

John 16 (16-22) – Tears of Sorrow, Tears of Joy

When Jesus said, “*So also you have sorrow now,*” he was talking about the fact that he was going away, but the disciples didn’t understand what was going on, and they were confused. They had joy because Jesus was there. But then they would feel sorrow when he died. Then joy again when he rose from the dead. Then confusion again when he ascended. Then joy again when the Holy Spirit came down. But even after all of that, they, and all Christians, await that final, full joy, when Jesus comes again to reign as king.

When you first meet Jesus, he turns your sorrow over your sins into joy for him. In your Christian life, when Jesus is with you, it gives you joy, and when he seems absent, it brings you sorrow. When he seems to go away, but then he manifests himself once again to your heart, it causes you to rejoice. When you are down in the dumps, depressed, despairing, but then he shows up. When he overcomes some sort of sin in your life. When you have grieved the Holy Spirit but now you have repented and he moves in your life. When Jesus gets you out of a jam, when he gives you that certain sense of peace, when he floods you soul with his presence, when he reveals himself in a deep, powerful way, it brings joy in your life. You see him as helper, as healer, as deliverer, as Lord. You see Jesus again, and it gives you joy.

That’s what the revelation of Jesus Christ to your heart and in your life does. And he can and will do that throughout your life. You will have tears of sorrow, and you will also have tears of joy. And there is a joy that will never go away, because nothing can take it away. A permanent joy.

When you have sorrow, what you need is to see Jesus again. Yes, as a Christian, Jesus is always with you. But what you need is for Jesus to reveal himself to you in a way that overcomes your sorrow. Jesus transforms your sorrow into joy, with a transcendent and timeless joy.

In this world you can take joy in many things, many places, many people, many relationships, and many experiences. But those things don’t always

last, you can't always get to them, or afford them, or have them, or keep them. Circumstances can change your enjoyment of them. Things you once enjoyed you no longer enjoy. And sorrow can take the joy out of most anything you can do. It seems to hover like a cloud, as your tears keep falling like the summer rain, turning what used to make you happy into just another reminder of why you are sad.

But Jesus can give you a joy that nothing can take away. A joy that can make the darkest of clouds disappear, even when they are still there. He can give you tears of joy even when they are mixed with tears of sorrow. In 2 Corinthians 6:10, the Apostle Paul was talking about the ups and downs and all arounds of his life and ministry, and he said he was *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*. Jesus is known as the man of sorrows but also as the one who was anointed with gladness above all others. Paul said you are to rejoice in the Lord always, and that means even when you have sorrow, and especially when you have sorrow. That's the right time to focus on who Jesus is and what he has done, on who he is to you and what he'll do for you.

It isn't hypocritical to have both sorrow and joy at the same time. Romans 12:15 says to rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Sometimes you are around both, and sometimes you are both. That isn't hypocrisy; that is maturity. That is learning how to properly process life.

When Romans 8:28 says all things work together for your good, it doesn't mean that all things are good, or that all things feel good. It means that God is working his plan to make you more like Jesus by learning to see Jesus in all the ups and downs and all arounds of life. Including death. Christians can know that God is working his plan even when things aren't so good. When you have great sorrow, know that great joy will come again to you.

But what is the source and substance of that joy? Sometimes the thing that brought you joy doesn't get recovered, reconciled, or restored. Sometimes you lose friends and loved ones. But Jesus is the source and substance of

your deepest joy. He is the one you need to see when friendships end, when finances crumble, when health fades away, and when loved ones die.

Life isn't supposed to be just all happy and no sad. You aren't supposed to wake up every day and say, I'm great, life is great, and everything is great. You aren't supposed to be happy all the time. That isn't until the next life. In this life, you have to learn to have sorrow and joy.

People try and avoid sorrow, they try and live a life without sorrow, and they think the goal is to have no sorrow. But the Bible and life tell you that you will have sorrow. And yet you don't have to wallow in your sorrow. It isn't a sin to have sorrow, but you can sin in your sorrow by not allowing God to minister to you in your sorrow. It grieves the Spirit of God when you turn to sin instead of him in your sorrow.

