

Christ is risen. Alleluia.

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

Our text has Jesus in the upper room with His disciples on the night of His betrayal. The words here in John are sometimes called His Upper Room Discourse. Jesus' words are words of both warning and encouragement.

In fact, shortly before our text, Jesus had just shared with His disciples some rather sobering words: “[B]ecause you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19). “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own” (John 15:19); but you’re not; you’re following Me; and so the world hates you. “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

And so, Jesus says in our text: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” Indeed not, we think ... not after all that. There’s only so much bad news one can take ... at least, all at one time.

With these words ringing in their ears, the disciples would experience the hatred of Jesus in the days ahead: the plotting, the lies, the injustice, the spite, the cruelty, the torture, and, yes, the execution. The world hated Jesus, and He was killed as a result of it. But let us never forget that He died because He permitted it, and He died not for His sake but for the sake of that same world. This is God’s love for us: “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Jesus’ words here in the upper room came true. “A little while, and you will see me no longer.” Jesus would be taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb. A stone would be rolled over the opening; and a seal was placed on the grave. No matter. Jesus’ words were sure. Their separation would only be a mere three days — “a little while” — and then they would see Him again — “and again a little while, and you will see me.” Jesus would rise again from the dead, and He would show Himself to His disciples, eat with His disciples, talk with His disciples, comfort His disciples.

In the midst of these events, however, the disciples didn’t get it. Somehow, they blocked it all out. Jesus had told them of His impending death — three times: “Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (Matt. 16:21). And, “Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day’” (Matt. 17:22-23). And again, “the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and

deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day” (Matt. 20:18-19).

The disciples were bothered by it and didn't want to hear it then (Matt. 16:22; 17:23), and so here they whispered among themselves, “*What does he mean by ‘a little while’?*” Their protestations notwithstanding, their obtuseness notwithstanding, the disciples found out that Jesus' words were true: He “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. . . . The third day He rose again from the dead” (Apostles' Creed).

I don't excuse the disciples for their foolishness and slowness “*of heart to believe*” (Luke 24:25), but it is understandable. When it comes to bad news, we're the same way. We don't like bad news; we don't want to hear bad news; we may even pretend that we didn't hear the bad news. But none of that can undo what has already happened or forestall what is about to happen.

In my experience, it's sometimes the way we act as the death of a loved one approaches. We ignore the obvious or discourage talking about it. Dad knows he's dying, but “no, Dad, you'll be okay. You'll get better,” we say. Maybe we're trying to be encouraging, but death comes anyway, and often without some important conversations taking place. Or even though we know that we will one day die, we don't like to think of that either, and we avoid making preparations for it.

But, as has been said, the Christian life is one big preparation for death. We begin that life, as Kelice did today, by being united with Jesus in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:5). And we continue that preparation by being built up in faith in the crucified and risen Jesus. Jesus said, “*and again a little while, and you will see me.*” Jesus did rise from the dead, and the disciples' sorrow turned to joy. “*I will see you again,*” Jesus said, and indeed He did. And as He had told them, “*your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*” Moreover, that enduring joy would take them through the hatred, sufferings, and persecution that they would later have to endure for the sake of Christ and His Gospel.

Dear saints of God, this is what I want to suggest to you now. This is the truth that the Spirit guides us into; cross and resurrection are not things to be avoided or ignored; Jesus owned it. It was His in obedience to the Father, and this is what the Spirit of truth declares to us, along with our own victory in Christ Jesus.

So that now we know that death has been swallowed up in victory. Though we die, yet shall we live (John 11:25). Surely, we will sorrow for a while because of death, but joy will come, for our “*Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after [our] skin has been thus destroyed, yet in [our] flesh [we] shall see God, whom [we] shall see for [ourselves], and [our] eyes shall*

behold, and not another” (Job 19:25-27). In a little while, we will see Him. We will not be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Rom. 8:39).

It’s this knowledge and this faith that gets us through our own “*little while*” of struggles and sorrows in this vale of tears. St. Paul calls it a “*light momentary affliction*” and compares it to “*an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*” (2 Cor. 4:17). That’s the way infinity works in comparison to the finite — it swallows it up, even as the infinite Christ’s victory swallows up death, not just for Him but also for us (1 Cor. 15:54). Thus again, Paul says, “*I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*” (Rom. 8:18).

Yes, “*again a little while,*” in the glory to be revealed to us, we will see Jesus. We will be with Him, or more accurately, He will dwell with us in the new heaven and new earth. “*[We] will be his people, and God himself will be with [us] as [our] God. He will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things [will] have passed away,*” for “*the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end*” will have made “*all things new.*” And we will rejoice with an everlasting joy that cannot be taken away.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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