus only “seemed” to have a physical body, the whole time}.

It is important to remind ourselves and remember that we have a different perspective and a different understanding of Jesus's words, than the disciples did had when they first heard them. When we read or hear these passages, we understand them more fully knowing that they refer to Jesus's time between the resurrection and His ascension to heaven; knowing that they refer to the living, resurrected Jesus “in the flesh”.

Now, Jesus was starting to prepare His disciples for His resurrection. This is why He told them that, “*You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.*”; telling them that, even though their hearts were filled with sorrow now (16:6), that they would become even more sorrowful “*in a little while*”, but that their sorrow would not last long since it would be turned into joy “*a little while*” after that.

Why or how would their sorrow turn to joy? Jesus explained, because “*A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.*” Then, He used an odd seeming analogy to compare the state of their feelings to: comparing it to a woman giving birth. Jesus explained, “*When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*”. This certainly feels like an unusual example to use with a group of men, even if it may be considered as a universal truism; being believed true since otherwise, it would be unlikely that many women would choose to give birth to a second child.

- The Greek term Jesus used in this analogy to describe a woman's experience of giving birth: *lupe*; is ordinarily interpreted spiritually or mentally as “sorrow”, “grief”, “sadness”, or “anxiety”, yet it is also interpreted physically as “pain”, “suffering”, and “distress”.

- Similarly, the Greek term Jesus used to describe the aspect she “forgets”: *thlipsis*; is ordinarily interpreted as an “affliction” or a time of “tribulation”; describing some kind of trauma that could be either physical or spiritual or mental.
- Meanwhile, the Greek term Jesus used for joy: *xara*; is the familiar term ordinarily used in Scripture to describe a Christian's “inner happiness”, “gladness”, or “delight”.

These terms seem reasonable for describing the different senses of child-birthing. Jesus {and John the Apostle} apparently thought that they were comparable enough to describe the emotional and spiritual roller coaster that the disciples were about to experience.

- First, Jesus was comparing the pain of their grief to a woman's pain in giving birth.
- Then, He contrasted the suffering of their respective tribulations against the joy, love, and wonder felt by a mother at the first sight of her newborn child; using that image to describe how the disciples would feel once they saw Jesus alive, again;
  - once they knew that He had been resurrected, triumphing over the grave;
  - once they saw and understood the truth, the reality of Jesus' life;
  - once they earnestly and completely knew and believed that Jesus is the Christ: the Son of God, the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*.
- Using this analogy, Jesus was warning them that they would grieve His loss. They would grieve for His suffering. They would grieve for this terrible cost (discovering the price He would pay for us). But then, when they saw Him alive again, they would rejoice. Then, they would know that His death was worth it, that it was enough. Then, they would rejoice, as they began to understand the truth about what Jesus's death had purchased for them (and us). Then, they would rejoice because they would know that, even when Jesus would leave them again, it would not be forever because they would know that they would not lose Him again.

When the disciples saw the miraculous wonder of Jesus' resurrection, they would truly know and believe that everything Jesus had said is true. Then, they would know and truly believe that they belong to Christ and He belongs to them. Then, they would know true joy and experience the confident knowledge that Jesus has prepared a place for them and that He would return to come gather them and bring them to Himself, bringing them to where He is, to remain with Him forever (14:3). They would see the risen Christ and their hearts would rejoice because they would know that no one could take their joy away from them, and like the disciples before us, this is what we feel and begin to experience when the Holy Spirit gives us saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus continued to explain that, “*In that day you will ask nothing of me.*”. But, they would not be not asking because they no longer had any need or want, nor because they would believe that Jesus could not provide for them, but because they would not need to go through Jesus anymore. They would ask nothing from Him because His work and role as mediator for their salvation will have been completed.

- They will have been declared to be righteous and just, with Jesus's righteousness, {forensic justification} and they would be being made righteous and just, through the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification.
- The veil separating them from God the Father will have been removed; the cavernous gulf of our sin and wickedness will have been bridged, so that they could go into the LORD's presence themselves, to boldly come before His throne of grace and ask for His mercy (Hebrews 4:14).

- They will have been adopted by God, as His beloved children, and they will have been given such a high standing in His divine favor that then, {Whatever they would ask of the Father, in Jesus' Name and also thus in accord with His divine will, would be given by the Father to them.}

Therefore, Jesus again commanded them (and us), “*Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*”.

Next, Jesus told them, “*I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.*”

{It is worth pausing to note that, like Paul (Galatians 4:21-5:1), John, and Jesus acknowledged the plain fact that within Scripture (within God's Word) there different types of writing: some that is written with plain speech, some that is written with “figures of speech” like metaphor, analogy, and allegory. Some things are meant to be understood literally, while other things are intended to be understood symbolically. Therefore, it is impossible for us to read and interpret all Scripture plainly and literally (something which certain interpretive systems claim to do).

