

## In Me, you May Have Peace

John 16:25-33

Jesus chose the most significant of all times to teach the disciples the secrets of joy and peace. The cross was but hours away. The trauma of that event would shake the disciples as nothing had before. They were to go through a time which would be as far removed from peace and joy as heaven is from hell. Jesus knew the disciples would soon be very teachable in respect to joy and peace, "Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone..." They would be so shaken by the events to come that they would be scattered, abandoning Jesus and each other. Scattered, this group that had walked together with Jesus for three years, scattered and alone.

On the eve of this, moments from these heart rending experiences, Jesus taught about joy and peace. What we need to understand is that joy and peace, as desirable as they are, are not independent spirits. Instead, they are dependent and rest on the faith and confidence we have learned to have in God.

We just ran across this in the Psalms the other day. We were reading Psalms 93 which is thought to have been written in celebration of the return of Israel from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem. As always, people tend to think circumstantially. If things are going well, then let's praise the Lord! And so they did. "The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength..." Of course they knew the power and strength of God and they were confident in His goodwill since they were miraculously returning from exile to the land. They thought of themselves as experiencing a second Exodus. The God who had shown Himself to be more powerful than the Pharaoh of Egypt was back. As He had provided for His people under Moses, now he was doing so again. But their celebration of God's intervention on their behalf led them to further implications of their faith, "Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting." Their celebration led them to the realization that God was not "back on His throne" for

he had always been on His throne. The exile was itself a testimony to God's sovereign rule for in the time the hearts of Israel had come back to God. The fatalism of the people who believed that God's veracity as God was inextricably linked to His defense of His temple and His city, Jerusalem without regard for the spiritual state of the people had been exposed as fallacious. So, the people opened their Bibles again and rediscovered the path to faith and blessing. They were taught by the examples of faith, Daniel and Ezekiel and Mordecai and Esther. The nation relearned its faith in exile and so as they marched to Jerusalem they could see it, The God who had exercised His power to release them from their bondage was also the God who had exercised His power to bring their hearts back to Himself. "Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting."

This heritage of faith that had been reclaimed by the returning captives was knowable to the disciples of Jesus. They had the Old Testament Scriptures and could read Psalms 93 just as we are able to today. But the disciples are like we are. They do not always put the knowledge they have to good use. Jesus had even challenged them to have faith when circumstances seemed out of control when they thought they were going to die in the storm while Jesus, clearly at peace, slept in the nose of the boat. So, when they could have believed and hung onto their faith - even in the midst of trial and crucifixion, they panicked and were scattered and alone. Before the fact, Jesus taught joy and peace.

Let's notice the specifics of Jesus' teaching; He predicted their future joy based on the triumphant outcome that would soon be experienced. The comparison to a woman giving birth revealed the two phases of what they were to experience. First the trauma of pain and the fears of uncertainty and loss, then, the joy of birth, a new reality that cast the necessary but former pain back into a prior existence, one that is now so overwhelmed by present possibilities that for all practical purposes, it is forgotten. Joy of resurrection has replaced the loneliness and distress of the losses represented by the cross. But in addition, Jesus also invited the disciples to a life of continuing joy as they learned to "ask in His name," and receive what they asked for.

Finally, Jesus spoke plainly. We understand now what Jesus was talking about with His metaphor of the woman giving birth but in the garden, before the cross and before the resurrection, the disciples were confused and did not know what Jesus was saying to them. So He spoke plainly. The key word was (v. 28) "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." These words may seem vague to us but they were apparently clear to the disciples. They represent the purpose and plan of God. According to that plan, Jesus came forth from the Father and came into the world. When we celebrate Christmas there is no ambivalence about the triumphant power of God as He reaches down and brings His Son into the world for His stated purposes of salvation. "There is born unto you a Savior who is Christ, the Lord." Jesus, sent by the Father had come into the world to accomplish the purposes of the Father. Once this was finished, He would naturally return to the Father. "Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." Jesus was saying that He had come to accomplish His mission and having done so that He would then return to the Father. Jesus then added, "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." Peace comes from the confidence that God is God. He is in control. The chaotic state of the world and seemingly of our lives is illusive because God has His plan and He is executing His plan. From the Exodus and from the second Exodus and from the resurrection God's triumphant power has clearly been demonstrated in His interventions on behalf of His people. He has not changed. In the most dark moments, God reigns. In the end, Jesus will return. His enemies will be put down and His purposes accomplished. We will reign with Christ. Our side is going to win. The defeats and disappointments experienced along the way are just steps in the path to victory. There is no reason to be dispirited. We have no cause to be upset. Jesus has shown us how to take it all and maintain our joy and peace.