

**JUBILATE / THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Text: St. John 16:16-22

*ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

There is a lie circulating among many Christian circles and denominations. I am sure you have heard it; you may have even been taught it. *“If you are a true Christian, if you believe hard enough, if you pray earnestly enough, your life will be prosperous, healthy, and happy. If only you have enough faith, your life will be trouble free.”*

Our LORD JESUS puts that lie to rest with the words He spoke to His disciples: *“Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful....”*

Still, the lie persists. It says that Christian life, true Christian life, is without pain, sorrow, or suffering. The lie spreads its poison among Christians telling them the Christian life endures no real hardships and partakes in no real cross. It tells us that the Christian life is worry-free, hassle-free, and in effect, the Christian life is practically perfect in every way.

The implication then is, if you experience any kind of despair, if you are tormented by disease of mind or body, if you are depressed or in anguish, if you suffer heartache for any reason, then you are not a true Christian. Because GOD is not blessing you there must be something wrong in your life. In short, you have fallen short of pleasing GOD, and for this reason your life is not blessed with the fruits of true faith.

But that is a lie. The truth is that the Christian life is lived out in a fallen world full of heartache and pain, suffering and death, even as all the while the Christian life is also lived out in the redemption which can only be found in the shadow of the cross of CHRIST JESUS.

So it is, that the Christian life this side of Heaven is a mixture of fear and love, weeping and laughter, sorrow and gladness, mourning and joy, insecurity and confidence. Even though we Christians feel the pain of cross and suffering in this life, we look forward to the fullness of true, lasting peace, contentment, and joy our LORD has reserved for us in the life of the world to come.

These are not the words we want to hear. We would prefer to hear that life in CHRIST is a life full of comfort and ease. We want to hear that being Christian means we will be treated with the utmost fairness, that others will always love us, that our mountains will be made low and our highways made straight. That is what we would prefer to hear. We would tell our Blessed LORD that we not only want our sins removed—that He should not only die our death—

but that He should also take away everything that annoys and frustrates or bothers us, every bad thing that can happen to us, every evil word or deed that might come against us. That is what we would prefer.

Our text from Isaiah tells us that *“those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength.”* This, too, is something we do not prefer to hear. We are far too short-sighted and far too short on patience. Our short-sightedness causes us to focus on the negative: *“A little while, and you will not see Me... you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful.”* Our impatience says, *“LORD, look at all I have done for You and in Your name. Can You not give me a break?”*

Instead of saying what we want to hear, our LORD says what is true and real. And what is this? *“A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the FATHER.”*

So which *“little while”* should be our focus?

Are we to focus on that *“little while”* when we do not see the LORD? That is precisely where Satan would have us focus. Satan cooperates with the world and plays with our mind and our emotions so we believe that our faith does us no good at all. In his deception the devil whispers to us that pain and sorrow are all that we will find in this life. He would strike down GOD’s gifts to us in Word and Sacrament and replace them with despair. Satan would have us concentrate on the *“little while”* of sorrow so that we turn that molehill into a mountain—so that the *“little while”* is no longer a *“little while”* but seems to us an eternity and all we can manage to see.

So we do whatever we can to avoid the cross in our lives and shipwreck our faith. We take the path of least resistance and dodge the harder parts of our callings—or run from our callings altogether. We fail to speak the truth of what we believe as Christians for the sake of keeping a false peace; in an attempt to evade any negative consequences that we might experience as a consequence.

JESUS says, *“A little while, and you will not see Me; and again, a little while, and you will see Me.”* There will be those *“little while[s]”* when you cannot seem to see JESUS, when life is fierce, when the world seems to be laughing at you, when you are sharing in the trials of our LORD. But He reminds you here, *“It really is only a little while that you must endure. That pain, that disease, that heartache, that difficult situation is almost over. Just hang on, hang on to Me. Trust in Me to pull you through this time of pain. It may seem like an eternity, but it is only a little while. Your Easter is coming.”* As the Psalmist writes: *“Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.”*

Consider the bloody, perilous passage of birth for both mother and child. The mother experiences intense pain as wave after wave of contractions overwhelm her. Yet all the while she is clearly focused on but one goal; she cares about nothing other than getting that baby out.

So also, we still bear the burden of the Law and the consequences of sin. We are forgiven, like Eve in the garden, clinging to the promise of the MESSIAH, but still waiting for the consummation of our joy. That consummation lies in the future, but until then, the Law continues to bring pain and sorrow.

Into the midst of this comes JESUS, our SAVIOR; the One whose whole life and being were consumed with, and immersed in, our *“little while”* of doubt and anxiety and sorrow and misery. He comes and says to us three times *“a little while,” “a little while,” “a little while.”* That is the length of our suffering. A *“little while”* is the length of Christian sorrow.

Consider again the mother in labor. For all she experiences, she is a woman uniquely focused upon the joy to come. She is not distracted by the petty things of this life. As she goes through the pain of giving birth, she cares not at all if the doctors, nurses, or passersby see her physical condition. She does not care if her face is flushed and sweaty, she does not care if her hair is a mess; she is giving birth to new life, and for *“a little while,”* that is all that matters in her mind. For *“a little while,”* she has sorrow, but then the baby comes and when the child is laid upon her breast for the first time, all is forgotten. Her sorrow is complete and her joy begins.

So it is with us. We endure for now and live through this *“little while”* keeping our eye on the prize—keeping our eye on the long while, the never ending moment in the unending Day of our LORD. For while the cursed sorrow and the devilish despair last only a little while, then comes the joy which knows no end and the peace which surpasses our human understanding. Then comes the blessing that far outstrips any temporal heartache.

But first, comes *“a little while.”*

While you are in that *“little while”* of impatient, despondent sorrow, do not be like a pregnant woman who dreads the *“little while”* of pain she must face on day she will give birth. Instead, think of the joy of a woman who has just given birth and whose happiness cannot be contained. For *“as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.”*

Turn now with joy to the gifts our LORD gives to you in His life-giving Flesh and His life-giving Blood. Even now, the LORD sees you again as He smiles on you with His life-giving Word of renewal and forgiveness. For in this, CHRIST creates within you a new heart and an upright spirit as you experience the joy of His salvation. Even now, our LORD JESUS is waiting to bestow upon you a foretaste of the joy and peace to come in the Feast of the altar.

In this we rightly rejoice, for in this blessed Sacrament is a joy no one can take from us. In it can be heard a blessed Word that no devil or enemy of GOD can undo, for it is as though JESUS says to you, *“I promise that your little while is but a little while and it will soon be over and I will return for you, “and your heart will rejoice and your joy no one can take from you.”* For I have suffered your *“little while”* that in My cross and resurrection you can experience My eternity. These things I did to forgive all your sins.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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