

**The Word Became Flesh  
(Week 49)  
John 16:16-24  
“From Sorrow To Joy ”**

**Introduction**

**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed in us. Romans 8:18**

Have you ever watched a movie when you didn't quite grasp the plot? You sit there and watch what is happening on the screen, but even though you see it with your own eyes, you don't really understand what is happening. It is a pretty confusing feeling is it not? But with just a simple explanation, that elusive missing piece that completes the puzzle, causes us to respond with those words we have uttered so many times before, "Oh, *now* I see it." It is amazing how just one simple piece of information completely transforms our perspective. Everything seems to fall into place, when we finally have a grasp on the reality of what we are seeing.

It is hard for me to even imagine just how distraught the disciples were on the night before Jesus went to the cross. Keep in mind that they had listened to His teaching for three years, but in all honesty, most of it went over their heads. They simply could not recall or even comprehend many of the things He had taught them. And then, after all of this, He then informed them that He was leaving! How confounding all of this must have been for them. This is always the case when a worldly mind tries to understand spiritual truths. It is much like watching a movie and not really understanding the plot.

Although the disciples didn't always understand their Master, one thing was for certain; they loved Him. And they had placed their faith in Him, even though they didn't always grasp the meaning of His message. In fact, they had never fully understood His mission here on earth. Their perspective changed somewhat after His death, burial, and resurrection, but when The Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost, they were completely transformed! All their questions and misgivings completely vanished on that miraculous day. This is the result of carnal minds being regenerated by The Spirit.

**Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.**  
**Romans 12:1-2** (emphasis added)

When we receive Christ, we also receive The Spirit of God within us, and as a result, we are completely transformed in our way of thinking. This is one of the ways that you can tell that someone has truly had an encounter with Christ. They are changed in such a miraculous way, that no one can deny the transformation. To know Christ is to thirst for what is holy and to despise all that is worldly. It is a rebirth from darkness to light, from death to life everlasting.

As Jesus spoke of the things of The Spirit, His disciples became all the more confused. But in spite of their lack of understanding, He was so very patient with them. For He knew that once their minds were transformed by The Holy Spirit, everything that He had told them would make perfect sense. For it is impossible to grasp spiritual things apart from the discernment that comes from above. He had chosen them for great things (John 14:12). And they would most certainly carry out those things, once they became adequately equipped to do so. The same is true for everyone who believes in Christ!

So as we look at this passage today, we learn of the transformation that is to come when a person is filled with The Holy Spirit. There will be a *Transformation in Perception*, a *Transformation in Perspective*, and a *Transformation in Prayer*.

**Transformed Perception (vs. 16-18)**

***"In a little while, you will no longer see Me; again in a little while, you will see Me." Then some of His disciples said to one another, "What is this He's telling us: 'In a little while, you will not see Me; again in little while, you will see Me', and, 'Because I am going to The Father'?" They said, "What is this He is saying, 'In a little while'? We don't know what He's talking about." John 16:16-18***

One would have to admit that on the surface, these statements of Jesus would indeed seem 'cryptic', to say the least. The response of the disciples is priceless. They did not have the first clue as to what He was saying. Even as we read His words now, we may "think" we understand what He meant, but it is important to remember that everything Jesus says is usually much deeper than it seems on the surface!

A casual reading of this statement, in retrospective of the cross and resurrection would lead us to believe that Christ was telling them that He would soon die and be buried, and then He would rise from the dead. So in this regard, they would not be able to see Him, but then, they would see Him again. But actually I believe that He is saying so much more than this based upon the subtle diversity He used in the wording of His statement.

Jesus used two different Greek words that are translated "see" in His sentence. The first word, *"In a little while you will see Me no longer."* is the Greek word *"theoreo"*, which carries the meaning of *witnessing something*. Such as, we went to "see" a movie. In the second part of the sentence, He uses a different word for "see" entirely: *'again in a little while, you will see Me'*. This word is *"optanomai"*, and it carries the meaning of *more earnest inspection*.

So what was He saying to them? He was telling them that they could not really see Him for Who He truly was, but a time was coming when their perspective would change, and on that day, they would truly "see" Him. What day was this you might ask? In order to answer this question, it is vitally important that we remember the context of this discussion. Jesus had been telling them that He would send The Spirit to them upon returning to His Father. When The Spirit came, He would enlighten them and guide them into all truth (**vs. 13**). So you see, at the present time, they could see Jesus, but they had not truly been able to "see" (perceive) Who He truly was. But when The Spirit came, their perception would be transformed. Then, even though Jesus was in heaven with His Father and they couldn't see Him physically, they would actually be able to see Him better than they ever could when He was with them!

This is a reality well known to every Spirit-filled believer. I have never seen Jesus with my own eyes, but The Spirit of God has enabled me to see Him perfectly. I know Him on an intimate level, just as I know my family and friends here on earth. It is hard to describe this to someone who is lost, but every Believer knows exactly what I am talking about. Listen to the words of The Apostle Peter as he describes this relationship.

***Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9***

So, what was Christ telling His confused disciples that evening? He was telling them not to worry, because a time was soon to come that all their doubts would disappear. All their questions would be answered, and finally, everything that He had taught them would make perfect sense. And even though they would not be able to see Him physically, in truth, they would see Him better than ever before! This is what The Spirit does for all who place their faith in Christ. Things that were impossible to understand, are now made clear, by the transforming and renewing of our minds. The Spirit transforms our perception, so that we can grasp the spiritual truths of God's Word. Has your vision been transformed today? Can you see Jesus for Who He truly is? You will, if you place your faith in Him. The Spirit will see to that.

