

## Children's Moment

July 5, 2015

**Title:** Independence Day

**Object:** Flag

**Scripture:** Hebrews 9:22; Isaiah 1:18; 1 Corinthians 6:10; 1 John 1:9

This week we will celebrate the 4th of July, but I believe it is better expressed as "Independence Day!" We were freed from the tyranny of England and our country was born. This morning I have a flag. Who can tell me the name of this flag? Right, it is the flag of the United States of America. As you know, our flag is red, white, and blue. Have you ever stopped to think what those colors mean?

**Red:** Red stands for courage. Many men and women have had the courage to stand up and fight for our country. They have defended our country against our enemies and many have died in the service of our country.

**White:** White stands for purity. Purity means to do what is right. We hope and pray that our country will always stand for what is right. We need to pray that God will bring leaders the fear God and will do what is right.

**Blue:** Blue stands for justice. When we pledge allegiance to the flag, we end with the words: "With liberty and justice for all." That means that in our country, everyone should be treated fairly and with respect.

The colors red, white, and blue remind me of our country, but those colors also remind me of Jesus.

**Red** reminds me of Jesus' blood that was shed when He died on the cross for my sin and your sin. That is very important, because the Bible says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (Hebrews 9:22)

**White** reminds me that when I give my heart to Jesus, He washes me and I become as "white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18) The Bible says, "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:10)

**Blue** reminds me of God's faithfulness. The Bible tells us "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) God is forever faithful to keep His promises.

Let's pray. The colors red, white, and blue have meaning. Yes, Lord, I am reminded of our great country, but more importantly, let these colors remind me of You, O' God and the gift our great Savior, Jesus. Amen

John 16:16-22

**Sorrow Will Turn Into Joy**

I tend to wake up early, not everyone in my family is hyperactive and wakes up early. This does not mean I think everyone should wake up early. But, then again the people around me should be like me, shouldn't they? Don't most of us see the world from the viewpoint of how we are and we think people should be like us? I wake up most mornings and look forward to the day, but there are days I wake up and think, "how will I get through this day?" It is at these times, as I think of our country, or people in my life, that Psalm 30:5 proves itself true, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." For with the morning I have renewed hope as I read God's Word, think of what Jesus has done in my life and the lives of many that I dearly love. I have hope and yes, even joy, because I believe that as sinful as the world, our government and people are becoming - God is in charge and has a purpose. This hope brings us right to Jesus' words this morning. Jesus tells the disciples in verse 20, "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." I am saddened by the sin in my life and the sin I see all around me. Many of us are concerned about the direction of our government and lament for the evil we see, yet, the world is rejoicing and thinks its journey into self-absorbed sin is reason to rejoice. People have not changed since Jesus spoke these words 2000 years ago. Without Christ there would be no sorrow that turns into joy.

In overall terms of the teachings of the Bible, I understand verse 20 means for

Christians we do endure times of sorrow, but Jesus replaces our sorrow with joy. The sorrows of this world may last briefly or even a life time, but then Jesus replaces it with Joy – the joy of our salvation, the joy of living with the Holy Spirit within us, the joy of knowing Jesus will return and set the world right and we will know the joy of living with Christ for eternity.

### **Sorrow To Joy**

As I studied this passage of verses 16 to 24 in John 16, I observed there may be some uncertainty as to what Jesus means in verses 16 to 19 when he says, “a little while.” Read along with me beginning in verse 16, “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” **17** So some of his disciples said to one another, “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 am going to the Father?’” **18** So they were saying, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” **19** Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, ‘Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’?’” Jesus and His disciples used the term “a little while” seven times in four verses. Jesus is often very clear and precise in the words He chooses, but here His words “a little while” are somewhat vague. I believe Jesus had a purpose in this. I believe His vagueness allows for more than one meaning. I see that Jesus’ vague wording opens up three possible interpretations. I think Jesus meant for all three of these at the same time.

First by saying, “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me” in verse 16 is referring to Jesus’ impending death and

the days in the tomb in which no one sees Him and then the resurrection that follows where He is once again seen. Secondly, it could also signify the time period before and after Pentecost. The disciples and many others physically saw Jesus after His resurrection for “a little while” but after He ascended to heaven we know Christ spiritually through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is suggested by what Jesus is saying in verse 16 coming immediately after Jesus’ teaching about the Holy Spirit. Lastly, it may denote what we call the “Church Age,” the time period between the first and second coming Christ. For the short time, when look at this period in context to history, in which we do not see Jesus here on earth with our physical eyes, but at the end of the “Church Age” He will return in glory. If we have died before His return we are in His presence in Heaven and if we are alive when this happens we will see Jesus face-to-face, either way we begin eternal joy. Let me take time to address each of these three possible meanings.

