

John 16:4-33

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Date: 23 June 2024

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back to John 16, page 902. Let's pray one more time as we come to God's word.

! Father, in these moments would you speak, and by the Holy Spirit whom you promise in these verses, would you teach us and guide us into all truth.

For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, one of the consistent themes in the pre-election fuss, if we can call it that, that we're in at the minute, is leadership.

In many ways it's part of the political game, isn't it? It's part of what happens at this time in a season, an election season. You point out your opponent's flaws, you highlight why their leadership is not one worthy of voting for.

They're weak, or they're out of touch, or they're confused, or they're just not really serious. That kind of thing. While, of course, you and your party are none of those things.

[1 : 08] It's a common tactic. And it's a common tactic because we know that good leadership, in any context, is really important. So the question as we come to the passage this morning is, what do you make of Jesus' leadership in this section of John's Gospel?

A couple of weeks ago we heard that he had just told his closest disciples that the world hates them. Chapter 15, verse 19. They will be persecuted for their allegiance to Jesus.

What lies ahead for this group is going to be nothing less than awful. Jesus preparing them for battle. And then he says in our passage today, and by the way, I'm leaving.

I'm not going to be here to help you. What would you think of a political leader who said that? Well, look, here they get the party together. Here are all the problems that the party is facing.

They speak to the nation. Here are all the problems that the nation is facing in these days. And I'm off. Maybe we've actually just seen that, actually.

[2 : 11] I don't know. But Jesus has talked about his departure, his going back to the Father, right the way back to when he got out the wash basin for the disciples' feet in chapter 13. He talked about his hour, which has now come.

But he didn't talk about this context of opposition for his followers. He didn't talk about that, verse 4, this opposition that the disciples would face because he was with them, he says.

I haven't told you this because I was with you, and I assume that's because the opposition, when he is there, is directed at him. And also he's right on hand. He's right there to help them if that comes their way.

But all of that's about to change. He's about to leave. So is that a failure of leadership? Is he weak? Is he out of touch in some way? The disciples can't see any good in this at all.

Look at verse 5. They are filled with sorrow that he is leaving. Sorrow has filled their hearts. But that is because they can't see past themselves. Back in chapter 14, verse 28, Jesus told them about all of this.

[3 : 13] He said all of this was coming, and he rebuked them at that time for not rejoicing. Their circumstances might be hard, but what is about to unfold is nothing less than the climax of Jesus' ministry.

The very reason, the epicenter of the reason why he came to the world. They should be full of faith. They should be rejoicing rather than full of fear and sorrow.

In fact, Jesus presses on this group that his departure is going back to the Father is actually going to be better for them than having him there present with them in person.

Verse 7. I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away. It is going to be better for you. Is that right? What could be better than having the Lord Jesus Christ in your presence?

What could be better than being in the same room, around the same table with the Lord Jesus Christ? Feeling the warmth of his breath when he speaks to you. Looking into his eyes.

[4 : 14] What could be better than that? How many of us today would swap places with the disciples to be able to just be in the presence, the physical presence of the Lord of glory even for a moment?

And yet Jesus says it is better for them and it is better for every generation since. It is better for us here this morning that Jesus goes away because of what he tells us here in chapter 16.

You see, when he talks about leaving, when he talks about returning to the Father, it isn't just that he is going to get out of the way. It isn't just that he is leaving the whole situation.

But the path to that destination, the path back to the Father requires him to go to the cross to die for the sin of the world. Then three days later to rise again, defeating Satan, sin and death once and for all.

After which he will then return to his Father in heaven. It is to their advantage, it is to our advantage that Jesus departs because it will mean nothing less than the salvation of the world.

[5 : 24] But as well as that, as well as the salvation of the world, his focus here in 16 is that it will mean that he can send the Holy Spirit. If he doesn't go, look at verse 7, the Spirit cannot come.

But if I go, Jesus tells them, I will send him to you. If I don't go, there is no Spirit. If I go, I will send him to you. His going is required for the Spirit to come.

