Your grief will turn to joy

John 16:5-33

Key Verse:16:20 “Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.”

In New Testament the words “*me phobeo*”, which means “*Don’t be afraid*” appears 41 times. Jesus said the same words to Peter when Peter met Jesus for the first time at the Sea of Galilee. Jesus said, “*Don’t be afraid. From now on you will fish for people.*” (Lk 5:10). Jesus told his disciples the same “*me phobeo*” while they were struggling in the middle of storm. (Jn 6:20) Jesus said the same to the Apostle Paul when Paul was in prison in Corinth. (Ac 18:9-10) Jesus said, “*Do not be afraid: keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city*.” These words, “*me phobeo*” has the imperative form in Greek, meaning that Jesus commanded them not to be afraid. Jesus commanded them because his disciples were often afraid for sufferings and worried about their future. In other words, they had a habit of worrying about all things all the time. We are not much different from them if we have the habit of worrying and of becoming anxious.

Jesus was about to be arrested and tried. His disciples sensed that something awful was going to happen to Jesus and to their security. They began to be anxious and worried about their uncertain security. How did Jesus help them to overcome this situation? In today’s passage Jesus taught them several things so that they could overcome fear and prepare for the upcoming challenges. We can also learn how to overcome present sufferings and live victorious lives as Christians.

First, Jesus taught them the work of the Holy Spirit (5-15). In 14:16 Jesus promised the coming the Holy Spirit to his disciples. “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever---the Spirit of truth.*” The Father God would send the Holy Spirit as Another Advocate, Another Counselor or Comforter to his disciples to help them and to be with them forever. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor and the Mighty God according to the Prophet Isaiah. (Is 9:6) Jesus taught the secret of the kingdom of heaven and the wisdom of salvation to his disciples and to the people. Jesus protected them from vicious religious leaders by answering all their devilish questions. Jesus also saved them from the storms and fed them when they were hungry. Jesus encouraged them to have faith in God and to experience the power of God through prayer. As long as they were with Jesus, the disciples were safe and secure.

Now the Holy Spirit would take over the role from Jesus and help the disciples to carry out God’s will with confidence and hope. The Holy Spirit would counsel them and protect them. In 14:26 Jesus said, “*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you*.” In fact, as long as the Holy Spirit is with us and in us, we don’t have to worry about anything. He is our counselor, advocate, mediator, teacher, protector, and supporter. If you lack wisdom, ask God for the Holy Spirit. If you are fearful, ask the Holy Spirit to give you faith. If you are poor, ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom to make money to serve God and to support your family. We haven’t received because we didn’t ask. Even though we asked, but didn’t receive, because the motivation for our request was not right with God. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to help us and to be with us forever.

In verses 5-7 Jesus told his disciples the necessity of his departure for the sake of the Holy Spirit. He said, “***Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you.***” (7) The Holy Spirit will take the baton from Jesus for God’s future ministry. Therefore, Jesus had to go to the Father. In verses 8-11 Jesus explained the work of the Holy Spirit, especially to the world. Look at verses 8-11. “***When he comes he will prove this world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned***.” The Holy Spirit will come as a prosecutor who will prove that the world is wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment. About sin, Jesus said that the world was in the wrong because people did not believe in him. Unbelief is a major sin against God. At that time the Jews thought that sin was violating Moses’ Law, which was partially true. But they were wrong because they rejected Jesus, who was the fulfillment of God’s law. Whether it was intentional or unintentional, unbelief is a major sin which causes God’s capital punishment. John 3:18 says, “*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son*.”

About righteousness, the Holy Spirit would convict the world because people had a wrong concept and view about righteousness. They thought that they could become righteous when they kept Moses’ law, which was partially but not wholly true because there is no one righteous, not even one by keeping the law. (Ro 3:10). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Ro 3:23) Even though you keep 612 regulations out of 613, if you violate one of them, you are a law-breaker. In Romans 3:20-22 Paul said, “*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law…But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe*.”Because we cannot become righteous before God by our works or by keeping the law, God provided another way for us to become righteous, which is through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul said that Jesus Christ became a sacrifice of atonement for our sins so that we can be justified freely through our faith in his blood on the cross. Jesus’ disciples did not understand what Jesus was talking about, but later the Holy Spirit would help them to remind them of all Jesus’ teachings and understand them.

Jesus’ death on the cross alone did not meet the requirement of our salvation. His resurrection completely fulfilled it. By conquering the power of death, Jesus proved that he was alive and his promises were true. Jesus’ resurrection proves that God’s righteousness through our faith in Jesus is completed. This is why Jesus said in verse 10, “*About righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer*.”

About judgment the Holy Spirit proves that the world was wrong because the prince of this world is condemned. Look at verse 11. “***and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned***.” At that time the Jews believed that God would condemn them when they sinned against Him. This was partially true. The Holy Spirit would teach them that God would condemn the prince of the world, Satan, in our place when we believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 12:31, “*Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out*.” Satan is an accuser. Satan accuses us when we make mistakes or do not keep God’s law. But Jesus is a Savior. He saves us from Satan’s accusations and set us free from condemnation. The Holy Spirit will do Jesus’ work for them. In Romans 8:1,2 Paul said, “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death*.”

