

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church

Shobonier, Illinois

Easter 5C

May 18, 2025

John 16:12-22; Revelation 21:1-7

From the Now to the New

[Jesus said,] "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:12-13 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world:

Last week, we heard Jesus say, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28). And while the last part is quite comforting, the part about hearing His voice can be difficult at times. He says something similar today when He says, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." Indeed, sometimes what Jesus says is hard to hear and hard to bear.

Life in this world, in the "now," can be difficult. Problems of all kinds surround us all around. At such difficult times, it is most helpful to hear what our Lord says lies ahead for that will give us the hope and strength we need to carry on.

To be sure, the disciples were having a time of sorrow and sadness and grief. It's Thursday evening, and Jesus has been telling them some disturbing things. He's been saying that He's about to go away, that He's returning to the Father, and they won't be seeing Him for a little while. This fills them with grief. Obviously, they're going to miss their Master. He had called

them to be His disciples, and they've been with Him these past couple of years, and they have witnessed some astounding things. Jesus has done great works of mercy and power: healing the sick, casting out demons, stilling storms, feeding the multitudes. They had never seen any things like these! And they have heard Jesus' remarkable teachings, His words of wisdom and insight unlike any other's. Jesus has demonstrated an authority in word and deed that could only come from God. This has been life-changing for these men, to be with Jesus in such close contact during this time.

But now He says He's going away. Imagine their shock and sadness and confusion! "How can this be? What will we do? How can we cope? And what does He mean by this 'little while' when we will see Him again?"

You and I may have similar questions. Our "now" may not be so pleasant. We wonder how we're going to cope when we see our life savings going down at the same time that gasoline and groceries are costing more and more. We wonder how we're going to cope when we get the bad diagnosis of cancer or other dread disease – and how are we going to pay all those medical bills? We wonder how we're going to cope when a loved one abandons us and refuses to be reconciled. We're saddened when our adult child doesn't ever take the initiative to reach out to us and says they're too busy whenever we suggest getting together. All of these things, and much more, cause us pain and grief and cause our hearts to be downcast. Is this kind of a "now" all there is? Do we have any hope for the future?

That's what the disciples were wrestling with. "Jesus says He's going to be leaving us, and what will happen to us then? Was this all for naught?" Well, Jesus knows what they're thinking and feeling, and He addresses their sadness and sorrow. He says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice." Wow! This sounds even worse! At least, though, Jesus is being honest. He doesn't sugarcoat things. He knows they're going to be weeping and lamenting. And at the same time, the world will be rejoicing! This can mean only one thing: Jesus' enemies, who have been out to get Him are going to succeed! And they, His enemies, will be rejoice that they finally got Him!

Jesus had told His disciples that this would happen. He had said several times that when they go up to Jerusalem, He would be arrested and handed over to sinful men, and they will kill Him! And He has just said, that very evening, that one of the twelve is going to betray Him! The

bad news is in the process of happening that very night! Of course, this comes like a blow to the disciples. They're stunned, they're confused, they're saddened. How is it helping, Jesus, that you're saying, "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice"?

It is helping, because it is by this very act of Jesus' enemies triumphing over Him, which will happen tonight and tomorrow that He will paradoxically gain the victory. His crucifixion will be the sacrifice that atones for the sins of the world—yes, your sins and mine! His blood will cleanse your sin-stained garments. His death will be death's undoing. All the devil's ammunition against you has been stripped away from him. Christ's righteousness covers your guilt and your shame. Now you are right with God. No more barrier, no more wall of separation, between you and God. Peace has been made in the body and blood of Christ.

This is the basis for what Jesus says next: "You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy." Think of the big change that happened for those disciples from Thursday night to Sunday night. Thursday night, they're sad when Jesus tells them these things. It gets worse when Jesus is arrested in the garden and they all are scattered. Friday, there's the shock when Jesus is crucified, and now He's dead! All their hopes are crushed. Saturday is the saddest Sabbath they've ever experienced. They're despondent—and frightened. On Sunday, they huddle in secret with the door locked, for fear that Jesus' enemies now will come after them. Oh, they hear some crazy talk from some women about Jesus supposedly rising from the dead, but who can believe that?

But then, suddenly, Jesus appears in their locked room. Jesus greets them with peace. He lets them touch and handle His body, to see that He's not a ghost. They see the nail marks in His hands. Yes, it really is Jesus, risen from the dead! And now is fulfilled what Jesus told them would happen: Their sorrow is turned to joy!

Jesus told them this would happen, too, using the analogy of a woman giving birth: "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." Now I have never given birth to a baby. Believe it or not, a biological male cannot be a "birthing person," no matter how he may try to self-identify. But I was in the room when my daughters were born. And I can attest that the actual "birthing person" does go

through some anguish, and she may even remember that pain a little later. But that anguish is far outweighed by the joy that the little baby gives you.

What Jesus is saying, dear Christian, is that the pain and the anguish of your “now” will be far, far outweighed by the incredible joy that’s in store for you! The apostle John was given a glimpse of the “new” that awaits us, and he passes that vision on to us in the Book of Revelation, to give us the sure hope of what we have to look forward to. He says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” This current heaven and earth are messed up. The whole creation is groaning, due to the damage that sin has done. We have earthquakes and droughts, floods and tornados, and so much more. But all that is coming to end. God is going to replace the damaged old with a perfect new: a renewed creation, where everything will work right, like it was before the fall into sin, when everything was very good.

What does John see next? “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Notice, the holy city comes down from God to us. That’s the way it always goes with our salvation: from God to us, and not the other way around. The bride is the church; her husband is Christ. The church is adorned like a bride: radiant, beautiful, no more flaws or ugliness. And a loud voice says: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” Now we see why the holy city is called the new Jerusalem. Because Jerusalem was where the temple was, where God made His dwelling in the midst of His people. And God is going to do that again in the new Jerusalem. And we will be delighted to be God’s people, to be in perfect communion with our God.

And here is God’s promise: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Now we feel the pain and the mourning and the crying of the old creation. When the new heaven and the new earth arrive—that is, when Christ comes again, when the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven—then all that old painful stuff will be forgotten. No more death, only life. No more tears, only joy and gladness. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

When that day comes, our Lord will say, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Including you! You will have a new, glorified body. Your soul will be renewed, with no more sin or sorrow to weigh you down. The same Lord who said on the cross, “It is finished!” now will declare, “It is done!” The goal has been reached.

Dear friends, this is the “new” you have to look forward to! It will be so much better than the sadness we experience in our “now.” But because we have this “new” to look forward to, to give us hope and strength to carry on—this hope will enliven and enlighten even our darkest days. And the joy of the future will sneak into our present, knowing that even now we have Christ our Lord with us, leading us forward toward that day when He returns. Hear again what Jesus says to you today: “You have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” That’s a promise you can count on, today and forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener