

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

“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.”

Jesus speaks about sorrow and joy on a great scale today in the Gospel reading when he said, “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” These words of Jesus pointed to the crucifixion and resurrection, and they also point you to the glory that is to come. It informs who you are in this world and what your future holds. But, apart from God’s word, this sounds confusing and easily misunderstood. The disciples didn’t understand it at first and Jesus spoke to them.

St. John recorded, “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.”

Let’s think about all of this for a minute then what Jesus said. Think about that phrase, “A little while.” This is something you need to be aware of in your lives in several ways. For my generation we measure time by how long it takes an app to download on our phones or for an update on our computer. Anything more than a few seconds for a phone app or a few minutes on the computer and we start questioning our existence and think our lives are ones of suffering. Jesus though is speaking to a little while in which they will see him lifted on the cross and then laid into the tomb. And all the while, of that little while, would be torture leading up to his crucifixion, an agonizing death upon the cross, and the mocking of the Jews and deriding of men. That little while seems like a great while when you consider all that went on and so much did. And then, as Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit, the little while was a deafening silence as his body was laid in the tomb. Yet Easter morning came, and the crucified Lord was risen from the dead. Sorrow was turned into joy as the tomb was empty and he appeared to his disciples and the twelve, now eleven. Mary Magdalene’s tears were wiped away as the Lord called out her name. Death was defeated, Jesus is risen. The joy was the joy of God’s peace given to them even as they were sent out to give this peace.

And for forty days they saw the Lord before them. The Lord, whom they did not see when he was laid in the tomb, they saw again and then he ascended into heaven and was hidden from their sight. They saw him, did not see him, saw him again, and again did not see him. But interestingly enough, Luke’s Gospel account of the ascension ends with something. St. Luke recorded, “While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.” Even as the Lord ascended into heaven, they, the apostles, returned to Jerusalem, with great joy. There’s something at the end of these “little whiles,” joy.

The antiphon for the Introit today is “Shout for joy to God, all the earth. Alleluia. Sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Alleluia.” This is where the name of this Sunday of the church year comes from, “Jubilate.” There is joy to be found and known as you go through this life seeing your Lord crucified, risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Your life is a life of joy because of Christ and his work for you.

That’s all good and well, you might be thinking, but you know another aspect of this life on this side of the grave. Going through this life is something which is lived under the cross. Lest we forget that the Lord reminds us with the image in the reading, “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.” That’s a pretty vivid image Jesus presents. Think about too when Jesus used this analogy this was before epidurals, pain meds of any kind, and classes teaching a husband how to use a tennis ball to massage his wife’s back as she is doing her breathing exercises. Labor is labor and life in this world is lived under the cross. This life is a life of labor and toil. Adam in his sin was cursed to work the land by the sweat of brow with thorns and thistles and then return to dust even as he himself is dust.

When we try to define joy without understanding the ramifications of sin and living in the fallen world then we will never truly understand what real joy is for us. We keep in mind that we live in the “little while.” Our lives are to be looking at what is at the end of the little while and have that define our “little while.” To lose sight of the end though is to have a despair which is unfathomable. One of the ways we do lose sight of this future joy is when forget that Jesus says, “a little while.” Ask a woman in labor who is pushing for two hours how little amount of time that seems and she likely will punch you in the face. But think about how quickly a movie goes by and before you know it two hours of your life have gone by as you sat and watched things get blown up with awesome special effects?

There’s a reason why patience is a fruit of the Spirit. In our old fallen flesh we aren’t patient, we’re the opposite or at the very least selective in our patience. Think for example, what is becoming less and less of a thing but something I remember when I was younger, people waiting outside all night in the cold so they could get the doorbuster deal on Black Friday for a certain tv, game console, or whatever. We are willing to be patient for this but then we it comes to other things that require patience such as getting an education, learning to drive, getting married and living as a married couple, well that’s just unreasonable for us. Heaven forbid a church service go longer than one hour but we get our money’s worth and talk about a how great a game was when it went into overtime. Patience, godly patience, is a fruit of the Spirit, it’s a fruit of faith of Christ. God teaches you patience not only in suffering but as you know and cling to what your future in Christ will be and the joy which awaits you.

When you don’t look to the future and know what you have been given in Christ and is yours in the waters of your baptism you will lose sight of what is to come. The danger is real. Another element in this is what you heard in the Epistle reading, “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Just as we forget the glory to come and that this suffering and bearing crosses is but a little while we also forget or reject the new person God has created us to be in Christ. We enter back into the yoke of slavery to sin we have been delivered from and think “it’s ok” I have time I will live how I want. But in this case those words of Jesus call us to repentance “a little way” turn into “stay awake” don’t grow complacent for the days are evil and don’t be caught like the foolish virgins who stand outside of the wedding feast with no place in the banquet hall. With our hearts this way God warns us that our sorrow will not end and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The Christian’s joy is not in sin and all sorts of ungodly things. There is no real joy in those rather the delight of the Christian and our joy which has been given to us delights and finds joy in God’s word and the things which he gives. So don’t be deceived with empty joy rather as we pray in Divine Service Setting I we have “repentant joy” which looks outside of ourselves.

In all this Jesus speaks to you today and gives you joy. He has atoned for your sin and is risen from the dead. And he is still with you and not just in some mushy I feel him way which doesn’t assuage your sin and sorrow but actually does give you joy. Know who you are and what this means. Baptized into Christ you are clothed with Christ. He speaks to you as his word is in your midst. He feeds you his own body and blood and you have forgiveness, life, and salvation. He strengthens and keeps you in the faith fixing your eyes on the eternal joy to come and will never be taken from you.

The Old Testament reading from Isaiah says this about God, “The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

That’s all yours too as your Lord is here and though you don’t see him, he is still here hidden and veiled in his means. He never grows weary and faint and he keeps you in his care. He points you to that day where this will be the same for you where there will be no more any sin, death, and assaults of the devil and the fallen world to assail you and try to tear you away from Christ. Instead, your future is known, and you have hope of what is to come. Jesus is here even now with healing, and he gives you himself and all his benefits. This “little while of this day,” hearing his word and receiving his Supper feeds you with Bread of Life and gives you eternal salvation. You are together here with your fellow saints in this communion and are encouraged with those confessing this faith with you and by the faithful witness of those who have gone before you in the faith too. “With angels and archangels and all the company of heaven” you laud and magnify the glorious name of the one who turns your sorrow into joy even now and gives you unending joy on the day that you are raised from the dead and at that eternal feast forever.

You are the Lord’s, and you will see him, and all this suffering, sorrow, crosses, sin, and death will be forgotten. Death has been destroyed by his death; Jesus risen the victory is won. With high delight let us unite in songs of great jubilation. The day is coming when you will see the Lord face to face and in unending joy and glory. Be of good cheer dear people of God, it’s but a little a while but the Lord is still with you and he forgives you and gives you joy. It is but a little while in this veil of tears but the glory to come is everlasting. “Shout for joy to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise.”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.