### **Death and Resurrection**

The most common reasoning for this passage is the Jesus is speaking concerning His death and resurrection. He has been working at comforting the disciples on this last evening. They will sorrow because of His death, but He wants them to understand that He will rise again and they will see Him. Jesus began teaching on this long before this last evening with His disciples. In chapter 13 Jesus said, “**Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him... 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you... 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**”

(John 13:32-35) With Jesus' arrest and crucifixion it will be critical that the disciples stay united and show the love they have for Jesus and one another. Peter understood that the time was short, he may not have understood much beyond that, but he knew things were drawing to the end. He responded to Jesus saying in verse 36, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." (John 13:36) Again there would be "a little while" between Jesus' death and resurrection and the disciples following Him to heaven.

Your reading assignment this week is Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. Read them, meditate on them and see how they predict and relate to Jesus' crucifixion. In addition Psalm 68 speaks about Jesus' ascension. The Old Testament is rich with predictions about the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Jesus had taught much from the scriptures of His day to the disciples concerning who He was.

The disciples had followed Jesus for three years, they had grown close to Him, become not only His disciples, but also, His friends. Jesus had tried to prepare them for His leaving, but they did not comprehend. It is like when my mom had cancer, I knew she was very sick, but hoped she would get better and as she failed I knew what was coming. But, when she died it was still a shock, one can never be completely prepared – there was a sudden vacuum in my life. I think this may have been how the disciples were with Christ at the end. For the disciples the pain and sorrow was most likely more intense than mine. I lost my mom, whom I loved; they lost their Lord, God come to earth, the Messiah! They experienced the pain of loss and the disillusionment of shattered hope.

Their sorrow was intensified because the world rejoiced at Christ's crucifixion.

Jesus had alluded to this in verse 20 of our passage, saying, “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.**” The disciples’ world: Israel, the Pharisees and Sadducees and many people rejoiced because Jesus was out of the way. They could go back to living their lives as they desired. Jesus was no longer exposing their sin. I can imagine the Jewish leaders celebrating thinking their schemes and plans had worked and they could go back to ruling over the people for their own advantage. For they saw their victory in the darkness of Friday, but the light of Sunday was coming! This reminds me of the attitude we see in our own government and governments around the world, they deny that Jesus lives and they want to be left to their darkness and sin. The true church of Christ brings light that exposes the world leaders acts of darkness.

During the days that Jesus was in the tomb the disciples sorrow must have been intense because of their disappointment. Had they followed a man, a false messiah? Had they given up their average and normal lives to follow a man that would in the end be killed and their hopes dashed? We see this clearly in the story of the disciples on the Emmaus (**em·mah·ooce**) road. Luke says that this village was about 7 miles from Jerusalem and Emmaus (**em·mah·ooce**) means “warm baths.” Remember as it is recorded in Luke chapter 24 they were walking on their way and they were talking about all that had happened. Jesus had resurrected, but they did not know that and when He came up to them on the road they did not recognize Him. Jesus listened to their conversation and when He asked what they were talking about, they looked at Him in disbelief, “**Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’**” (Luke

24:18) Jesus' followers had put so much hope in Him and He had been murdered and was gone. At this point their hope had been completely crushed.

This atmosphere of complete disillusionment and disappointment explains Thomas' attitude when the other disciples told him they had seen Jesus and he replied, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." (John 20:25) Thomas did not disbelieve any more than the other disciples, for they had not believed either until they had seen Jesus. Thomas is expressing his need to see Christ for himself, as well. Thomas unbelief came from his disappointment and he is saying to the other disciples that his grief cannot be overcome by their story. Thomas would have reminded the others when Jesus announced that he was going to Jerusalem, that it was he who had said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:16) Thomas knew if Jesus went to Jerusalem he would be put to death and he expected to die with him, but his life was spared and this too disappointed him for he had to live with His disbelief.

So we find the disciples experiencing deep disappointment because Jesus was dead and their hope had died with Him, they were disappointed that they had lived and they were grieved by the joy exhibited by many in Israel that Jesus was dead. Before the resurrection the death of Christ appeared to be a total tragedy. Even though Jesus had taught the disciples about God's plan for atonement they did not understand and would not until the resurrection. Most of the world today does not understand God's plan for atonement because they are spiritually dead and have **NOT** journeyed out of the tomb with Christ. We rejoice in the Cross, brutal as it was, because it is at the Cross of Christ that there is victory over sin



and death. It is with the Cross of Christ behind that we know our God lives! Jesus atoned for all sins once and for all. For those God calls we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit to see Christ spiritually. As Apostle Luke taught, “God used his power to give Jesus the highest position. Jesus has also received and has poured out the Holy Spirit as the Father had promised, and this is what you’re seeing and hearing.” (Acts 2:33) I pray this is what you are seeing, hearing and living.

