

Introductory

This material is exclusive to John. It takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane on Maundy Thursday evening. In TLH, readings for John are appointed for Jubilate, Cantate, and John 16:23-30 for Rogate. LW completely removed the sixteenth chapter of John from the Easter Season, and LSB brought it back in Series C, with readings from that chapter for last week and this week.

There is a continuation of last week's text. He has been dancing around the subject of His departure and subsequent return, and we listened as He told them last week that it would take place "in a little while." Then He told them that they would be sorrowful, but then they would rejoice. Then He goes with the labor and delivery metaphor; a painful thing followed by a joyful thing.

Textual Notes

23. Still vague about the time of "a little while," when that time comes "καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἐρωτήσετε οὐδέν – in that day you will ask nothing." The word "ask" appears two times in this verse, but two different kinds of asking. The first "ask" is the verb "ἐρωτάω" – to ask a question," expecting an answer. The meaning is that a time is coming when they will not do that.

They will not have to ask any more questions because they will understand all that they need to know about God and Jesus. We note that immediately prior to this statement, they have been asking a lot of questions, first to each other, and then to Him. They are particularly baffled by the meaning of His telling them that He will be leaving for a little while, and then He will be back.

And after He rises from the dead, He does a lot of talking in the locked room, but they don't ask Him questions because they are no longer baffled. When He sees them later on up in Galilee, it is He who is asking the questions, not them. The one exception is when Peter (21:21) "λέγει – speaks" enigmatically to Jesus about John. But none of them ask Jesus any questions about Him.

This lack of post-resurrection questions about Jesus is best explained by noting that when the dead man is standing in front of you alive, it's pretty clear what has happened. In the locked room, having seen the risen Christ, they make confession of faith to Thomas that "We have seen the Lord." A week later, having seen the same, Thomas makes an even stronger confession.

Later on, up in Galilee, John tells us that they wanted to ask Him "who are you?" (21:12), but they did not. John notes that they didn't ask because they knew that it was the Lord, as well they should have, and Peter calls Him "Lord" there. You stop asking questions when you finally get it, and they were finally getting it, and shortly – at Pentecost – the light bulb will go on, and it did.

The second “ask” is the verb “αἰτέω” – a request for something, “ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἂν τι αἰτήσητε τὸν Πατέρα δώσει ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου – truly, truly I say to you, ‘whatever you petition the Father, He will give in my name.’” I think it only natural for people who hear this to think of all the cool things they would like to have, and the TV preachers tell them that they can.

All they have to do is “name it and claim it,” making Christianity into a shallow and vacuous cult. It’s not. For an idea of the things for which Christians ought to petition God, we begin with the Lord’s Prayer, where Jesus specifically told us how we should pray. This might be a good time to review the petitions out of the catechism, which explains the basic meaning of each of them.

We might then continue by looking at the things about which the Son will soon pray to the Father; He prays for disciples (Christians) then and for them now. Then you can look at the General Prayer in the Missal Book for an even greater understanding of things for which we should pray. Finally, look at the various prayers for various things there and in the hymnal, and you’re on your way!

24. He notes, “ἕως ἄρτι οὐκ ἠτήσατε οὐδὲν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου – until now you have not asked for nothing in my name.” He taught them how to pray in the Lord’s Prayer, but it is not ever recorded that they used it once since. In the English language, two negatives make a positive, but the double negator in Greek makes it emphatically negative that they have asked Him for nothing whatsoever.

The present imperative commands them to make it a part of life to “αἰτεῖτε, καὶ λήμψεσθε, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη – ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be fulfilled.” We rhetorically ask if Jesus ever would have prayed for greater wealth, a bigger house, a flashy sports car, or to win the lottery? Would He ever have prayed for the demise of somebody He didn’t like?

The problem with “name it and claim it” is that material possessions can bring happiness, but they have nothing to do with “χαρὰ – joy.” For proof of that, just look at Americans, who have many things, but who may or may not be joyful. The thing spoken of here has nothing at all to do with such things, but bespeaks a spiritual health and well-being brought about only by Christ.

At its base, the word “χαρὰ – joy” means an awareness and a knowledge of God and the things of God. Such awareness and knowledge are possessed by Christians. The Natural Man’s knowledge of God includes much knowledge about God. Perhaps the most significant contribution to our joy is the certain knowledge that we were headed for eternity in Hell, but instead are going to heaven.

There is also the knowledge that God is a loving Father who wants only good for us even on this earth, that He takes care of our needs while we wait for heaven, and that – see the Petitions to the Lord’s Prayer and the First Article of the Creed. Compare and contrast joyful Christians with Agnostics and Atheists, who are hands down the most miserable and despairing people around.

