**PRAY**

We are looking today at Jesus’ words to His disciples to prepare themselves for His death on the cross.

As He does that, He lets them know that whatever sorrows, sadness, guilt or fear that may result, they can be assured of a time to rejoice shortly afterwards.

It is evident that despite acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, the disciples had yet to fully comprehend and accept that the Messiah’s mission included death – as the only route to restoring a right relationship with God.

It is the death that is so important – without Jesus’ atoning blood, the way cannot be restored to God.

Remember Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life – no one comes to the Father except through me.

**SLIDE** **John 16:16-18**

**“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.” Then some of His disciples said among themselves, “What is this that He says to us, ‘A little while and you will not see Me; and again a little while and you will see Me’; and ‘because I go to the Father’?” They said therefore, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is saying.”**

In these verses, Jesus is telling His disciples that His departure will be soon, only for a short time and it will be temporary

These words are spoken literally within hours, possibly not even that long, of Jesus arrest. In just over 12 hours, Jesus will have been crucified. In less than 18, He will have died and probably been laid in the tomb as well.

They didn’t understand the events that were to come, nor did they grasp that because Jesus had to go to the Father, they would see Him again when He rose from the dead.

Unfortunately, despite Jesus’ reassurance, it is more than likely that during ‘the interval between His death and resurrection the disciples lost their faith and spiritual vision – they no longer saw Him than did anyone else in the world.’ (Trench)

As with the previous conversation we saw the disciples have with their master, there is again confusion and a lack of understanding about what Jesus is talking about.

Today, we have the benefit of hindsight, most of the NT Scriptures and many from the OT too, as well as teaching on a regular basis, to be a reminder that Jesus was to die, be buried, then to be resurrected on the third day.

The disciples didn’t comprehend that, although they did have their Scriptures and the Lord telling them. At this point, they didn’t understand what He meant about not seeing Him and then seeing Him.

Their lack of understanding concerns what they believed He was here to do. ‘If Jesus wishes to found the Messianic kingdom, why go away? If He doesn’t wish it, why return?’ (Godet)

**SLIDE** **John 16:19-22**

**Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him and He said to them, “Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, ‘A little while and you will not see Me; and again a little while and you will see Me’? Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labour, has sorrow because her hour has come; but 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. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”**

The disciples may have been confused, but Jesus knew the events that were to come – He also knew that they wanted to question Him about what He had said.

Jesus, as God, is the same yesterday, today and forever. In the same way He knew the disciples didn’t understand, He knows what things trouble you. He knows where your thoughts lie and where you are struggling.

That should reassure you – it is the sign of the love that the Father and Son have for your that they care to that infinitely intimate degree.

He wants us to know that He cares for us, but at the same time, He wants us to understand we need to have our hearts and minds prepared for the events that this world will bring, as we approach the return of Jesus to collect His church.

Jesus reassures His disciples, that any sorrow they are going to have, will soon turn to joy. They will undergo a transformation that only God, by His power and grace, can bring.

It is the transformation that God promises through **Isaiah 60:19-20, The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light and your God will be your glory. 20Your sun will never set again and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light and your days of sorrow will end.**

It is the same transforming power that John describes in **Revelation 21:4**, where God **will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**

In the same way Jesus would restore relationship, hope and victory to His disciples on that Easter Sunday morning, He wants to do that in your life today.

You don’t have to wait for Easter to come around, you don’t have to wait for Jesus to be crucified and raised again – you can take hold of Jesus promises at this very moment, claim them for yourself and transform your life.

It can happen for you even before I finish speaking – God wants to be in your life and to transform and occupy it totally. He has the power to do that because He is your creator and His Son has died on the cross to wipe out your sins.

The disciples got the message in the end – Spurgeon wrote, ‘It is most remarkable and instructive that the apostles do not appear in their sermons or epistles to have spoken of the death of our Lord with any kind of regret. The gospels mention their distress during the actual occurrence of the crucifixion, but after the resurrection and especially after Pentecost, we hear of no such grief.’

The promise of joy that Jesus speaks about is knowing that the Messiah has been resurrected – the work of His earthly ministry was complete, so you should now have nothing to fear or doubt.

**SLIDE** **John 16:23-27**

**“And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from God.”**

Here, Jesus promises us greater joy because we will be able to converse with God the Father, knowing that He is listening to us.

Because of Jesus’ work, as Jesus’ present-day disciples, we have an unlimited access to God through Him – because the Father Himself loves you.

