

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

“Shout for joy to God, all the earth. Alleluia. Sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!”

It’s always a bit odd, at first, when this Sunday of the church year is named Jubilate, after the words of the antiphon of the Introit. The church sings, “shout for joy to God, all the earth,” and then Jesus talks about sorrow in the Gospel reading. In some ways it’s a bit sobering. It’s sobering not that Jesus is some “Debbie Downer” telling you to calm down after his resurrection. Jesus is risen, your sin is forgiven, and you, even you share in this resurrection and eternal life. No, the sobering thing in this Gospel reading and day is how Jesus tells you to view life after his resurrection and even his ascension. Jesus teaches his disciples, and he teaches you what it means to go through this world that is a vale of tears with real joy. Like many things in the Christian life, there is a “now and not yet” reality that you live as the baptized people of God. You are drawn by your Lord to see who you are living in this world and the joy you have in Christ now all the while looking to Christ and the eternal joy he gives to you.

Listen again to what Jesus said in the Gospel reading. Now take note of the context. These words from John 16 are from Maundy Thursday, it’s the night of the Lord’s betrayal. Jesus said, “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 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’?”

Let’s think about all of this for a minute what Jesus said. It was confusing to the disciples and they needed an explanation. 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 (Xennial) 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 first 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 in those final days of Holy Week. 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 and his disciples did not see him.

Now what did world think during that first little while? Jesus said, “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.” The world thought Jesus was defeated as he bowed his head, gave up his spirit, and died on Good Friday. The Jewish leaders wanted a guard at the time so that the disciples, in their minds, wouldn’t go and steal the body of Jesus and say he rose from the dead. When he did really rise they bribed the guards who witnessed it all.

The death of Jesus is something which is truly good but there’s something in this as well. He really did die. What about the disciples? Death is reason to weep and lament. He told the disciples they “will weep and lament.” He didn’t say you might, or maybe. He didn’t say if you don’t have enough faith, you will weep and lament. No, Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.”

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. Their 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

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again, and again did not see him. But interestingly enough, Luke's Gospel account of the ascension ends with something striking. St. Luke recorded, "While he [Jesus] 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." Did you catch that? 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.

You are living the little while of your life and the time between the Lord's ascension and his return on the Last Day. What does Jesus say about this to you today? You are no different. You go through this world with weeping and lament. You see the world rejoicing that it cannot see Jesus. It may not be so obvious as opening rejoicing in the streets, but you see it nonetheless. You see the subtle remarks and ways the Lord and his church are pushed away or deeper and deeper into what the world considers out of touch with life and society.

The devil, likewise, wants joy to be the little while and sorrow and lament be those things that no one can take away from you. He wants you to fix your eyes on your sin, on death, on doubt, and whatever he can get you to trust other than your Lord who is crucified for you and risen from the dead.

Your old Adam, the sinful man, in all this is all too willing and glad to go along with the world and the devil. It also tempts you to look to yourself and not shout for joy. The old man wants to remain in his sin for he sees no need for repentance. The sinful condition wants to hide itself in all things which don't have to face the realities of living in a fallen world by burying itself in whatever it likes or can latch onto rather than humbling itself and leaning not on its own understanding.

Jesus said, "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. 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. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of 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 may be full."

The little while of sorrow, Jesus turns into joy. Good Friday always comes before Easter. Labor comes before delivery. Jesus said these words to the disciples as he would go to the cross, died, be laid into the tomb, and rise again on the third day. Jesus came to his own and spoke the word of "peace be with you." He gave them the promise, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." He doesn't leave his people, he doesn't leave you, as orphans.

Jesus makes some comments that are the Gospel reading for next Sunday. What Jesus said, though, occurs before the Gospel reading today. So next week you will hear what the disciples already heard before today's reading. At the beginning of John 16, in verse 7, Jesus said, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

As you think about and take to heart all the Lord says to you this morning, you see what it is go through this "little while" that is the now of life on this side of the glory. And here's the thing, this is Jubilate Sunday and there is a great reason to "shout for joy" because Jesus is risen from the dead. Your Lord is still here with you and he has sent the Holy Spirit, the comforter. You'll hear more about the work of the Holy Spirit in the next few weeks leading up to Pentecost but know this today. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Paraclete which gets translated often into "Comforter" or "Helper." This word, Paraclete has some connections to the Greek word for "call" and with it a preposition that has a meaning of "alongside." You see, as you go through this life, this little while, The Holy Spirit comes along side of you, he is with you, encourages you, admonishes you, and comforts you. The Holy Spirit takes what belongs to Jesus and hands it over to you through the means of grace. He, through the word, turns your sorrow into joy. The thing too about the joy that

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God gives you is that no one can take that joy away from you because it comes from God who has called you his own, is still with you, and promises you will be with him forever.

There is joy and rejoicing as the Holy Spirit has called you to faith and gathered you together as the church. That's another wonderful thing in what Jesus is teaching you today about the joy that you have in him who is the Resurrection and the Life. You are not alone. You are the church. As God's people you don't endure the "little while" by yourself but do so together as the people who have been called out of the darkness and into the light of Christ. You encourage one another in the body of Christ with the words of Jesus. You build one another up and speak well of each other. You serve the Lord together. You bear one another's burdens together. You weep together. You rejoice together. You share in the joy of Easter today and you share in the eternal joy of salvation. You look around you right now and you know that even though you see these people for a little while this morning, for a number of years, or even in this lifetime, you will see them again for ever because together you belong to the Lord who forgives you, has redeemed you, called you his own, and tells you he will raise you up on the Last Day to live in the new heavens and the new earth he prepares for you to dwell with him and all the saints.

"Shout for joy to God, all the earth. Alleluia. Sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!" It's a great and joyous morning as the people of God. It's the Easter season. Jesus is risen from the dead and you have eternal life. You, the church, "sing, pray, and keep his ways." Rejoice in your Lord today with your brothers and sisters in Christ. You rejoice even as you have sorrow no because you know something in all this, you know Jesus and that means everything. Jesus knows you and you are his dear child. Take this all to heart this morning and cling to your Lord who has won the day. He has died for your sin. He has overcome the world. He has crushed the head of the serpent. He has destroyed death. He has done this all for you. This is what you have every day. Every day the Lord grants you life in this world you begin and end each day as a baptized child of God. Day by day, come what may, your Lord will guard and keep. Even if today is your last day in this world and this little while is even shorter, your Lord is still risen from the dead and you belong him. Cling to Jesus who is the Lord and giver of life. Cling to him as you hear his word and keep it. Cling to him as you receive his body and blood given and shed for you. Cling him as you go from this place washed clean in the baptismal waters as a child of God who has eternal joy that no one can take from you.

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