Likewise, we recognize that there are difference genres of writing in Scripture; different types of literature. We have clear examples of poetry written in the Psalms. There are clear examples of historical narrative, like Joshua or 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. The Pauline corpus consists entirely of letters mailed to address specific issues in particular churches. Then, there are also prophesies: some which are oracular foretelling (Isaiah 15-23) and others reveal the mysteries of God (the Revelation; Zechariah 1-7).

So, rather than trying to understand Scripture plainly and literally (which would turn the entirety of the Song of Solomon into something like a horror show instead of a love story), we need to work to understand it plainly, according to its genre. We need to consider its context, like: who wrote it, who it's audience was, and what the circumstances were which led to it being written; then, we may understand it in the way that it was originally intended.}

Similarly, Matthew records on another occasion that “*...the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*” (Matt. 13:10-13 ESV) So, we know that Jesus often spoke in a figurative way, a way that obscured the fullness of His meaning. But, we also remember that when He did so, He would also explain His parables to the disciples afterwards, so that they would understand His intended meaning rightly. Like in the Synoptics, this is Jesus's recorded acknowledgment of this practice in John's Gospel. Yet differently, it is also Jesus's promise that He would soon only speak to them “*...plainly about the Father.*”; implying that soon they would understand Him “naturally”, through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Then, Jesus explained more about what it will be like on “*that day*” when they will truly pray “in Jesus' Name”. He told them, “*In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf.*”, explaining that they will get to ask God themselves; telling them that He will not be needing to ask the LORD for them. They will not need Jesus to continue mediating for them before God. They will not need to go through Jesus to get to the Father anymore, since Jesus will already have brought them into the Father's presence (John 14:6).

However, I must digress for a brief moment, to ensure that you do not misunderstand me. I just said that Jesus' role as our Mediator will have been completed, and I need to clarify.

- Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Covenant of Grace; agreeing to it, and receiving it from God the Father, on our behalf.
- Jesus is our Mediator in that He has redeemed us through His death on the cross; paying our penalty for sin with His righteous blood.
- Jesus is our Mediator in that He has assigned His righteousness to us, for our justification before God, just as He has claimed our sinfulness for Himself; so that He could suffer our just condemnation, in our place.

Yet, each of those acts are uniquely “one and done”. Once Jesus did them, He never needs to repeat them. They have happened, their effect is applied, and now we are able to move forward. Through Jesus' past mediation, we have been brought into a loving and loved relationship with the LORD as His adopted children. Therefore, now (and this is what I was meaning) we no longer need Jesus to mediate for us with the Father in our prayers, because we may now go directly to the Father. We do not need to pray to Jesus, to ask Him, to ask God the Father, for us. Instead, we get to pray to our heavenly Father ourselves, and ask Him ourselves by telling Him, “...because Jesus said we could.” This wonderful privilege is another consequence of the joy we have through our union in Christ. We still rightly pray to Jesus, because He is God the Son; and, we rightly pray to God the Holy Spirit; and, we rightly pray to God the Father. However, the point is that now, we neither need nor have any mediator between us and God: Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.

- Christians do not pray to either dead saints or to Jesus' mother, Mary. We do not ask them to pray and ask things God for us. Even if they could hear us, or understand us, they are surely busy worshiping before the LORD's throne and, even if they were not, they have no greater weight of influence with the Almighty than we, ourselves, presently do.
- Christians: those who believe in and trust in Jesus Christ alone; those who are grafted into the “*true vine*” of Christ; we enjoy the great privilege of being able to go directly to our Father in heaven without having any interference, interruption, or obstacle between us.
- Thus and therefore, Christians, we may “...with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16 ESV)

After Jesus said this, now “*His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God."*”. But, has He been “*speaking plainly*” and refraining from “*figurative speech*” over the course of this evening's conversation? Saying things like, “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*” (Jn. 15:1-2 ESV), certainly sounds figurative. So, I think that the disciples' new found certainty and belief does not come from a change in Jesus' manner of speech, but rather from something beginning to be changed within themselves. Things that are hidden from those on the “outside” were being revealed to them by the “spirit of Christ” because they are on the “inside”. I think that now, they were really starting to understand what Jesus was saying about Who He is and What He was preparing to do for them, even as they could not understand How He was going to do it.

But then, finally, Jesus spoke in the plainest speech possible, telling them, “*Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone.*”. He had already told them, and showed them, that Judas was on his way to betray Him. He had already told Peter that he was going to deny Him three times. Now He tells them that they will all abandon Him; that they will all flee from their association with Him; and that they will all leave Him completely alone, without a friend or companion. Except, for God the Father. He told them, “*Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*”. Jesus knew that the Father

would not abandon Him. The Father would not leave Him to go through everything that He would go through, totally alone. Jesus was trusting that the Father would stand by Him and vindicate Him in the final accounting.

