

God With Us

A Study of John's Gospel: "Sorrow to Joy"

John 16:16-22

"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." – John 16:20

I. The Promise of Joy

- a. The words *a little while* points to the time interval when the disciples will *literally* see Jesus after His death during His post-resurrection appearances.
- b. The words *they kept asking*, indicate that extensive dialogue took place among the disciples without them arriving at an answer.
- c. Jesus understood their confusion, but He knew it would all come into focus with the passage of time and with the aid of the Spirit's teaching ministry. (John 16:12-13)
- d. Jesus' death would cause them to weep and mourn. However, after the resurrection, their sadness would turn to gladness
- e. The Holy Spirit would enable them to know that Jesus had to die so humanity could have forgiveness of sins. Later the church would rejoice in His death, as we celebrate communion.
- f. Jesus illustrated the truth of pain, replaced by joy, by the pain of childbirth followed by the joy of new life when a child is born.
- g. The disciples would soon enter the process of pain (*you have sorrow now*), but the light of joy was just ahead after His resurrection.

II. The Reality of Sorrow and Joy

- a. Everything Jesus said had a wider meaning in it than we might first imagine.
- b. We can take Jesus' words as a prophecy that all who truly follow Him *will* have their seasons of darkness and their joy restored. The reality of sorrow and the promised reality of Jesus joy.
- c. Your sorrow itself shall be turned into joy, literally and actually. The sorrow is not to be taken away, and joy put in its place, but the sorrow which hurts you will be turned into joy.
- d. Joy is essential ingredient to the Christian life. Suffering is our reality, but so is joy.
- e. We cannot tell the strength of a person's character unless it is tried. Suffering is used to develop the excellence that lies hidden in our nature. (Job 23:10; Psalm 66:10)
- f. It is only when we experience deep pain or loss that we discover how deep the depths of our Christian faith.

III. Practical Application

- a. If joy is essential, then it means that joy is possible. In a world of sin, suffering, mess and misery, it is Good News to hear that joy is possible for every child of God.
- b. Can you give a personal example when your sorrow turned to joy?
- c. The Bible sometimes talks about sorrow and joy as though they were sequential experiences. First you have one, then you have another. Psalm 30:5, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."
- d. The Bible also informs us that sorrow and joy can be simultaneous experiences. (Phil 3:1-2; 2 Cor 6:10) What can we learn from this?
- e. Describe a situation in ministry when you experienced "sorrow to turned joy."
- f. Our joy will not be perfect in this life; we will always strain and struggle.
- g. The Lord requires of us things that we cannot immediately produce by our own power. The Holy Spirit enables us to experience the joy of Jesus in the face loss and disappointment.