

*"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 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 to 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 you also 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 from me.*

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask 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 be made 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."*

**John 16:16-28**

### **"You Will Weep...And The World Will Rejoice"**

Pastor Stephen Ridge

We join the Lord Jesus in John's gospel past midnight on the night of the Last Supper and bending in toward dawn on Good Friday. Jesus and his disciples have talked and talked and talked, and Jesus knows that he's about reached the limit of what his men can bear. *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now,"* Jesus tells them, *"but when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth."* And we saw last week that this coming of the Spirit that Jesus keeps bringing up is not the absolute arrival that it might have been if God the Holy Spirit hadn't been there the whole time.

God the Holy Spirit had visibly descended on Jesus when he was baptized in the Jordan River by his kinsman, John the Baptist. At table in the Upper Room, Jesus had promised the disciples that they would know the Spirit when he came because, Jesus said, *"he dwells with you and will be in you."* In other words, the men around Jesus had been under the influence of the Holy Spirit for who knows how many years, just as countless Old Testament believers had been under the influence of God's Spirit since the day Adam and Eve first believed a gospel not too long after they were expelled from the Garden.

So the point here is that in the dark, on the paths leading toward Gethsemane, Jesus is promising his apostles something more than what the Holy Spirit had done in Israelite hearts in the centuries between Moses and Christ. The Spirit would, Jesus told his apostles, *"...guide you into all the truth."* In other words, everything the prophets had been to old Israel, the apostles would become for the entire world going forward. Last week, we heard Jesus say that the Spirit, *"...when he comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment."* We noted last week that Pentecost was only seven weeks in the future on the night when Jesus promised his Spirit would come and guide the apostles, *"into all the truth."*

All the truth to the whole world! That's why in Acts 2, seven weeks out from Good Friday, when the Spirit will visibly descend on the men and women who belong to Jesus, they will start babbling the gospel in all the languages from all the places from which people had traveled to find Israel's God that day in Jerusalem. Because with the death and resurrection and ascension of God the Son, gospel and faith will become a worldwide phenomenon, and God the Holy Spirit will take the point, the Spirit will travel in the hearts of all those people who threw in with Christ that day from the Holy City back to the places from which they came.

And there, they won't have to settle for half, or two thirds, or three quarters of a gospel, because not only will the Holy Spirit travel in Christian hearts through the whole wide world, but, Jesus said, the Spirit will *"guide" the apostles "into all the truth."* Think about the Old Testament! It's a collection of books famous for list after list of peoples' names who got born! So and so begat so and so, and so and so begat so and so, pages and pages of who got born and who was next and who came after that.

Why? Because the one promise, the only gospel Adam and Eve got on their way out the garden was that one of the woman's offspring, a child yet to be born, would crush the Serpent's head and save us all from the mess sin has gotten us into. Someday, somehow, a woman's son would save us from the stupidity and tragedy that human history has become, so God's people wrote down child after child from peoples' families because they believed that one day Israel would hit the trifecta and the right boy-child would save us all. That's what Old Testament faith consisted of, a specck of a promise here, a hint of a promise there, mix and match and move them around, and trust what you can understand and hope to be saved.

And God the Holy Spirit moved in peoples' hearts back then in old Israel to arrange the hints and specks so that people like Moses and Joshua and David and Elijah and Jonah and countless, nameless others believed what they could understand and they were saved...before it could be known who Jesus was or what the cross was about or how someone would ever rise from the dead and fly through the clouds.

But now, Jesus was telling his men on that last, long walk toward Gethsemane, that the Spirit would "*guide*" them, the apostles, "*into all the truth*," so that their teaching would sort out the specks and hints, shine light into pictures and shadows so that people like us in the last days would know the Savior's name, understand the depth of sin and the power of grace, take to heart the principles and boundaries and fences God gave us to hold our souls and lives and families together. That tired, bedraggled group of men escorting Jesus to a rendezvous with death really had been given "*the keys to the kingdom of heaven*."

They were just too tired and sad to know what Jesus was getting at. Like Jesus said, it was more than they could bear. So Jesus returned to the matter at hand, what they would go through that night and how it would lead to the coming of the Spirit and the saving of the world. "*A little while and you won't see me, and again a little while and you will see me.*" And all God's people said, in so many words, "That's interesting. What the heck are you talking about?" So he tells them, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice!*" Again, the men around him couldn't quite follow what he said.

So Jesus stayed at it, "*When a woman gives birth, she has sorrow for 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 you also have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*" It is interwoven through the whole gospel that God offers an intangible, indestructible kind of joy to those people who will face the terrible sorrow that sin and curse have imposed on the world. What did Jesus say? "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*"

There was no way for sin to be vanquished and death to be conquered except that Jesus dies, and everyone who loved him gets their heart broken. But once the work was done, once sin was atoned for and the grave was open, it was a whole new day for everyone who could take to heart what it was all about. Jesus said to his men, "*In that day you will ask nothing of me.*" Not that three days later the apostles would stop needing Jesus. Rather that forgiveness from the cross and power from the resurrection would provide for Jesus' men and for us a standing with God that will allow us to walk with Jesus, sight unseen and voice unheard.

Let me, Jesus said to them, "*...tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I don't say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf, for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and believed that I have come from God.*" Why a little while this and a little while that, why in forty days would Jesus go airborne, and none of the men around him that night would ever see him again? The answer is that the Son of God came to give us the best possession he had to give, and that is a love relationship with his Father. He went to the cross for his Father. We are Christ's gift to the Father. And we are the gift that the Father gave to Jesus. And the point of the exercise was love. Forgiveness from the cross, and power from the resurrection becomes ours so that we can learn the love that Father, Son and Spirit have always shared in heaven.