Lastly, Jesus told them, *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*. This is the final element contributing to our joy. It is perhaps, this aspect of our union in Christ that most distinguishes a Christian from the worldly wicked: the peace we experience even in the midst of tribulation. Christians respond to the sufferings and troubles of the world and this present life in a way different from the worldly wicked; different from they who have “no hope”.

Christians, we understand that “peace” is not the absence of conflict; it is not the absence of war. Peace, true peace, is “wholeness”; which is only found in our union to Christ. Yet there is something that we often to misunderstand about this peace. We have it and we are only able to enjoy it because Jesus Christ has “*overcome the world.*” but, we do not understand what that really means. Yes, Jesus has overcome sin and death and the grave. Yes, Jesus has and shall overcome and triumph over Satan, the ruler of this world. But, Jesus has also overcome our own worldliness: our connections and ties that have kept us bound to this world. Jesus has overcome them and connected us to the world that is to come: His heavenly, restored world; His eternal kingdom. That fact is part of how He makes us whole and gives us His peace. We have peace because He has overcome us, conquered us, and taken us captive; claiming us for Himself, as His treasured possession.

Through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, we are made to become “whole people”. We become wholly ourselves; becoming who we are created to be. We are brought into a personal, life-giving relationship with God the Father, through our relationship to Jesus. We have a confidence which sustains us through everything, because we know what is on the “other side” of “whatever this is”; because we have read the “end of the story”. We have God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who dwells inside us to help us through any trial. We know and we believe that we may and must “fully rely on God”, to get us through all of our troubles (2 Corinthians 1:9); both our big troubles and even our little ones.

Having this peace of Christ means that, even when the “world is on fire” and the “house is collapsing around us”, we are not fearful. We are not worried or anxious because we are filled with this joy knowing that better things lie ahead ahead of us. We know that the worst thing that the world can do to us is kill us, but after that, the only thing we will know then, is the joy of being in the glorious presence of God (Philippians 1:21-23). So really, the joy we understand Jesus is speaking of here is a truly great joy; a multi-layered joy. Therefore, as Christians:

- It is a joy for us knowing that our Savior and Redeemer lives (Job 19:25; John 20)!
- It is a joy for us knowing that, because He lives, we also shall live (John 14:19)!
- It is a joy for us knowing and understanding, what the cost of His death and resurrection have purchased for us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:8-10).
- It is a joy for us knowing that we have been restored to fellowship with God; to a right relationship with the Universal Sovereign and Judge of all Creation (Romans 5:11).
- It is a joy for us knowing that we have immediate access to the Great Provider, to ask for whatever we need, and the confidence to believe that He will give us everything that we truly need (Hebrews 4:16, 11:1-2).
- It is a joy for us knowing that, since God has chosen us for His own and that He has given us to Jesus Christ as His inheritance, that our salvation is secure; that no one can take it away from us because no one can take us away from Christ (Exodus 19:5; Malachi 3:17; John 10:28-29, 17:12; Ephesians 1:18). Therefore, no one can take away this joy.

Jesus tells us, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*” So, what should we be most wanting to ask for from the Father?

- More of Christ.
- More and stronger faith in Jesus.
- More Christ-likeness.

Ask for these things in faith, and you shall surely receive them. Then your joy shall be made full, through your union with Jesus Christ, and “*no one will take your joy from you.*”. This joy is one of the benefits received because Jesus has sent us His Holy Spirit to dwell within us. This joy flows from our peace of conscience. This joy feeds our sense of God's love. This joy helps us to grow in grace: the grace of God, in giving grace to others, and even in giving grace to ourselves. Ultimately, this joy comes from the knowledge of our adoption by God, as His beloved children; the knowledge of our justification through the imputation of Christ's righteousness and His satisfaction for our sinfulness; the knowledge and experience of our progressively being sanctified by the Holy Spirit (WSC #33-36). This joy is not just merely a matter of knowing these things, but also about believing them to be true for ourselves, and then, though living accordingly.

- When we believe that we are a child of God, then we will work to live in ways that please Him and makes Him proud of us, just as we do our earthly parents.
- When we believe that Jesus has paid the penalty for our sin; that He has not only wiped out our moral deficit but also increased our account infinitely, then we will not want to fall into such a debt ever again and so, work to avoid it.
- When we believe that we are being made holy: that we have been washed clean of our sin and are being purified; then we will want to avoid making ourselves dirty and sin-stained again.

But then, living in such a way: living obedient to God our Father and His revealed will; does not feel burdensome, but will be done joyfully because we know and believe that such an excellent way has been given for our good benefit. We will live as obedient children because we are living in such a joy that we will never want to leave it or lose it, because we know that all other “joys” pale in comparison; for they are proven to be false pleasures, in comparison to the truth of joy in the LORD.

So, believe Christ. Believe in Jesus Christ. Trust in His promises, given for you. Rest in His peace and experience His joy knowing that no one will ever take it away from you.

**AMEN**