Some people believe that Jesus’ death and return to the Father, was needed to persuade an angry Father to be gracious. But there is no Scriptural basis for that – the Father’s was always gracious, but we needed a route to accept that grace.

The route to that restored relationship is in what Jesus says, ‘because you loved Me.’

God the Father does not love the disciples on the basis of their love for Jesus, but their love for Jesus was evidence of the Father’s love for them.

‘In the same way that a pulse doesn’t make the heart pump, but it is evidence of it. Our love for God doesn’t make Him love us, but it is evidence that He loves us’. (Guzik)

If ever you have doubts about salvation, or concerns that God doesn’t know or care about your situation, remember Jesus’ words – the Father Himself loves you.

**SLIDE** **John 16:28-33**

**“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.” His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own and will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

Jesus is in a position to reassure His disciples because of who He is and where He has come from.

The entirety of the Bible shows that Jesus was with God the Father before the creation and He will be in the eternal Heavenly kingdom with His believers at the end of earthly time.

Because of that authority, Jesus can declare He has come from the Father and will return.

He can make the claim that He has come into the world – He was born as a man.

He can make the claim that He will leave the world – that He would die.

No one else in the entirety of human history can honestly make that claim.

Even as the disciples affirm their faith in Jesus, He warns them their faith will be tested.

Certainly, Jesus did not doubt the belief of the disciples, but He knew that the events in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the court-yard of the High Priest and when standing at the foot of the cross, would both leave Jesus alone, yet strengthen the disciples resolve in the long term.

In a way, the fact that Jesus foresaw their failing away should be encouragement to us.

The disciples came back forgiven and strengthened in their faith – to a point where they were willing to die for their faith. The reality of the truth of Jesus for them was everything.

We can take courage and strength knowing that God is forgiving, even though He knows our failures.

Jesus knew that within a couple of hours He would have been abandoned by His disciples. He says, you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone…

Yet, Jesus was single-minded in continuing with His earthly task.

Spurgeon said of this time, ‘they have left him alone; but there He is, still standing to his purpose. He has come to save and He will save. He has come to redeem and He will redeem. He has come to overcome the world and He will overcome it.’

Throughout His life, Jesus relied on His close relationship with God. Especially in the loneliest moments, He knew His Father was with Him.

Jesus offers us peace that will us strong in the Lord, with a strength to endure anything the world throws at us – tribulation, another word for trouble or persecution.

Unfortunately, faith in Jesus will more likely bring tribulation than peace and Jesus wants us to understand this clearly. Not time to discuss that.

But Jesus says, ‘be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’. Jesus has the ultimate victory – despite the events of the coming 24 hours. He would go to the cross not in fear, but as a conqueror.

**CONCLUSION**

Numerous times in John’s writings, he uses the Greek word *nikao*, to describe someone who has conquered, prevailed or been victorious.

It is a word that Jesus spoke to John in His Revelation – describing believers in Him as overcoming and the associated rewards for those who are faithful.

Believers are promised:

* To be able to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God **Revelation 2:7**
* That the second death will not hurt them **Revelation 2:11**
* A new name given by Jesus **Revelation 2:17**
* Power over the nations **Revelation 2:26**
* To be clothed in white raiment and have your name in the Book of Life and have Jesus vouch for you before the Father and His angels **Revelation 3:5**
* To be granted permission to sit with Jesus on His throne **Revelation 3:21**

Does this world offer anything that would compensate for losing the things Jesus promises? I don’t think so.

If you have concerns, lay them at Jesus feet – He wants to hear your doubts.

He wants to transform you, in the same way those eleven disciples were transformed – for the glory of God’s Name and His Kingdom.

**OFFER / PRAY**

**READINGS**

**John 16:16-33**

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**ISAIAH 60**

**‘Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. 2See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.**

**4‘Lift up your eyes and look about you: all assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar and your daughters are carried on the hip. 5Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. 8‘Who are these that fly along like clouds, like doves to their nests? 9Surely the islands look to me; in the lead are the ships of Tarshish,bringing your children from afar, with their silver and gold, to the honour of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for He has endowed you with splendour.**

**11Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that people may bring you the wealth of the nations – their kings led in triumphal procession. 12For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined.**

**16…Then you will know that I, the Lord, am your Saviour, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 19The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light and your God will be your glory. 20Your sun will never set again and your moon will wane no more;
the Lord will be your everlasting light and your days of sorrow will end.**