Now let's pause here for a second. It is important to recognize that the Christian life is life in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

He is absolutely central to how we live in a world that hates us. And whilst in our more wistful moments we might wish that we were sitting with the Lord Jesus in the upper room, Jesus himself tells us otherwise.

Life lived in the Spirit is better than life in the physical presence of Jesus. Now we mustn't exaggerate what life in the Spirit means, but we mustn't diminish the goodness and the blessing of what it means either.

[6 : 30] Indeed, it is that goodness that Jesus explains in this passage. It is to the disciples' advantage that Jesus departs and the Spirit comes for four reasons.

And that's what I want us to explore this morning. Four reasons. The first reason is that he will bring conviction to the world. Point number one, conviction to the world.

But if I go, I will send him to you. Verse seven. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer.

Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. Here is the promise of the Spirit's ministry to the world. He will bring conviction concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

But notice the way his sending is described. Jesus says that if he doesn't go, the helper will not come to you.

[7 : 34] You see that? Verse seven. If I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Because Jesus is going, he will send the Spirit to his disciples. So the Spirit's ministry to the world isn't a disembodied thing.

It comes through the empowering of these disciples. The Spirit will come to them for the sake of the world. And that is exactly what we see when his promise is fulfilled at Pentecost.

When the disciples, specifically Peter, preach the gospel to Acts chapter 2, men from every nation under heaven, the world, and the Spirit comes, he brings conviction concerning sin.

The hearers are cut to the heart as they see who Christ is. And that this Jesus whom you crucified, as Peter says, is the Lord of glory. And they realize they haven't put their faith in him as they should.

[8 : 40] Concerning righteousness. They realize that the empty righteousness of old Israel is precisely that. Empty. It is dead. And that Christ is the truly righteous one who has shown that righteousness.

John has recorded the witnesses to that righteousness throughout the book. The woman at the well, chapter 4. The man born blind, chapter 9. Lazarus, chapter 11, to name a few.

And then the climax. He rises from the dead as his vindication by the Spirit and returns to the glory of the Father. Concerning righteousness. And then concerning judgment.

Pentecost. The hearers see that in their sinful self-righteous state, they have made the wrong judgment about Jesus. Jesus had told them back in John 5, 22, that God had placed all judgment in

his hands.

But they rejected that and crucified him as a guilty criminal. However, in that death, Jesus had judged the ruler of this world. That's what's going on. As Jesus is judged on the cross, bearing our sin in our place and bearing the judgment of God, he and himself is judging the ruler of the world.

[9 : 47] The one who engineered this condemnation as being judged as Christ is. And that judgment means that he himself is now condemned. This is the promise of John 16 and it comes to pass in Acts 2.

But while all of this sounds negative, sin and righteousness and judgment, conviction on those points, it is a good thing. It is a good thing because it is the means through which the Spirit brings salvation.

The Spirit confronts the world with its failure and proves its guilt, but he does so in order to convert. And of course, that was the outcome at Pentecost. Jesus' followers went from a group of about 120 to over 3,000 as the Spirit did his work.

This is God loving the world. This is God bringing conviction for sin to the world in order that they can find salvation in the Lord Jesus.

There were 11 on the mountain at the Great Commission. There are 120 in Acts chapter 1. There are thousands more in Acts chapter 2 and the story continues today. Billions of people convicted by the Holy Spirit onto salvation.

[11 : 00] If Jesus had not departed and returned to the Father, you would not be here this morning and neither would I. The Spirit brings conviction to the world leading to salvation.

Secondly, he brings guidance to the church leading into truth. Guidance to the church leading into truth.

I still have many things to say to you, verse 12, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. Like so much of this section, we have a problem in many ways in the contemporary church.

We take these words and we read them in such a way that bypasses that initial context. One commentator says we take them from the upper room into our living rooms, and we must avoid doing that. These words are spoken to these disciples, these first apostles, describing the ministry that they will have.

[12 : 15] And Jesus has already told them in 1426 that the Spirit would teach them and enable them to remember all that he has told them. This is a promise that the apostles will be enabled by the Spirit to take what Jesus has said, verse 14, He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine, which is also the Father's, verse 15, all that the Father has is mine.

So he will take all of God's revelation, the Spirit, and he will enable the apostles to remember it. Where is that revelation to be found?

The four gospels, the book of Acts, the letters, indeed verse 13, the promises that the Spirit will also declare to the apostles the things that are to come.

Prophecies that we have in the New Testament letters about the future, but also the book of Revelation. In fact, the opening words of the book of Revelation sound a lot like what Jesus says here. Listen to this, Revelation 1 verse 1, the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things which must soon take place.

Part of the apostles' foundational role in the church is that they will be empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit to write the New Testament.

[13 : 37] Can you see why Jesus might have thought, verse 12, that this was too much for them to bear? You are going to be enabled to write the document upon which the whole church in all history will stand.

These men would write about and they would bear witness to Jesus. At the same time, in their words, the Spirit would bear witness and this would guide the church in truth.

So this is first a promise to the apostles, but that doesn't diminish its relevance to us. We need to be led in the truth.

We need to know what our Savior said. We need to know what is to come in order to live accordingly. If you don't know what lies ahead, you can't be best prepared for that occasion. And

we have these things in our New Testament.

As the Spirit led the apostles in the truth, so he leads us in the truth through them. So we must let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, Colossians 3.16.

[14:38] And there we will both see the Spirit glorify the Lord Jesus as he has promised, and work inwardly in our hearts and minds so that we can glorify the Lord Jesus as we should. Jesus still has many things to say to us, but let us remember where he does that.

He does it in the Spirit-inspired New Testament, the Spirit-inspired Scriptures, and through the proclamation of that word. The Spirit as our helper guides the people of God in the truth.

Thirdly, he will bring communion with the Father. Communion with the Father leading to joy. As Jesus describes his leaving, and the imminence of that, the disciples are confused.

Verse 17, what is this that he says to us? A little while you'll not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me, because I'm going to the Father. Verse 18, we do not know what he's talking about. So Jesus explains. And he reiterates that it is going to be tough. The world will hate them, and they'll weep, and they'll lament. Verse 20, indeed the world will think that they have won.

[15:46] And it will seem that way initially. The world will look on the defeat of Jesus on the cross and think, there we are, we got rid of him. Panic over. But like a mother giving birth, the pain and sorrow and anguish will give way to joy.

Because there will be a reunion. Jesus has in view, first of all, the gap between Friday and Sunday. In this case, it's the next couple of days. The world will think that they have triumphed as they see the wretched body of Jesus hanging on the cross, lowered into the tomb.

But Sunday is coming. The sorrow will give way to joy as the disciples see Christ again. This time they'll see him in his victorious, resurrected body.

Death has been defeated. All that Jesus promised has come true. It will be an amazing thing. All of the sorrow of Friday will give way to joy on Easter Sunday. But there will come a time when he leaves permanently.

When as we confessed in the Creed a moment ago, he ascended into heaven. And they won't see him again in this life. Well, what happens then? What do you do then? When he's gone fully, where will they go for instruction?

[16:58] Wisdom, comfort, strength. He tells them then something remarkable. Look at verse 23. In that day, when I have returned to the Father, 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.

They can go directly to the Father. When Jesus returns to heaven, they can go directly to the Father. Up to now, no one has ever prayed, our Father in heaven.

And no one has ever asked for anything in Jesus' name. But through the Spirit, this is now possible. You know that you can pray the Lord's Prayer because you possess the Spirit.

It is now possible. You can have direct communion with the Father. And in that communion, there is fullness of joy. This is such an important point for the disciples to grasp.

[18:04] That Jesus does away with his metaphors and analogies. Do you notice that? There are no vines or branches anymore to describe their relationship. There's no mothers giving birth to describe their experience of trials. He tells them straight that they have a Father in heaven to whom they can go.

And with whom they have direct communion. This would have blown the disciples' minds. Old Testament references to God as Father are little more than illusions.

But when the second person of the Trinity takes on flesh, and John says in chapter 1, in seeing Him, in seeing Jesus, we have seen the, quote, one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The reality of God being a Father becomes clear. And here is where this really matters. Look at verse 27. When you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you can say that the Father himself loves you.

