

## **Humanity Redeemed**

### **Week 2 – The Upper Room**

#### **John 16:16-33**

Jesus' final days with His disciples are drawing near before the anguish of Gethsemane and the brutal savagery surrounding His crucifixion. Interestingly, Jesus' main concern is the well-being of His panic-stricken disciples. With great affection and tender-heartedness, He is preparing them for the horror of the coming days. Their troubled faces reflect their raw emotions, fraught with confusion, dismay, and even despair.

While we cannot possibly grasp all that the disciples were experiencing in that moment, we can learn rich lessons on **how to look up when the world is crashing down**. In our text, we will see that Jesus promises His followers joy, love, and peace, to steel them as the looming shadow of the cross presses in and to sustain them in the aftermath. We can't help but notice that these are listed among the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) which He alone produces in and through yielded believers. These three love gifts of the Spirit of God are still available to us. And, in context, we see the crucial role prayer plays in order to claim and appropriate all that is ours in Christ Jesus.

#### **I. The Promise of Joy - John 16:16-24**

Jesus speaks of a future hope saying, "A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me again" (John 16:16). Commentators disagree on the interpretation of this verse. Some think Jesus was making a reference to His post-ascension appearances, others lean towards the Second Coming, and still others regard it as a reference to the coming of His Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The last one seems the most plausible as it is in the context of His teaching on the promise of the Holy Spirit. While we cannot be certain, we do know that Jesus was giving them hope. His resurrection from the dead would guarantee for all believers the promise of eternity with Him.

This remark only served to confuse His disciples. His followers were still looking for Him to set up a political reign to overthrow Roman rule and could scarcely grasp the reality of the spiritual Kingdom of God. We, on this side of the cross, have the advantage of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the complete written revelation of the Word of God. Still even with the Word of God in our hands, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and scores of resources and commentaries at our disposal, we do not fully understand the great mystery of the resurrection. Yet we believe. We trust. We walk by faith and joyfully declare, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

The Lord read their minds and "knew that they wished to question Him" (John 16:19). He acknowledges the overwhelming sorrow that the disciples would soon be plunged into but promises, "Your grief will be turned into joy" (John 16:20).

Jesus illustrates with the poignant image of a woman suffering in childbirth, which is one of the curses of the fall (see Genesis 3:16). It is no coincidence that, facing the Cross, He makes reference to God's judgment on sin in the Garden of Eden. Christ is God's remedy for mankind's ruin. Salvation for all who would believe and receive Jesus is made possible by His sacrificial atoning death. A laboring mother in the grips of childbirth endures pain. However, her greatest suffering gives way to her greatest joy when her newborn is delivered!

The Lord was not saying that the event causing their sorrow would be replaced by an event producing joy but rather that the same event (the cross) that caused mourning would be the cause of their joy. The dark shadows of sorrow and grief cast by the cross fled before the brilliant, glorious light of the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4-47). (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, p. 217).

Christ's ascension to the Father would allow His followers to make their requests directly to the Father in the name of Jesus. The Lord had already taught them the concept of appealing to God in prayer (Matthew 6:9; 7:7-11), but up to this point they had not petitioned Him in Jesus' name. Hebrew 10:19-22 says, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith." (Needless to say, that rules out all petitions incompatible with the character of Christ.) The result of such access is unspeakable joy.

## **II. The Promise of Love - John 16:25-27**

Perhaps more than anything, the disciples needed to be reminded of their direct access to the Father and to be reassured of His love for them. They were about to be plunged into a season of suffering and sorrow, the likes of which they could have never imagined. As the dark days of the crucifixion unfolded, the love of God would become a source of great comfort. After the ascension of Christ, it would fuel the disciples' passion as they were called into service for the Kingdom and dispatched through the Great Commission (even as all believers are).

Doubting the love of God is a temptation we all face when dire circumstances strike. As the onset of difficulties cloud our perception, the enemy of our soul slithers in and interjects his lies. Satan's mode of operation is to fill our thoughts with his twisted reality that is contrary to the truth of God's Word in the sadistic hopes of plunging us into despair and depression, rendering us ineffective for the cause of Christ. Beloved, we are loved by the Father! Jesus said, "The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed" (John 16:27). It is poignant to note that the word in the original language for "love" used here is not "agape" as we would anticipate. Rather it is "phileo". This word has the idea of tender affection and typically relates to brotherly love or family love.

Because we have received Jesus Christ, we have been given access to the Father through the Son by the Spirit! We can come to Him in prayer and speak to Him as an adoring

child approaches her Father. John wrote, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” Beloved, we are daughters of the King!

### III. The Promise of Peace - John 16:28-33

In John 16:28, Jesus recaps His time on earth saying, “I came forth from the Father [His incarnation] and have come into the world [His mission]; I am leaving the world again [His crucifixion] and going to the the Father [His ascension].” The disciples’ response was like, “Oh, now we get it. Now we know what You are talking about.” Their naive reply indicates just how over-confident they were in their own understanding. They could not possibly unravel all that the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord would mean for them personally or for the millions who would enter into salvation by grace through faith in His completed work on the cross.

It would seem that Jesus’ response to His bewildered band of followers was more observation than rebuke. Jesus said to them, “You [will] be scattered, each to his own home, and [will] leave Me alone” (John 16:32). Surely this revelation caused their breath to catch in their chests. Jesus knew their faith would falter in the course of the staggering events that were just about to be set into motion.

Jesus reminded them that the Father would be with Him through it all. This reality of the nearness of God in painful seasons is sustaining, comforting, and life-giving. Psalm 34:18 says, “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Jesus closed out His discourse with words of strength and hope! “These things I have spoken to you, so that **in Me you may have peace**. In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, emphasis mine). What He told the disciples over two millennia ago is still true today. Jesus has overcome. He has overcome the world’s system, the power of the flesh, and the wiles of the devil. Through His death, He paid the price for our sin and broke the power of cancelled sin. His victory is our victory! Whatever your life situation is today, let His words pour over you, “take courage, I have overcome.”

Despite what we see in the natural world, by the eye of faith we know with certainty that King Jesus is sovereignly reigning and ruling “both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” (Colossians 1:16). He has overcome death, hell, and the grave! Therefore we can say, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory: O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). Hallelujah! What a Savior!

We do not minimize suffering. We do not deny grief. We do not ignore pain. Rather, we trust God to walk us through every trial and tribulation, up to and including “the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4), with grace and strength. We may be walking with shaky legs of faith but, in the midst of it all, we can abide in Him and experience His joy, love, and peace! Glory to God!