

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #65

John 16:23-33

We are living in a depressing world. In fact, we are living in one of the most depressing states in the world. We are at the top of the list on job losses, unemployment and home foreclosures. Many businesses are closing down or leaving. Food prices, like everything else, are on the rise and I just read that many horse owners are getting rid of their horses because they can't afford to feed themselves and their horses. Many are just giving them away to someone who has pasture. In such a depressing world like this, where can we find any joy, any hope or any peace?

As depressing as things are for us, they were even far more depressing for Christ's disciples. Jesus Christ, who is God, has just told them He is about to leave. He also told His disciples that they would be cast out of the synagogue and killed (16:2). That is not happy news. It is no wonder that "sorrow had filled their hearts" (16:6). What do you say that can give these disciples any joy or hope or peace? What could they do in such a depressing world to cope? **Jesus answer was you can pray. May I suggest that the key to living joyfully in a depressing world is prayer.** That is what Jesus taught right here.

In **verse 23**, Jesus says that "in that day," that is in the day He is gone, His disciples would no longer be able to ask Him any questions. Had Jesus just stopped with this statement, it would have left them without any hope, for in all reality what this would mean is no longer will you be able to ask questions of God. But Jesus did not stop there. That is why what Jesus says in these remaining verses is so critical and what He says is this:

EVEN WHEN JESUS IS GONE THE DISCIPLES MAY HAVE FULL JOY BECAUSE THEY WILL SPECIFICALLY BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH GOD AND RECEIVE REVELATORY INFORMATION FROM GOD BECAUSE OF THEIR CONNECTION TO JESUS CHRIST.

The connection that a believer has to Jesus Christ can give hope in any context. It becomes very clear that any connection we have to God is through Jesus Christ. **Without a relationship with Jesus Christ there will never be full joy or real peace.**

PART #1 – What one has in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I want you to notice in these verses the connection that is stressed in regard to Jesus Christ: "in My name" (v. 23); "in My name" (v. 24); "in My name" (v. 26); "in Me you may have peace" (v. 33).

There are four promises that Jesus Christ makes to His disciples in these verses that are very practical and very powerful:

Promise #1 - In Christ you have the right to ask things of God the Father. **16:23-24, 26**

This is the third time that Jesus has brought up the subject of prayer, which indicates this is a critical matter of joy.

Now in this context there are two different Greek words used for “ask.” One means to ask an interrogating question (ερωταω) (vv. 23a, 26) and the other means to ask a request of a superior (αιτεω) (vv. 23b, 24, 26b). These words may be used interchangeably, however **what is critical to see is that the second word (αιτεω) was never used by Jesus concerning Him asking His Father things. Jesus was never inferior to the Father**, but all these disciples were and obviously so are we. When we pray, we pray as an inferior and when Jesus prayed, He prayed as an equal. However, if Jesus Christ, Himself, was a Person of prayer then we sure need to be too.

Now we may be certain that the disciples had prayed to God long before Christ addresses the subject here. In fact, we know at one time the disciples had asked Jesus to teach them to pray, which He did in what many call the “Lord’s prayer,” “Our Father who art in heaven...” (Matthew 6:9-14; Luke 11:2-4). What was new about all of this was the addition of praying “in Jesus’ name.” Some have wondered whether it is okay to pray directly to Jesus. One old Bible scholar said why would you want to rob yourself of your intercessor. You pray to the Father in Jesus’ name and He is right there interceding on your behalf.

Jesus is teaching His disciples that they have a right to petition God through Him, the very One they had lived with. They could ask God, through His name, questions and they could make requests. This becomes a thrilling way to live life in close communication with God.

Notice carefully what is said here - you may ask God the Father “ anything ” (16:23). When you have questions, you do have a right to go to God and ask Him for answers. When you have needs, you have every right to go to the One who can meet the need. That is what Jesus is teaching right here. If it is consistent with His name, His Word and His will, He will answer the request.

The Scriptures teach that to pray in Jesus name also means we must meet certain prerequisites:

- 1) We must be willing to obey the Scriptures - John 15:7
- 2) We must be willing to examine our motives - James 4:3
- 3) We must be willing to examine our willingness to forgive - Mark 11:25-26; Matt. 6:14-15
- 4) We must be willing to deal with our own sin - Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:1-2; I John 1:6, 9
- 5) We must be willing to judge our own Phariseeism - Matthew 6:5-8; Luke 18:9-14
- 6) We must be willing to examine our own marriage - I Peter 3:1-7
- 7) We must be willing to examine our faith - James 1:5-7; Mark 11:20-24

Promise #2 - In Christ you may have full joy from God the Father. **16:24b**

There is nothing more fulfilling and joyful than when you pray about something and you see the Mighty God answer your prayer. When God moves for you, your emotions move in you.