### Seeing Spiritually

We also see this passage in John 16 relating to Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit for the Church Age. Jesus began chapter 16 speaking about the evil of the world and the need for the Holy Spirit. Jesus clearly taught that it would be the Holy Spirit “**convicting the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.**” (John 16:8-11) Jesus made clear that the Holy Spirit’s ministry was to convict the world of its sin and need for Christ, thus bringing some to faith in Christ and indwelling them with spiritual life.

In verses 12 to 15 Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit would bring to their memories all the important teachings of Jesus and they would become instruments of God by the power of the Holy Spirit to write the New Testament and take the gospel to the lost of the world. The disciples were able to speak greater truths and more powerful truths once Jesus returned to heaven than while He walked with them. This continues today with us because of the Cross of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ, the Ascension of Christ and the indwelling of

the Holy Spirit we speak the gospel with power and convict the world of its sin and its need for the Savior Jesus.

When people say to me, pastor I do not feel spiritually close to Christ. In general they are suffering one of two problems. First, they are locked into the history of Christ along with the Jews and cannot move beyond His death and do not truly believe He is alive today. Secondly, they are not letting the Holy Spirit rule their life, they are spending inadequate time reading, studying and meditating on the Bible and interacting with God, which means they are not spending enough time in prayer speaking and listening to God. This is what the writer of Hebrews meant writing, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”* (Hebrews 11:1) The writer then goes on to give example after example of people of faith. He says they had great faith but they did not have what Christians have – the Holy Spirit. Because of the Holy Spirit chapter twelve instructs us, *“Therefore, (whenever we see the word “therefore” in the scriptures it means listen up – now that you have heard or read an important teaching here is what you are to do as believers) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Hebrews 12:1-2) If our sorrow is to be turned to joy while we live in this corrupt world, then first our joy will be based on letting the Holy Spirit have His way in our lives. The sorrows of the world will turn to joy through the study of the scriptures in which the Holy Spirit will bring spiritual wisdom. The sorrow and pain of living can be turned to joy through prayer – communicating

with God through the power of the Holy Spirit. This was the testimony of Paul, "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 3:13-14) These are great verses to write on a card and put on your mirror or dash of your car. Spiritual sight is based on the power of the Holy Spirit allowing one to see and know Christ, and then having the fortitude to press on in this corrupt world keeping our focus always upon Christ Jesus.

### **Seeing Spiritually and Living In Hope**

Finally I see in this passage applying to the Second Coming of Christ. Even though we are able to experience joy, joy that can be interrupted in this age in the midst of sorrow created by disappointments and sin, we have confidence knowing that the sorrow and corruption of this age is not permanent. Jesus is coming! And Jesus is coming as John recorded and Jesus said in "a little while." Peter wrote of what the attitude of the world would be, saying, "that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'" (2 Peter 3:3-4) We will always have scoffers; this is evidenced by what Peter quotes in verse 4 the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Malachi. After this short period of history and in "a little while" Jesus will turn our sorrow into joy just as He did for the disciples.

## **Closing**

There is a progression in these verses. First, there is the revelation of the Lord just after the resurrection. This went beyond anything the disciples were able to understand prior. Second, there is the revelation of Jesus as the Christ during this age through the power of the Holy Spirit. This even better than what the disciples experienced in the first few days after Jesus' resurrection. Remember Jesus said, "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." (John 16:7)

Then finally there is the revelation of Jesus, when He returns in His perfection and glory at the end of time. If this progression applies to what we see Jesus saying here in John historically then it should also apply to our own personal relationship with Jesus. We should know Jesus better this year than we did last year. Even though Joyce and I have been married 41 years I can truly say I know Joyce better this year than when we got married, better than 30 years ago, 10 years ago and better than last year. I have this great desire to continue my life's journey to know Christ more for this will enable me to know Joyce more, my children more, my grand children more and to know you, my beloved more. Without growing in Christ all else will collapse and fail. This is the challenge that is laid before us; to grow in Christ until we die or He returns and by the grace of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, study of the Word of God and time communicating with God in prayer we will enter into a greater and greater knowledge of God increasing our faith day by day. Jesus said, "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." (John 16:22) If we fully surrender our lives to Christ – no one will take your joy from you. If you surrender you will see the blessing God promised Abraham

come alive in your life, as I paraphrase Genesis 12, “I will bless you and make *Christ’s name great in you*, so that you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you *and your testimony of Jesus* all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:2-3) Amen!