

**“Sorrow Turned to Joy”  
John 16:16 – 24**

**Big Idea – God brings joy by transformation, not substitution.**

**1. Jesus announces his departure and ascension – vs. 16**

John 16:16 “In a little while you won’t see me anymore. But a little while after that, you will see me again.”

Jesus made a deliberately puzzling statement (John 16:25, He spoke in proverbs ["dark sayings"]) and the disciples did not understand. This also encourages me as I study my Bible and find statements that I cannot understand. Even the disciples had their hours of spiritual ignorance!

What did Jesus mean? Possibly He was talking about the soon-to-occur events in connection with His death and resurrection. After His burial, they would not see Him for a little while; but then He would rise from the dead and they would see Him again. He had told them on previous occasions that He would rise from the dead after three days, but they didn’t get it!

However, I think that Jesus was speaking primarily about His return to the Father ("Because I go to the Father"—John 16:16). This ties in with John 16:10—"Because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more."

He was not talking to them about His return at the rapture because that would have been over 2,000 years away. He was likely talking about Pentecost when they would receive the Holy Spirit, the Helper who was just like Him Who would dwell inside of them forever. In fact Romans 8:9 calls Him the Spirit of Christ.

Romans 8:9 “But you are not ruled by your sinful selves. You are ruled by the Spirit, if that Spirit of God really lives in you. But the person who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ.”

**2. Problems and questions – vs. 17, 18**

They could have asked Jesus right then what He meant but they began to have a “trade your ignorance” discussion among themselves! It is only when we come to the Lord and ask Him that we learn the really important life lessons God has for us.

### **3. Jesus explains with an illustration of childbirth – vs. 19-21**

John 16:20 “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.”

The world was glad when Jesus Christ was crucified. Both the religious and political leaders of that day expected to see the early believers die out and the "Christian movement" disappear but it didn't happen.

Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to His church, and the church is carrying the Word of His grace to the ends of the earth. The early believers even rejoiced when they were persecuted

Acts 5:41

The world today does not want Jesus Christ or His church. The world is rejoicing while we are suffering, longing for our Lord to return in the Rapture

**The principle: God brings joy to our lives by transformation, not substitution.**

John 16:20 “...you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.”

John 16:21 “When a woman gives birth to a baby, she has pain, because her time has come. But when her baby is born, she forgets the pain, because she is so happy that a child has been born into the world.”

His illustration of the woman giving birth makes this clear. The same baby that caused the pain also caused the joy. In birth, God does not substitute something else to relieve the mother's pain. Instead, He uses what is there already but transforms it.

Every parent knows what it is like to have an unhappy child because a toy is broken or a playmate has gone home. The parent can do one of two things: substitute something else for the broken toy or absent friend, or transform the situation into a new experience for the unhappy child. If Mother always gets a new toy for the child each time a toy is broken, that child will grow up expecting every problem to be solved by substitution. If Mother always phones another

playmate and invites him or her over, the child will grow up expecting people to come to his rescue whenever there is a crisis. The result either way is a spoiled child who will not be able to cope with reality.

The way of substitution for solving problems is the way of immaturity. The way of transformation is the way of faith and maturity. We cannot mature emotionally or spiritually if somebody is always replacing our broken toys.

Jesus did not say that the mother's sorrow (pain) was replaced by joy, but that the sorrow was transformed into joy. The same baby that caused the pain also caused the joy!

It's the same way in the Christian life: God takes seemingly impossible situations, adds the miracle of His grace, and transforms trial into triumph and sorrow into joy just like He did for the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 23:5 "Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee."

Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave, and Potiphar put him into prison as a criminal; but God transformed that hopeless situation of defeat into victory and took Joseph from the pit of the prison to the pinnacle of Pharaoh's government as second in command!

Egypt's persecution of Israel only caused them to multiply and prosper the more.

King Saul's murderous pursuit of David only made him more a man of God and helped produce the psalms that encourage our hearts today. Even Jesus took the cross, a symbol of defeat and shame, and transformed it into a symbol of victory and glory.

Matthew 5:11 "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.

12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way."

Matthew 5:11, 12 "You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

11 Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable.

12 You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.”

#### **4. Jesus introduces to His disciples the new way of praying – vs. 23, 24**

John 16:23 “In that day you will not ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you anything you ask for in my name.

24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy will be the fullest possible joy.”

The central theme of this paragraph is prayer: "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). It is important to note that the text uses two different words for "ask," although they can be used interchangeably. The word used in John 16:19, 23a, and 26 means "to ask a question" or "to ask a request." It is used when someone makes a request of someone equal.

The word translated "ask" in John 16:23b, 24, and 26b ("pray") means "to request something of a superior." This latter word was never used by Jesus in His prayer life because He is equal to the Father. We come as inferiors to God, asking for His blessing; but He came as the very Son of God, equal with the Father.

In John 16:23, what period of time did Jesus mean by "in that day"? I think He was referring to the time after the coming of the Spirit. He promised them in John 16:22 that He would see them again, and He kept His promise. He spent forty days with them after His resurrection, teaching them clearly the truths they needed to know in order to take His place and minister on earth (Acts 1:3ff).

"That day" cannot refer to the day of His return for His church, because there is no evidence in Scripture that we shall pray to Him after we get to heaven. Jesus knew that they wanted to ask Him a question (John 16:19).

He assured them that a day would soon come when they would not ask Him questions. Instead, they would pray to the Father and He would meet their needs. This was the promise that they desperately needed to believe: that the Father loved them and would hear their requests and meet their needs.

While Jesus was on earth, He met all the needs of His disciples. Now He would return to the Father, but the Father would meet their needs. Here is the wonderful promise and privilege of prayer.

Jesus had mentioned prayer many times in His ministry, and He had set the example for prayer in His own life. He was indeed a man of prayer. In His Upper Room message, Jesus emphasized prayer.

John 14:13 “And if you ask for anything in my name, I will do it for you so that the Father’s glory will be shown through the Son.

14 If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.”

John 15:7 “If you remain in me and follow my teachings, you can ask anything you want, and it will be given to you.

16 You did not choose me; I chose you. And I gave you this work: to go and produce fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you anything you ask for in my name.”

John 16:23 “In that day you will not ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you anything you ask for in my name.

24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy will be the fullest possible joy.

25 I have told you these things, using stories that hide the meaning. But the time will come when I will not use stories like that to tell you things; I will speak to you in plain words about the Father.

26 In that day you will ask the Father for things in my name. I mean, I will not need to ask the Father for you.”

**He made it clear that believing prayer is one of the secrets of a fruitful Christian life.**