

Easter Sunday - Early

April 5, 2015

I Tell You the Truth . . . Your Grief Will Turn to Joy

Text: John 16:16-22

Rev. George Ferch

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! In the name of Jesus, who proved all his promises to be true when he rose from death and the grave, dear fellow celebrants,

It always amazes me how quickly a child's heart can go from broken to happy. One second it is the end of the world because the little girl cannot find her favorite blanket or toy. She finds it and all is well. A little boy bumps his knee and cries. Mom kisses it and makes it better and his heart smiles once again.

We celebrate an event this morning that in fact we celebrate every Sunday. Our sins caused Jesus' agony and death on the cross. They put him into a new tomb outside Jerusalem. Then, three days later the angels told the women that Jesus came alive and rose from the dead just as he said. The angels' words turn our grief to joy. Jesus' resurrection makes our hearts smile again.

Jesus had told his disciples in the upper room, "**I Tell You the Truth . . . Your Grief Will Turn to Joy.** You will weep, mourn, and grieve. Your grief will turn to joy.

Of all the days of the year, our hearts ought to be grinning broadly today. The alleluias we removed six weeks ago are back. We removed the alleluias because there is weeping, and mourning, and grieving in the days and weeks prior to the miracle that declares the entire world not guilty of sin.

Our Savior told his disciples, "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve . . ." Just a few days after saying these words, Jesus witnessed broken hearts in his followers. With the rooster's crow still ringing in his ears, Peter went outside and wept bitterly. Her son's death pierced Mary's spirit as with a sword. Mary Magdalene had stood outside Jesus' tomb and wept. Jesus heard our broken hearts and contrite sighs on Good Friday.

Why such raw emotions? Because that is reality. The gospel of prosperity and ease is a false gospel. The theology of glory in this life is a delusion. Read the Scriptures and take them to heart. They quickly correct this falsehood and delusion. Christians hurt. We weep with

sadness. We mourn over losses. We grieve over transgressions and guilt. The pages of Scripture do not have to tell us that, do they? The Scriptures confirm what we experience in our lives. I just heard someone say the same thing about being a Lutheran. She said I am a Lutheran because Lutheranism gives words to what I experience in my life.

We woke up today and thought, "Welcome, Happy Morning!" I suspect that was not the case every day since last Easter. What caused your tears? A job loss, or a broken heart? An illness or a loved one's illness or death? Are you still mourning over a loss from a few years back? What guilt has caused you to grieve this year? Was it "faithless worrying and selfish pride," or, those "sins of habit" or "sins of choice"? You will weep, and mourn, and grieve.

Jesus' disciples would mourn when they experienced what he told them, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me... Your grief will turn to joy."

Jesus knew he was going away into death. He trusted that his Father would raise him from death. Jesus knew he would return to his disciples. They would see their Lord and Savior again. In view of Easter, the cross that caused them so much grief two days prior turned into a source of joy. There was Mary, crying at the tomb. When her Savior stood next to her and called her by name, Easter turned that cold hole in the rock into the rock of her faith. Jesus is the Son of God.

Easter turns Jesus' cross into a gift that assures us God accepted Christ's payment on our behalf. After weeping at the grave of our loved one, Easter promises a blessed reunion in heaven where Jesus wipes every tear from our eyes. After lying awake at night fearing our own death, Easter turns our fears into a longing for a pleasant sleep while we wait for our souls to reunite with our glorious bodies on the Last Day. Easter turns our grief into joy.

A Hindu woman went to visit a Christian missionary who had converted her 16-year-old daughter. The woman asked, "What did you do to our daughter?" The missionary replied, "We did nothing." The girl's mother said, "Oh, yes you did. My daughter died yesterday, and she died smiling. Our people do not die that way."

Because of Jesus, that girl's heart was smiling and so are ours. Nothing can take that away from us. Not even death.

Christ is risen! May that put a smile in your heart today and always. Alleluia. Let all God's people say, "Amen." <SDG>