Look at verses 12-15. “***I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.***” Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will guide them into all the truth. When they knew the truth, the truth would set them free. (Jn 8:32) Thus far we have learned that the Holy Spirit will protect us, defend us, and guide us into the way of salvation. What a blessing is for us when the Holy Spirit is with us always and forever! What privilege we have for spiritual battle in this troubled world!

Second, our grief will turn to joy (16-28) When Jesus said, “***In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me***”, his disciples did not understand what he meant. So they kept asking, “***What does he mean by ‘a little while”? We don’t understand what he is saying.***” (18) Here what Jesus meant was his imminent death and resurrection. The disciples would not see him for three days while he was crucified, but after three days they would see him again. Jesus predicted his death and resurrection several times, but they didn’t understand what he meant. How slow they were to understand the words of Jesus! But in verse 20, Jesus encouraged them with the glorious resurrection after his crucifixion. Look at verse 20. “***Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy***.” When Jesus is crucified on the cross, his enemies will rejoice thinking that they removed the Son of God. At that time Jesus’ disciples would weep and mourn for his death. But their grief would turn to joy because Jesus would rise again from the dead after crushing the head of Satan. His disciples would see the glory of resurrection behind the tragedy of crucifixion.

Jesus compared the present suffering to a woman’s birth pains. In verses 21-22 Jesus said, “***A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come, but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy***.” We have several mothers here who went through such excruciating pain when they gave birth to their children. Their husbands only enjoyed their newborn babies, but their wives experienced tremendous pain. However, the mothers forget their pain when they saw their newborn babies. Tears from joy made them forget their pains which they went through. In the same way we grieve and suffer while living in this troubled world. This is like birth pains for new life and eternal life. When the time of grief passes, our present suffering will turn to joy. We’ll forget what was behind and will rejoice for what is ahead. Paul said in Romans 8:18, “*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*” This is true! Because of the future glory and eternal life in heaven we endure present sufferings. Our present sufferings are not worth compared to the glory in the future. Someone said that men can live without many things, but not without hope. We have glorious hope for future in the kingdom of heaven. So we can endure sufferings and overcome this world.

In verses 23-28 Jesus asked his disciples to pray in his name. Prayer is total dependence on God and a privilege for believers. Prayer has power to make impossible possible. Prayer in Jesus’ name is very special to his disciples because Jesus is the Son of God. The name of Jesus has power as the Son of God. There was one Korean herb doctor who wanted to visit the site of Mt. Horeb in the desert of Sinai. But this historical site was prohibited to civilians. It was not open to the public. But the gate to the site was opened for the doctor because he had a free pass to visit any place in Saudi Arabia. The King of Saudi Arabia gave the doctor a free pass as an appreciation gift because the doctor had healed a prince, his lovely son. The power of the name of the king was beyond the laws and rules. The name of Jesus has power to bring God’s answer to our prayer. Jesus promised in verse 23,24. “***In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete***.” This is why we pray in Jesus’ name whenever we pray. Jesus is the mediator between God and us. He will plead for us when we are helpless and when we are weak. We will experience that the door will be opened when we pray in Jesus’ name. We will receive whatever we ask for when we pray in his name. We will enter the kingdom of heaven when we pray in Jesus’ name. We may visit the private site in the name of King of Saudi Arabia. But we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven in that man’s name. We can enter the kingdom of heaven only in the name of Jesus Christ, who died in our place and rose again from the dead. Amen! Have you ever prayed in Jesus’ name when you are in trouble? Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Amen!

Third, Jesus overcame the world (29-33) Jesus’ disciples said that now they understood what Jesus had meant. They understood that Jesus came from God the Father and he is the Son of God. Understanding Jesus’ word was good, but not enough to overcome coming sufferings and hardships. Jesus predicted that they would be scattered and go home when Jesus was crucified. They would leave Jesus alone. Look at verse 32. “***A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me***.” Jesus foretold his trial, death, and resurrection in advance so that they might be prepared against temptation. Jesus was like a lovely mother who teaches her children to be prepared in advance for upcoming difficulties. Now here are Jesus’ final encouraging words. Let us read 33. “***I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world***.” How can we have peace in this troubled world? People lose peace and become nervous and anxious when they are in trouble. We can have peace in the time of trouble when we believe in Jesus’ words. Jesus said, “*Take heart! I have overcome the world*.” The word ‘*take heart*’ is more than just ‘don’t be afraid’. It means to have good cheer and enjoy sufferings for the sake of future glory. Jesus overcame the world through his death on the cross and resurrection. Hebrews 12:2 says, “*For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*.” We can overcome this troubled world because Jesus overcame it beforehand. We can overcome the world because we have the glorious hope in God’s kingdom. We can overcome the world because we have the Holy Spirit who will guide us, protect us, and pray for us. We can overcome the world because we have the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Mighty God. Amen.