The verb “πληρόω – to fulfill or complete” is used eighty-seven times in the NT, mostly when a writer declares an OT prophecy to have been “fulfilled.” Here, the word is in the perfect tense

with “joy” being fulfilled or completed. Going back to the things for which we ought to pray, they are things associated with joy that comes from the spiritual and eternal, not temporal and physical.

Check out C.S. Lewis’ *Surprised by Joy*, his story of conversion from Atheism to Christianity.

Or, if you ride bikes, note that the e-bikers are the ones enjoying the ride, not Spandex Guy.

25. Noting now that His hearers are having a hard time comprehending what He is trying to tell them, He notes “Ταῦτα ἐν παροιμίαις λελάληκα ὑμῖν· ἔρχεται – these things I have spoken to you in figures of speech.” There is a word in the Greek language for “proverb,” and this is not the word. There is a word for “parable,” nor is it that. This is the generic word for a figure of speech.

Did you notice that Jesus has been using the figure of speech known as euphemism quite a bit? He emphatically contrasts that sort of speaking – using figures – with another, saying “ἀλλὰ παρρησίᾳ περὶ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἀπαγγελῶ ὑμῖν – but plainly regarding the Father I will report to you.” The word παρρησίᾳ is used to describe straightforward, unvarnished, tell-it-like-it-is language.

The word “ἀπαγγελῶ” is used to describe somebody simply reporting the facts, ma’am, nothing but the facts. A euphemism is a softer saying meant to soften a hard saying. People use a lot of euphemisms for death, for example, which is a hard thing, but somehow saying “he passed” doesn’t sound as harsh as “he died.” For the Christian death is victory and release, which are not harsh.

Here, Jesus has been talking in euphemism about how He’s going to go to a place where they can’t see Him, and then after a little while they will be able to see Him. Such words, I suppose, could have meant a lot of things, at least to them. And then he talks about how it is when a woman is in labor and giving birth to a child. After He gives it to them straight, then they understand (v. 29).

26. When that day comes, and when they make petitions to the Father, making the proper requests in His name, He will intercede on their and on our behalf with the Father, making the same requests for the same things. He Who acts as the Intercessor between sinful man and Holy God in matters of salvation, will also act as intercessor between us and Him when we pray for things we need.

27. He continues with the Intercessor theme, noting that “αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Πατήρ φιλεῖ ὑμᾶς, ὅτι ὑμεῖς ἐμὲ πεφιλήκατε – the Father befriends you because you have befriended me.” The verb is φιλέω – brotherly love, not αγαπαω – self-sacrificial love. This is not about Christians giving of self sacrificially to Jesus, but it is about the relationship they and we have with Him, and that’s okay.

We talk like that all the time. Upon meeting somebody for the first time, we often poke around for common ground; oh, you graduated in 86, do you know...? When we want to do business but don’t know with whom, a friend will perhaps tell us about a friend who is in that business, and that you should tell him I sent you. They are friends with the Son, so also are friends with the Father.

Furthermore, He notes that “καὶ πεπιστεύκατε ὅτι ἐγὼ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον – and you have believed that I have come out from God.” This isn’t exactly a ringing endorsement of their very thorough theological understanding of Him, but they do recognize Him to be from God. Not everybody did, and generally the theologians of the day didn’t, nor do many of them of our day.

28. Contrasting “the Father” and “the World,” He says that “ἐξῆλθον ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ ἐλήλυθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον – I came out from the Father and came into the world.” Given what John and He have said of “the world,” it’s like saying that Jesus left the bliss of heaven to come into this filthy, roach-infested hell hole of a place, and who would want to do that? Jesus would and did want that.

But it’s only temporary, “πάλιν ἀφίημι τὸν κόσμον καὶ πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα – again I let go the world and journey to the Father.” The verb “ἀφίημι” is often translated “forgiven.” It means “to let go,” like you let go of your fishing nets, and this double entendre has Jesus letting go of the world even as He is in the process of forgiving the world by His life, death, and Resurrection.

29. And they get it, declaring, “Ἴδε νῦν ἐν παρρησίᾳ λαλεῖς, καὶ παροιμίαν οὐδεμίαν λέγεις – Look! Now you speak plainly, and You do not speak in a figure,” which is like us saying, “oh, now I get it! Why didn’t you just say that you are going to shortly kick the bucket!” If often happens that we will use euphemism, they don’t get it, and we have to just give it to them straight.

The doctor comes out and tells the family that the surgery had a “negative outcome,” and they don’t get it. The doctor says, “he didn’t make it,” and that’s more clear, and the family says, “are you saying that he died?” The doctor shakes his head and the family maybe say, “well why didn’t you just say so,” like the disciples here are essentially making that sort of criticism of Jesus.