But Jesus can transform your sorrow. Jesus is the living embodiment of what joy really is. He can bring his transcendent joy and transform sorrowful situations into a revelation of himself. Even in tears of sorrow you can have tears of joy. It's true. Let me explain.

The disciples were starting to realize that they were going to lose the personal presence of the one that they had left everything for, the one they followed and lived with. The one they had come to adore, to worship, to totally depend on. The one who did miracles and who gave them the power to do miracles, the one they believed to be the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. He was going to go away. Jesus was everything to these men, but he was going to become even more to them. But he had to go away to accomplish that. And he had to go away more than once to fully do that.

You need to realize something about that from this text. It is a major lesson of the Bible. God will take certain things away from you, and it may not be because you messed it up. God may take them away, even good things, even things that aren't spoiling you, things you are being a good steward of, even things that help you to be godlier. And it will hurt, and you might not

understand why. But God has a good plan for you. And sometimes you have to lose good things in order to see other things. Sometimes you have to let go of good things in order to hold on to greater things. Sometimes even Jesus needs to go away in order to come back in a greater way. The greatest joy that Jesus gives is a greater revelation of himself.

In 1 Peter 1:7-8, the Apostle Peter writes about the trial of your faith. And he says that God reveals your faith to you through that trial, and it is more precious than gold, even though it feels like fire when you are going through it. Peter is saying that the thing that brings you sorrow is the thing that will reveal your faith, and a faith revealed is a thing to rejoice. It is more precious than gold. Jesus comes to you in a powerful way and that is far greater than simply avoiding or escaping sorrow, especially when you do so by sinning.

You need to learn the value of the victory of faith. When Jesus reveals himself to your heart and in your life, even though you don't physically see him, Peter says you have a joy that is beyond expression, and full of glory. It's the weighty revelation of Jesus through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That is the transcendent, transforming power of God. That is the joy that Jesus gives you. The sorrowful trial can intensify your joy when Jesus, who is your joy, reveals himself to you once again.

Jesus IS joy, and the disciples were introduced to joy, and they grew to know joy. But joy had to be taken from them, and they had sorrow. But joy would return more powerfully than ever, and they would know joy in a deeper way than ever. But then joy had to go away again. Yet joy would send his helper to give them joy while they waited for joy to return once again.

And joy will return once again, and that joy will be full and final, greater than ever. It will overcome all sorrow, and it will never be taken away again. This maximum and perfect joy will last forever. And now the Church has a sense of sorrow as it waits for the return of the Lord, but it will have ultimate joy when Jesus is revealed once again, fully and finally.

You need to see Jesus again.

But you won't if you keep holding on to that thing that isn't him.

What are you holding onto that is keeping you from a greater revelation of Jesus in your life? Perhaps your mindset is, "I'm not going to give up what I've already got", but maybe what you've got is just fear and misery and guilt and frustration. Maybe you've been deceived into a wrong sort of dependence. Let me ask you. Would you be willing to give up some material thing, if you knew that your fear and frustration would go with it? Would you be willing to give up some goal, if you got peace and joy instead?

It's time for you to learn to let go of good things so that you can grab hold of better things. You have to let go of your fear if you want to let go of your sorrow and find joy. You don't have to fear an unknown future when you know God. The disciples had to let go of Jesus so that he could prepare a place for them in heaven. And send the Holy Spirit down to them. In John 16:7, Jesus said, *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.*

Let go of that thing that is keeping you from a deeper revelation of Christ. And sometimes what you're letting go of isn't as good as you think it is anyways. What could possibly be worth more than Jesus? What precious sin is worth more than the presence of God? You might feel anxious about letting go of that sin, or letting go of that concern, or letting go of some precious thing, some precious goal, some precious person. But Jesus says to cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Let him show you his love, and you'll receive his joy. And no one can take that from you.