

Rev. Danny Mackey  
Fourth Sunday of Easter – Jubilate  
May 8, 2022 (Mother's Day)  
John 16:16-22  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed!] Alleluia!

The Easter Acclamation is starting to seem a little...old. We know Christ is risen. Easter was three weeks ago. We've still got the Easter banner up, but the lilies are gone. Things seem to be getting back to normal. A joyous shout of "Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!" is quickly becoming out of place.

Is it that Easter isn't worth celebrating this long? Not at all. But it's hard to have a celebration last this long—even an Easter celebration. It makes sense. Life in this world is hard. It's hard to focus even on Easter after three weeks, three weeks of hardship, three weeks of aches and pains, three weeks of busy-ness, three weeks of politics, three weeks of trials and sorrows, three weeks of things that have gone wrong, terribly wrong. How can we keep the Easter joy for this long?

Jesus knew this would happen. You see, Jesus knows us and understands us better than we ourselves do. He knows and understands the burdens and struggles that we face in this life. He knows the challenges and sorrows—and how they can wear down a person. So, on the night when He was betrayed, there in the Upper Room with the disciples, Jesus takes some time to speak about what life will be like after the Resurrection. Jesus speaks words of comfort that make up the entirety of John 16. So, even though we may be tired and worn with care, let's listen to Christ's Word and see what gifts He gives through it.

*"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me."*

Jesus repeats this phrase three times. When Jesus first spoke this Word, the disciples didn't get it. But we have the benefit of time. We've got John's account of the Gospel. So we do get it. That Thursday evening yielded to Good Friday. Within the next 24 hours, Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried. He was taken away from them. They wouldn't see Him any longer. Christ knows this is coming. He also knows the resurrection is coming. They will see Him again. He will come to them—in the very same Upper Room—after the resurrection. He will once again be with them.

*"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me."*

Yet Jesus doesn't stay with them much longer. He only hangs out with the disciples for another 40 days after Easter. Then He ascends. And there is sorrow and wonderment—trauma and ecstasy. But as the disciples learned from Christ's death and resurrection, this parting is only temporary. The One who's gone to the Father is preparing for them a home for all eternity.

*"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me."*

Jesus ascends and then, ten days later, sends His Holy Spirit upon them. They are filled. Joy and forgiveness and a promise of an eternal, blessed reunion in eternity is theirs. Their own possession and also their proclamation to the nations.

What we remember, what we know, dear friends, is that we here now are living in that same little while of the disciples. We know that the day shall come when we shall see Jesus, face to face. It will be either at our death or when He returns on the Last Day—whichever comes first. Either way, we shall see Him. So we live out our lives in this time of the little while. And we remember the same things the disciples remember. Christ died, but Christ rose. Just as He said. If He says that for a little while you won't see Him but then you will again. Well, it'll be just as He said. He's true to His Word. That's why we confess that we look forward to the resurrection of dead. That's why we pray, "Thy kingdom come." We know it's coming.

But that doesn't mean the little while we have here on earth won't be filled with difficulty. We have struggles, trials, and sorrows. Others cause some; we cause others. While we're still sinners in this sinful world, we will have sorrow. This is what Jesus says.

*"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."*

This quickly happened for the disciples. They lamented Christ's betrayal, arrest, trial, torture, and crucifixion. But even that sorrow was turned to joy at our Lord's resurrection. That's the pattern. Christ turns sorrow to joy, just like He turned water into wine at Cana. And the disciples remembered this. Sorrow turned to joy is what they preached on Pentecost. Yet, in their work, in their lives, there was much sorrow. They were persecuted, stoned, and some even crucified. The world rejoiced as lions devoured the early Christians in the Coliseum. Crowds cheered as faithful men and women were hounded by the wicked. But always... always is the promise of joy. Joy to come. Joy that is theirs with Christ.

We need to learn and remember what they remembered. God is true to His Word. Does the world around you rejoice as you suffer? Do people delight in making your life more difficult? Must you always be cautious of the next scam? Are there people who would rejoice to see you stumble? That's the way of the world. And when we look at that... it's easy to get down, to get overwhelmed, to get depressed. But we have that truth to remember. Something people can deny but not undo. Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed!] Alleluia!

The sorrow of the crucifixion turns into the joy of the resurrection. That's how Christ works. He doesn't abandon us. He never forsakes us. Rather, we can know and be sure that our sorrows will turn to joy. That whatever it is in this life will indeed pass. Our sorrows, though they try, will not overwhelm us. All of them shall, in God's good time and pleasure—all of them shall yield and go away at the return of our Lord.

*“When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”*

Again our Lord gives another example to learn from. Sorrow turned into joy. Childbirth is a mighty, painful thing. It's one of women's superpowers. Something a man clearly can't do. Yet women go through it. And then they have the joy of their children. And what joy it is! Jesus, He who knows all things, says this. And every mother I've asked has confirmed this simple yet profound fact. Sorrow is turned to joy. God sees us through trials and into joy and happiness.

We experience sorrow in our lives. There are bad days. There are going to be times when the world rejoices at your suffering. It happens. Jesus says it will happen. So don't believe people who say it won't. Don't listen to the false preachers and liars who claim that all the joy in the world can be yours right now and forever—and if you don't that it's somehow your fault, like you don't believe enough, don't love God enough, aren't Christian enough. That's bunk. This world's joy is hollow and vacant and fades away. That's what the Preacher means when he writes, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!” That's because this world is full of sin—and anyone who tries to convince you that you can avoid sorrow and pain is actually trying to sell you on the joys of sin. That isn't our joy. Our joy is that which

comes from God. Our joy is what we have to grab ahold of and cling to. Our joy is found in Christ.

Listen to what St. Peter says: *“For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.”*

Sorrows and suffering and injustice comes. That happens. But how do we face them? We face them mindful of God. We keep His commandments. And we remember the promises of God. We know keeping the commandments is good for both us and for our neighbor. And we know that His promises are true—because Christ is true to His Word.

We’ve seen the world do its worst to our Lord and Savior... and yet He rose again.

We’ve seen Christians before us tortured and put to death... and yet they have the joys of heaven before them now.

We’ve seen even our friends and loved ones who’ve fought the good fight of faith—and it is a fight. The struggle is real... and yet they now rest from their labors.

Christ and His disciples have faced all of this mindful of God. As do you, because you too remember Christ’s death and resurrection and know that it’s your own. Just as Christ was raised, so too shall you be raised. Just as the disciples’ sorrow was turned to joy, so too shall our sorrow be turned to joy. And that’s a joy no one can take away!

So let us continue our Easter celebration and joyfully proclaim our Easter Acclamation:  
Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed!] Alleluia!