30. Furthermore, they say to the man who has just predicted His imminent death, “νῦν οἶδαμεν ὅτι οἶδας πάντα – now we know that you know all.” It follows that the One who comes forth from the all-knowing Father should know all things. It further follows that “οὐ χρειᾶν ἔχεις ἵνα τίς σε ἐρωτᾷ – you have no need to ask” anybody about things, especially questions about things theological.

To talk about one’s coming departure is one thing, but to talk about then coming back to them is a horse of a different color. They say, “ἐν τούτῳ πιστεύομεν ὅτι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθες – in this we believe; that you came forth from God.” He had observed earlier (27) that very thing; they believe that He came from God. The reason why they believe, they say, is because He knows all things.

On a human level, the men to whom He is speaking know Him better than anybody else has ever known Him. They have been with Him for three years, they have heard the words He has spoken, and they have seen the things that He has done. We have not, and John tells us that he knows more than he has written, and on that level, nobody will ever know Jesus as well as those originals.

On another level, we know all that we need to know about Jesus from the inspired writings of John and the rest. And can each of us not say that we recognize Jesus as the font of all wisdom and

knowledge, the one who has nothing to learn from anybody else? Beginning in Genesis and continuing through Revelation God answers all of our questions that can be answered about Him.

Included in that revelation is the teaching the teaching that there are certain things about God that we cannot understand, no more than a child can understand all things about life that come with becoming an adult. Through that revelation, we get the answers to the Big Questions, and it is that knowledge about those answers that give to us the peace and joy that is unique to the Christian.

31. To this Jesus responds “Ἀρτι πιστεύετε – just now you believe?” It’s a rhetorical question meaning “what took you so long?” Or more to the point, “do you (really) believe now,” after all the times when their unbelief broke through their belief and would have stamped it out. What is about to happen – hardship for not only Him, but trials for them as well – will test that belief

32. Very soon, as it turns out “ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ ἐλήλυθεν ἵνα σκορπισθῇτε ἕκαστος εἰς τὰ ἴδια καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀφῆτε – behold, the hour has come that you will be scattered, each into his own, and you will leave me alone.” The first verb “has come” is in the perfect tense, and we note the usual meaning, this time in reference to Crucifixion and Resurrection, past events whose effects linger.

None of them were there for the first event, and these believers were skeptical when told about and even upon seeing the second event. The word “leave me” is the same word encountered earlier, often translated “to forgive,” meaning “to let go.” When they soon came to Gethsemane to arrest Him, they dropped Him like a bad habit. Or like a hot potato. Or like a hammer on a nail.

They will soon be left without Him, but as for Himself, “οὐκ εἰμὶ μόνος, ὅτι ὁ Πατήρ μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἐστίν – I am not alone, because My Father is with Me.” Not much later on, He will cry out from the cross asking why The Father has forsaken Him. Barnes points out that even then, Jesus calls Him “My God,” and Ellicott notes that right after this, He commends His Spirit to “Your hands.”

33. Now contrast between “peace” and “tribulation.” The first is from God, and the second is from the world. He continues, “ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ εἰρήνην ἔχητε – these things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace.” The first verb is in the perfect tense. Peace is the certain knowledge that God is still in control of His Creation, no matter how it looks.

These days, it looks pretty bad. Duke University was begun as a Christian (Methodist) institution. They recently prayed in chapel to a goddess they proclaimed to be the “Great Queer One,” and Augustana College in Rock Island included a Beyonce Mass at their chapel during the Easter Season. There’s more – there’s always more – and that’s from people who bear the name of Christ.

Much of the Church, it seems, have allied with the World. By contrast “ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θλίψιν ἔχετε – in the world you have tribulation.” The verb “to have” is in the subjunctive mood – the mood of uncertainty; if you are a Christian, then you have that peace, but if you aren’t, then you can’t. – in the previous phrase, but here it is in the present tense; it’s a sure thing, and we observe that it is.

The word “θλίψις – tribulation” has its root in the idea of being pressured or pushed together with no way of escape. On a very basic level – and go ahead and talk about this to your people – we are constantly pressured by the Devil, the World, and the Flesh to sin and to abandon the Faith, and on this earth, there is no escape from that sort of suffering, especially not for the Christian.

He emphatically tells us “ἀλλὰ θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον – but be courageous; I have won victory over the world.” The verb “won victory” is in the perfect tense. The verb “θαρσέω – take courage” occurs seven times in the NT, and does not refer to hollow courage, but to courage that comes from knowing about that peace of God, the rationale and reason for being courageous.

That statement most certainly also carries with it apocalyptic connotations; one day you will be in heaven. Some of the translators (biblehub.com) use words like “self-assurance,” and I must say that I know a lot of Christians I would describe like that. It’s the self-assurance that comes from knowing how small we are and knowing that God cares for us nevertheless and gives us the victory.

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