

A Little While

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[0 : 00] Dan is serving us this morning and he plans to read from the Christian Standard Bible, the CSB. So that's what will be on the screen. If you have a different version, it might be just a little different and that will be just fine.

Here is John chapter 16, starting at verse 16 and running down through verse number 24. In a little while you will no longer see me.

Again, in a little while you will see me. Then some of his disciples said to one another, What is this he's telling us? In a little while you will not see me. Again, in a little while you will see me.

And because I am going to the Father. They said, What is this thing he is saying in a little while? We don't know what he's talking about. Jesus knew they wanted to ask him. And so he said to them, Are you asking one another about what I said?

In a little while you will not see me. Again, in a little while you will see me. Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn. But the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful.

[1 : 01] But your sorrow will turn to joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering.

Because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice. And no one will take away your joy from you.

In that day you will not ask me anything. Truly I tell you, anything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Until now, you have asked for nothing in my name.

Ask and you will receive so that your joy may be complete. Thanks, Dan. Good Father, we are grateful to be gathered together. Grateful to have your word.

Thank you for preserving it for us. Thank you for being so kind and abundantly generous that we all can have copies of Scripture, not only here with us in our hands, but in many cases, several copies of your Scripture at home.

[2 : 05] You are so kind and generous with us. And so we ask that you would help us as we turn our attention now to the preaching of your word, that we would be attentive, that we would be mindful, that we would be careful, that we would be discerning, that we would hear and understand those things, Holy Spirit, that you are kind to illumine our minds and our hearts to understand.

Please be with us, guide and direct us. We ask this for your glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and for our good.

In Jesus' name, amen. Have you ever had one of those moments where life suddenly changed?

One phone call, one conversation in a hallway, one doctor's appointment, one, you know, scroll on social media, one unexpected email in a single moment.

Everything can look different. Sometimes those moments are wonderful. You meet the one who becomes your spouse.

[3 : 29] That happened to me July 27th, 1992. That was a special moment for me. Maybe you see a picture of your baby on the ultrasound, or you land that new job, or you receive the gift that you've been hoping for.

Sometimes those moments are wonderful. But sometimes those moments bring sorrow. You receive terrible news that you are not prepared for.

A church divides. You see your baby on the screen, but that baby is not moving. Someone you love is suddenly gone.

An appointment results in a diagnosis that you did not expect. Life can change in a moment.

And we don't always know what it means. And sometimes we discover, but only later, that we were simply in a little while.

[4 : 44] The disciples are facing one of those moments. And what Jesus teaches them, as he continues in John chapter 16, is something that every follower of Jesus must learn.

Sorrow is real. And sometimes it lasts for a little while. But for those who are in Christ, for those who belong to Christ, sorrow is never final.

Jesus is leaving. He is going to the Father. The world will hate and persecute and murder his disciples.

But Jesus promises them the helper. And the helper will glorify Jesus, the Holy Spirit. He will guide the disciples into all truth.

He will help the disciples to understand the significance of Jesus' life and death and resurrection.

After telling the disciples all of this, Jesus says something confusing.

[5 : 58] Look at verse 16. A little while, and you will see me no longer. And again, a little while, and you will see me.

Do you like riddles? What has to be broken before it is useful? An egg.

Very good. Very sharp in the back row there. Very good. I'll give you another one since that one went so quick. What gets bigger when you take away from it?

A hole. Man, this is a sharp, sharp crew. Jesus' words in verse 16 sound like a riddle, don't they? A little while.

The disciples are confused. Why are they confused? Well, because given the triumphal entry in Jerusalem, they have expectations.

[7 : 07] Jesus will be accepted as the Messiah. He will be crowned as king. His kingdom will rise. His fame will spread. But now Jesus says, a little while, and you won't see me anymore.

And this doesn't add up. It doesn't make sense. It sounds like a riddle. Verse 17. So some of the 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'm going to the Father. They're trying to piece these things that he's saying together.

Verse 18. So they were saying, what does he mean by a little while?

We do not know what he is talking about. Did you notice in your copy of the scripture, the repetition of the words, a little while?