**Transformed Perspective (vs. 19-22)**

**Jesus knew they wanted to ask Him, so He said to them, "Are you asking one another about what I said, 'In a little while, you will not see Me; again in a little while you will see Me'? Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy from you."**

**John 16:19-22**

Have you ever noticed that when people are afraid to ask a question, for fear of feeling foolish, they will not ask it out loud, but will whisper their confusion either to themselves or to someone who seems as lost as they? We have all done this. Its human nature. We have no idea what is being discussed, but we are afraid to ask the questions out loud, because we think everyone will think we are, shall we say... "less than intelligent".

Jesus' disciples were afraid to ask Him what He was saying in regards to them not seeing, then seeing Him again. So instead of asking, they began whispering amongst themselves. He, of course, knew what was in their hearts and minds, so He addressed their fears. He did not fully explain His meaning, but He assured them with a parable that all things would work out for their good as He had promised them earlier (**John 16:7**). Once again, He is referring to the coming of The Spirit, Who upon His coming would make everything perfectly clear.

Jesus likened the sorrow that the disciples were enduring as the labor pains of a woman during childbirth. As soon as the baby is in her arms, she forgets all about the pain as her "sorrow is turned into joy." Here is the important lesson. The very thing that caused her pain in the first place also is the very thing that brought her joy in the end. The same was true for the disciples. Everything that would seem horrific to them in the coming days would later become a source of rejoicing. Namely, the cross, for all its suffering and shame, has now become the symbol of forgiveness and hope for the believer. It is the perfect example of sorrow transformed into joy.

When The Spirit transforms a person from the inside out, we come to realize that the trials we face in this life are for our own benefit. This is a foreign concept to the world, but it makes perfect sense to the Believer. The Word of God tells us that our Father uses suffering to conform us to the image of His Son. We share in His sufferings in order to be more like Him. In other words, the very thing that may be hurting us today will bring us joy in the future!

**Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.**

**James 1:2-4**

Just as The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, He will also allow difficulties in our lives in order to conform us to the image of Christ. In short, our sorrows are used by The Spirit of God to bring us everlasting joy!

**We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.**

**Romans 8:28**

And not only are we strengthened in our trials, be we can also find joy in the chastening from God. We can even take comfort in His strong discipline. For His correction may well be painful, but we know it is for our good, and we do not fear that He will remove His love from us, for His love is everlasting. Hear the words of King David who knew this reality all too well.

**Sing to The LORD, you His faithful ones, and praise His Holy Name. For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favor, a lifetime. Weeping may stay overnight, but there is joy in the morning.** **Psalm 30:4-5**

Place your faith in Christ, and allow The Spirit to transform your sorrows into joy.

**Transformed Prayer (vs. 23-24)**

**"In that day you will not ask me anything. Truly I tell you, anything you ask The Father in My Name, He will give you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My Name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete."** **John 16:23-24**

When we are transformed by The Spirit, our prayers become effective. Notice that Jesus says to them, **"In that day..."**. To which day is He referring? To the day of Pentecost, when The Spirit came to indwell every believer. For you see, to believe in Jesus is to have The Spirit, and to have The Spirit is to have direct communication with The Father!

Up until that point, the disciples had never prayed to The Father in The Name of Jesus. Why? Because Jesus had been physically present with them. However, because of the finished work of the cross and His return to His Father, all Believers have access to the throne of God at all times. Once again this is why He told them that it was "expedient" for Him to leave them to return to His Father (**John 16:7**).

It is also important here, once more, to examine the words that Jesus uses for "ask". Just as He used two different words for "see" in **verse 17**, He employs two different words in these verses for "ask". He states that in that day they would not "ask" Him anything. The word for ask in this sentence is "*erotao*", and it means *to inquire or ask a question*. That night the disciples had so many questions. Most of which, they were afraid to even ask out loud. What Jesus was telling them was when they were later transformed by The Spirit, all those questions would vanish. Upon His arrival, The Spirit would not only allow them to recall all that Jesus had said, but He would enable them to understand it. Not only that. He would teach them much more Truth that would come from directly from Christ Himself! (**vs. 13-15**).

The second word Christ used for "ask" is in regard to asking The Father for things in His Name. This word, "*aiteo*", carries the meaning of *one going to a superior with a request*. In other words, Jesus was speaking here of making our request known to The Father, by praying in Jesus Name.

Because we love Christ, The Father loves us and has given us the wondrous privilege of coming before the throne and presenting our request to God Himself. Jesus' death on the cross enabled us to have this type of informality with God. I am reminded here of the book of *Esther*, when the queen was granted access to the King, even though she had not obtained an official appointment to see him. As she walked into the throne room, the royal court must have been stunned that she would risk such a breach of protocol. Did she not know that taking such a risk could cost her her life? Yes! She did know. But she presented herself nonetheless, for her request was urgent.

We all know the story. Rather than turn her away or even have her executed, the king raised his scepter in approval and allowed her to speak with him. Why? Because she was his beloved bride. We too have this status before the throne, for we are the Bride of Christ. And we can now make our requests known to The Father without fear of condemnation.

**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.** **Hebrews 4:15-16**

This is what it means to pray in Jesus Name. Thanks to His finished work on Calvary's cross, we have access to The Father through The Son. And when we pray according to the will of The Son, The Father will always grant our prayer request. Thanks to The Spirit, we now know how we should pray. The questions have all been addressed in The Word, and God's will has been revealed to us by The Spirit. Thanks to the expedient work of Christ, our prayer lives have been transformed. What a wonderful transformation we have. Thanks to the indwelling Holy Spirit.

And let those who are transformed in Him say... TRUTH!!!