Promise #3 - In Christ you have access to knowledge about God the Father. **16:25**

Jesus had spoken figuratively by using the childbirth illustration to communicate the point that there would be sorrow in His leaving, but ultimately that sorrow would be turned to joy.

I am convinced that one of the great privileges we have is the privilege of literally understanding the Word of God. The Word of God presents truth about God.

Promise #4 - In Christ you are loved by God the Father. **16:27**

Jesus says, look I don't have to ask the Father to love you, He already does. Now the word "love" (φιλος) used here is one that refers to a loving friend. In Christ you are in a loving and friendly relationship with God the Father. I want you to realize this about your prayer. God views you as being His friend and when you pray, asking in Jesus name, He longs to listen, to analyze and to answer your prayer.

I truly believe that God longs to answer your prayers. He longs for you to get alone with Him and pray to Him, relying on the wonderful name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

PART #2 – What was going to happen to Jesus Christ. **16:28-33**

There are three main revelations that Jesus gives to His disciples right here:

Revelation #1 - Jesus Christ tells His disciples that He is going to leave the world and go back to the Father. **16:28-31**

Dr. McGee said that he believed that **John 16:28** is just as thematic a verse for the Gospel of John as John 20:30-31. This one verse proves Jesus Christ is God. He came from God, is God and He is going back to His home in heaven to be with His Father. He came out of eternity to spend a few moments on earth and then He went back to eternity.

I cannot wait until it is our turn to do the same thing. What a wonderful moment it will be when we get to leave this world and go to be with God. What a blessed moment when we will go into eternity for the first time.

In the course of telling them this, there are two responses:

(Response #1) - The response of the disciples to the news. **16:29-30**

The disciples responded to Jesus' news that He was leaving, in four ways:

Way #1 - You are now speaking plainly. **16:29**

To be quite frank, this entire discourse has featured a lot of plain talk.

Way #2 - We know You know all things. **16:30a**

What they are saying here is that they realized that Jesus Christ was omniscient, all knowing.

Way #3 - We do not have a need to further question you. **16:30b**

This was the moment in which the bulbs went on and they finally figured out He was God and He was leaving to go back to His home.

Way #4 - We do believe you came from God. **16:30c**

The prepositions used in this context are intriguing to ponder. The preposition "from" (απο) used in this verse is different that the word "from" (παρα) Jesus uses in **verse 28**. The difference as I understand Greek syntax is this - the disciples believe that Jesus came from (απο) the departure point of God. Jesus is emphasizing (παρα) that He came from the side of God,

actually residing beside God or alongside of God the Father. Both of these prepositions truly establish that Jesus Christ is totally, completely and fully God. But Jesus is giving us a very personal glimpse of His preexisting residency. He lived not just in heaven, but right alongside God the Father.

At this point, these disciples are finally saying they understand that Jesus is God come in the flesh. They are acknowledging that Jesus is the God/Savior, God/Messiah, God/King. What people believe about Jesus Christ is a matter of their faith, but what the written Scriptures teach about Jesus Christ is a matter of grammatical fact - HE IS TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY AND FULLY GOD. Finally these disciples got the point.

(Response #2) - The response of Jesus to the disciples. **16:31**

Jesus basically says finally, so you now believe. In fact, He asks them a question, “Do you now believe?” This is the question of your eternity right here. Not what have you done, but what do you believe. Who do you trust in to take you into heaven? There is only One in whom you dare place your faith and that is Jesus Christ. He came out of heaven to do the work so He could take you to heaven. Believe on Him and you will be saved.

Now this question sets the stage for what He was going to reveal to them next. The idea is, so you think you believe in Me and God now, well let Me tell you what is about to happen.

Revelation #2 - Jesus tells His disciples the hour was coming in which the disciples would abandon Jesus and leave Him alone. **16:32**

The time had come for Jesus Christ to go to the cross and at the same time these disciples would scatter and leave Him alone. Jesus reveals to them that He was not alone because God the Father was with Him every step of the way.

Revelation #3 - Jesus reveals to His disciples that in the world the disciples would have trouble but in Christ, the disciples would have peace. **16:33**

In spite of the fact that these disciples would certainly not be perfect - for they were just told they would abandon Jesus Christ, they would still have peace. Having God’s peace does not mean absence of failure or trouble or trials or conflict. Having God’s peace means the presence of prayer.

You will not find peace in your soul in this world; you will find it in Christ. You won’t find peace in your works or in your “Christian activity” or even in your church. You find your peace in Jesus Christ. As you pray for peace in Jesus’ name, you’ll get it.

I love something J. Vernon McGee said - you hear a lot of talk about the victorious life. There is only one Person who ever lived a victorious life. We haven’t lived it and we won’t live it. As we learn to identify ourselves with Jesus Christ, it is then and only then when we have victory and joy and peace.