[8 : 09] I think John repeats that. He's trying to invite us into their state of mind. They are not hostile. They are not objecting. They are not rebellious.

They are simply unable to see what Jesus sees. And they're unable to see what we see with the benefit of redemptive history.

We know about the resurrection. They don't get it yet. And so they are confused. Jesus is so kind. He notices their confusion. And he understands that this confusion that they're experiencing now is about to turn into something deeper. Sorrow.

Look at verse 19. Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him.

[9 : 13] 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.

What does Jesus know? Well, he knows that Judas will betray him. He knows that Peter will deny him.

He knows that the disciples will scatter when he is arrested. What Jesus means by a little while includes the whip and the crown of thorns and the nails and the cross.

A little while includes his death. A little while includes his death. It includes his burial and every awful hour in between. When he is absent from them.

[10 : 39] While his disciples mourn, the world will celebrate. The injustice seems so unfair.

The pain feels so unbearable. And yet a stunning reversal is about to occur. Their sorrow will be real, but it will not be final.

Jesus says, it will only last for a little while. And then, Jesus says in verse 20, your sorrow will turn to joy.

Notice he does not say that joy will replace your sorrow. Or joy will come after your sorrow. He says, your sorrow will turn into joy.

To help them grasp this reversal. He gives them a metaphor, a word picture.

[11 : 48] Look at verse 21. 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 will have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you.

I feel wholly inadequate to comment on this illustration, but just bear with me for a moment. When a woman is in labor, the pain is real.

It is intense. It is exhausting. It feels like it might never end. And yet everyone in the room knows something important.

[13 : 05] The labor pain does not mean something is wrong. It means that someone is about to be born. And once the baby arrives, the meaning of that pain changes.

The pain was not pointless. It produced the joy that followed. Jesus says, the disciples' sorrow will be like a woman giving birth.

For them, his death will be intense and exhausting. And those hours of absence, while his body lies in the grave, will feel utterly unbearable.

But it is through this labor pain, through this little while, that God births eternal joy.

And the resurrection will reveal that their pain was not pointless. Joy doesn't replace their sorrow.

[14 : 20] Their sorrow will turn into joy. Joy that is unstealable. Joy that cannot be taken away.

And so it is that Jesus says in verse 22, I will see you again. And then your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you.

The resurrection takes the sorrow that the disciples experienced when Jesus is arrested and beaten and crucified and dies and lies in the grave.

The resurrection takes that sorrow and changes it into joy. And the resurrection changes something else.

It changes how the disciples pray. Look at verse 23. In that day, you will ask nothing of me.

[15 : 33] Truly, truly, second time in this text, Jesus has used those words. 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 may be full. Before the cross and before the resurrection, the disciples could pray to the Father.

We know this because Jesus taught his disciples to pray that way. Or they could simply ask Jesus for what they need. Now Jesus says, you're not going to ask me anymore.

And you don't go to the Father sort of bare bones. You know? You go to the Father, Jesus says, in my name. The resurrection changes how the disciples pray.

[16 : 49] They will pray to the Father in Jesus' name. Now some people hear that phrase and then they treat prayer like it's a blank check.

or, because most of us don't write checks anymore, a credit card with no spending limit. Jesus doesn't mean you can ask for whatever you want and then just tag his name on the end of it and expect to receive an answer to that request.

You can imagine one sibling saying to another, Mom says. Mom said what? Mom says we can eat as many M&Ms; as we want because dinner doesn't really matter.

How would you know that's not true? Well, you're not, you're not talking according to Mom's character. No Mom would ever say that. Or, Dad said, don't bother cleaning your room while we're gone.

Why don't you all just sit around and watch TV for the whole evening? How do you know this is not what Mom or Dad said? Because it doesn't match Mom's character and it doesn't match Dad's priorities.

[18 : 15] To pray in Jesus' name means praying requests that correspond to His character. It means praying requests that align with His mission.

Requests that demonstrate submission to His will. To pray in Jesus' name means praying what Jesus Himself would pray for.

If the disciples pray this way, if they pray for what Jesus Himself would pray for, then Jesus gives them this remarkable promise in verse 24, Ask, and you will receive that your joy may be full.