He loves you. You can rest in the knowledge that the God of heaven and earth loves you. Christian, how does God feel about you?

[19:14] He loves you. He loves you. I know some of you doubt that. Some of you don't believe that that is the case.

Of course, you would say it because you have adequate theology to do so. But you think in your heart of hearts that your sin is too serious, or your faith is too weak, or your devotion to Him is too tepid.

He loves you. Maybe, like I say, if I was to press you, you'd say, I suppose He does love me because Jesus died for me.

I read that in my Bible. But He doesn't love you because Jesus died for you, because that gets things the wrong way around. Jesus didn't die to put the Father in His debt.

Jesus didn't die to persuade the Father to love us. No, Jesus and the Father are one. Chapter 10, verse 30 makes it clear. They're one in their words and in their works. So it is because the Father loves us that He sent Jesus to this moment, to His hour, to His death and resurrection for us and for our salvation.

[20 : 24] He loves you. John Owen says this, What He's saying is, it is because the Father loves us that He sent Jesus to die and rise, to reconcile us to Him.

The Spirit brings communion with the Father. And when you know that the Father loves you, that brings joy. Communion with the Father leading to joy. And then the fourth thing, the Spirit brings, number four, the presence of Christ leading to peace.

The presence of Christ. The disciples sound like they're getting it now. Verse 30, Now we know what you're talking about, they say. And Jesus ensures they really do. Verse 31, Do you now believe?

Verse 32, You will be scattered. And I'll die alone. Only the Father will be His companion. But, verse 33, I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.

In the world you'll have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world. Two words that are really vital in all of that. In me, in Christ, they will have peace.

[22 : 16] The Spirit whom He will send will bring Christ's presence to the disciples. And the outcome of that will be peace. Peace with God, as the Spirit applies the atoning work of Christ to them.

And hostilities with God cease. When we put our faith in Christ, we're united to Him and we have peace with God. And then, of course, the peace of God, as the Spirit indwells and assures them of Christ's final and ultimate victory.

It is to your advantage that Jesus returned to His Father.

Because in His death and resurrection, He triumphed over the world. He triumphed over the ruler of the world and all His servants. And in His sending the Spirit, He has given you the means by which you can participate in that same victory.

It is God's victory, but it is a victory that belongs to the children of God. That is why the Apostle Paul can describe the Corinthians as more than conquerors.

[23 : 23] Jesus has overcome the world. However hard it gets, however much the hatred of the world presses in on us and makes life difficult, all of that opposition is on the clock.

All of it will come to an end because Jesus has triumphed. And the Spirit of victory is the Spirit that He has sent into our hearts. We have communion with the Father.

We don't need to go anywhere else to know God and to understand Him and to be in relationship with Him. Our Father in heaven, in Jesus' name. We come to the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

He has made it all possible. You don't need to go anywhere else for meaning and purpose and significance because the one who established the universe invites you into relationship with Him. And it is all by the Spirit who has sent to Pentecost. So, here is a leader whose leaving makes things better for His people.

[24 : 25] He will send a helper who will convict the world leading to salvation, who will guide the church in the truth, who will bring communion with God the Father leading to joy and bring the presence of the victorious Christ leading to peace.

Jesus is the leader that we want. He is the leader that we need. The question is, do you know Him? Do you know Him?

If you don't know Him, turn to Him in repentance for your sin. Turn from your sin. Understand the conviction that you feel about living in the world the way that, apart from the way God made you, living in the world on your terms, in rejection of God, that conviction that you feel is from Him.

The Spirit is at work in you. Turn yourself over to Jesus. I'm sorry for living my way in your world. Please forgive me. And because the Father loves you, He will receive you. He will bring you in. And if you do know Him, do you know Him as the one who brings joy and peace?

[25 : 32] Don't go anywhere else looking for joy and peace. There is only joy and peace in the Lord Jesus in communion with the Father. He is the one to go to.

He is the one who will still your restless heart. He is the one who will give you fullness of joy. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.

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