The disciples heard Jesus say a little while and it confused them.

They did not understand the timeline. They had not yet believed that He would die and rise from the dead. they could not wrap their hands around a crucified Messiah.

[19 : 50] brothers and sisters, we also experience God working in little while seasons.

We know about waiting. We know about having more questions than answers. We've experienced injustice and unresolved tension in relationships.

we've seen the ways good things can be broken. I think it's in those moments when we are tempted to think maybe God is not in control.

Maybe God does not care. Maybe God is not here. what if instead we remembered right now in this moment I am in a little while.

My sorrow is real but it is not the end of the story. This may simply be a chapter that I have not read yet.

[21 : 13] and what if that diagnosis or that betrayal or that loss or that unexpected change of plans what if those little whiles when life changes suddenly become the moments that compel us to come before our father's throne of grace.

what if instead of withdrawing or numbing or isolating or filling every moment with busyness so that we don't think about the pain what if instead we bring our confusion about this little while to God and we pray in Jesus name.

because of Jesus finished work and because of his ongoing intercession on our behalf you can approach God with confidence you will find mercy and grace to help in your time of need it's true what we have already sang together thieves may take your possessions disease may steal your health death may rob you of family and friends and if your joy is in comfort or career or security or wealth or experiences then during that little while your joy can be taken away but if your joy is in a reunion with

Jesus and if your joy is in the security of being a branch connected to the true vine and if your joy is in Jesus' promise that the father answers prayers prayed in his name then your joy is unstealable sorrow it cannot be stolen from you it can't be stolen by unkindness it can't be stolen by a stock market crash it can't be stolen by gossip or slander not even by bullying or abuse or persecution or death sorrow is real but it isn't final and in your father's hands your pain is not pointless it is productive this is why we sing oh joy that seekest me through pain joy is seeking you through pain child of

God though your circumstances make it so very hard to imagine right now Jesus promises you a day a day is coming when your joy will be full do you believe this for the disciples this night will end in sorrow but the sorrow they experience on Friday will not be the end of the story the cross looked like utter defeat and the tomb felt like finality it seemed as though darkness and death and the devil had certainly won but as Psalm 30 verse 5 says weeping may stay overnight but there is joy in the morning and on that first day of the week early in the morning this promise from

[26 : 04] Psalm 30 came true in the most literal way imaginable the night of sorrow gave way to the morning of resurrection joy you may be in a little while right now a season of confusion a season of sorrow a season of doubt a season of pain remember remember the sorrow of the little while is labor pain for eternal joy you may not understand God's plan bring your confusion to the throne of grace and pray in Jesus name you may endure pain for a little while trust the father to turn your pain into joy that cannot be stolen away your sorrow is real

Jesus knows that but he also knows that it is not final let's pray father father we are grateful for your goodness and your compassion and your mercy and your steadfast love that follows us through every day lord jesus we are grateful for the great work that you accomplished when you took on flesh when you took on a body and you came to earth in order to live a perfect life and die an atoning substitutionary death and in order to be raised to new life proving that your death really was the once for all sacrifice to end all sacrifices holy spirit we are grateful for your power to grant life and repentance so that sin sick sinners like us can respond by repenting and believing in this gospel father we confess that we have wrestled this week with little whiles that we have found ourselves in places where we're confused about what's happening we have found ourselves wrestling with doubt and frustration maybe anger has stirred up inside of us thank you for the forgiveness that is ours through our savior the lord jesus christ maybe we have found ourselves in a little while and we have been experiencing pain and sorrow and loss and grief holy spirit would you comfort us and encourage us and motivate us with these good promises from your word to press on to keep on believing to fix our eyes on jesus he is the author and the finisher the perfecter of our

faith we cling to christ in our little wiles knowing that he is holding us fast and will not let us go father son and holy spirit we love you and we are grateful to be your people would you make us this week more faithful in prayer would you make us this week more mindful of the little while would you help us to seek out joy even and through the sorrow that we experience please make us more like jesus this week so that we are compelling evidence of your love and your grace and your power to save and to secure people for all eternity give us fresh joy in our salvation we ask in jesus name amen