

Jubilate  
St. John 16:16-22

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

In what has been a journey in reverse since Quasimodo Geniti—that is, moving from the resurrection to times before the crucifixion—we’ve moved forward from John 10 to 16. The section that chapter 16 falls in is known as the “Farewell Discourses.” Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper, though John hardly mentions it; he just gives you a little foot washing and A New Commandment. (cf. John 13:34) From then on, Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure, for His crucifixion. Today’s text is right in the middle of it all. There, He says, “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.”

It is, perhaps, a familiar phrase to many of you. Your child is becoming antsy. They’ve spent most of the day in the car, and the scenery outside is getting repetitive and boring. What do they ask? “Are we there yet?” And the usual response from the front of the car is “In a little while” (or something quite similar).

You’ve sat down in the bleachers at the arena. The teams are taking the field or skating onto the ice. Your child tugs on your sleeve and you bend down to hear them better. “When’s the game going to start?” “In a little while.”

You’ve spent the day shopping. You’ve been to seven or eight stores already, and you’re finally at your last stop, grocery shopping. You have your young one in the seat of the cart, while the basket is filling up with food. Your child peers at you from behind the shopping list and asks, “Can we go home now?” “In a little while.”

It has to be the most hated phrase of a child—or anyone to whom it is said, I suppose—and it so easily rolls off the tongue. Just what does it mean? Well, in the examples above, I suppose they most accurately translate to, “It’s the next thing,” or, “Just be quiet for now,” or, “Leave me alone for now, I’m busy.” It rarely, if ever, meant that the “when” the children were looking forward to would happen in the matter of a few minutes. What did it mean? Jesus had been telling His disciples that He was going away, and before they knew it, Jesus says, “In a little while...”

You might imagine the thoughts going through their minds. They expressed their bewilderment. It might seem as if they didn’t get Jesus’ Passion predictions to this point; after all, they didn’t get it until they had seen the empty tomb or Jesus Himself following the resurrection. However, to this point, Jesus had told them what was going to happen—these are His “Farewell Discourses;” it’s all He’s been talking about since the upper room, and He will be taken away from them later that night, so it’s not like they have a ton of time to forget what He has been saying, or that there’s been a lot going on since He’s been saying these things that would cause them to forget. Maybe they just weren’t listening.

Or, maybe, it was that phrase that threw them off. They had heard it from their parents so many times on their myriad treks to Jerusalem. Now, their Teacher said it, and they have no perspective or comprehension. They likely began to wonder just when this “little while” would happen.

Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

After another chapter in John’s Gospel, Judas approached with a detachment of the guard, and they arrested Jesus, bound Him, and brought Him to the chief priests to be tried. (cf. John 18:3ff) It could have been but a couple of hours, if that, and the “little while” of not seeing Jesus happened.

Jesus was beaten, brought to the Roman governor, then before Herod, back before Pilate, and beaten again to within an inch of His life. He was crowned with thorns and mockingly dressed in purple. They gave Him a cross beam, which He carries part of the way to Golgotha. There, He was nailed to it, said a few things, and finally finished what it was He came to earth to accomplish.

τέτελεστα! It is finished, and Jesus has won for you forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The full wrath of God for your sins was exacted against His Son. There is none for you, and now, therefore, no condemnation for you since you are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. (cf. Romans 6:4; 8:1)

For the disciples at the time, however, Jesus' lifeless body was taken down from the cross and placed in a grave. He is out of their sight—they see Him no more. The first "little while" has happened. Then, they waited for the next one: "and again a little while, and you will see Me." When will it be? Will they remember what He said and believe it? Well, their remembrance and belief have already been mentioned.

Jesus does rise...for them and for you. And He does appear to them again. This time, the little while lasted but a couple of days, taken from their sight on a Friday, appearing to them on a Sunday:

- On that Sunday, Mary Magdalene saw Him in the Garden where His tomb was, but mistook Him at first for the gardener. He revealed Himself to her by saying her name. She ran off and told the disciples. (cf. John 20:1-18)
- Later that day, two disciples were on the road to Emmaus when Jesus appeared to them. At first, they didn't recognize Him and thought Him the fool for not knowing what had happened in Jerusalem over the weekend. Even though Jesus rebuked them and instructed them about the Christ as revealed in Moses and the Prophets, "burning their hearts within them," it wasn't until He broke bread that they finally recognized Him. They ran back to Jerusalem, despite the late hour, and told the disciples what had happened. (cf. Luke 24:13-35)
- That same evening, Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room, bestowing on them His peace and Spirit. There, He instituted the Office of the Keys. They went out to find Thomas, who was not with them, and told him all these things. (cf. John 20:19-25)

And these appearances continued for the next 40 days.

- The week after appearing in the upper room, Jesus did the same again and appeared for Thomas' sake. (cf. John 20:25-29)
- Some time later, He appeared to seven disciples as they were fishing on the Sea of Tiberias. It was while they were making their way back that they saw Him on the shore, but did not recognize Him at first. It wasn't until He told them to let down the nets that John turned to Peter and told Him it was Jesus. He swam to shore while the rest arrived in the boat, dragging the net behind. Following the miraculous catch, Jesus and the seven had breakfast. This was the third appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the disciples. (cf. John 21:1-14)
- He had also appeared to over 500 disciples at once, many of whom were still alive as Paul was writing the first letter to the Corinthians, explaining to them the resurrection. (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:6)

After those 40 days, Jesus appeared to the disciples for the last time. That day, He was taken up in a cloud to sit at the right hand of Majesty and to fill all things. (cf. Acts 1:6-12; Ephesians 4:10) From that time forward, the church has not laid eyes on Jesus, though He did appear to Paul on the road to Damascus, and John was privileged to see Him and all of Heaven while exiled on the island of Patmos. Since then, no one has seen Jesus, heard Him, been touched by Him or touched Him, or received anything directly from Him. The church has, however, received all things from Him—received Jesus Himself—in His means: the Word and the Sacraments.

In His Word, you have the very accounts of Jesus Passion, death, and resurrection. You have the eyewitnesses of these events telling you exactly what happened—exactly what you need to hear. And, you hear them tell you that it's all for you. You hear the same in the words of the man in the pulpit, as he expounds these eyewitness accounts for you.

You hear the Word and the preacher tell you the Law to expose your sin to you. All of your misdeeds are laid open to you, and you are told how you fall short of God's glory. You are told how much of an enemy of God you are on your own account. And all of these words are true. You are a sinner. You have sinned. You have transgressed the Law of God. For it, you should be reckoned as God's enemy, and as His enemy, you should die for your sins—you would, apart from the intervention of God Himself.

For you, God has intervened. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4-5) Jesus was born under that Law, and every point He kept perfect as you could not and would not. But, it wasn't just His perfect obedience that is your intervention. In that perfect obedience, Jesus saw fit to be your substitute, and so like a perfect, sacrificial lamb, Jesus made His way to Jerusalem where, "in a little while," He gave His life as your ransom and remission. Life was demanded for your transgressions, so Jesus gave His for you. "[W]ithout shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22b)

And you, dear Baptized, are redeemed. You have received from God for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ, full remission of your sins. You are pardoned, restored, justified. This is the Gospel which must always accompany the proclamation of the Law, and it is found in the very same Word of God, penned by those very same eyewitnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection. They were there, and as those who saw Jesus in those 40 days following His resurrection ran off to tell others that they had "seen the Lord;" likewise in His Word, they run directly to your ears and tell you the same thing. It's not just good news that Jesus is risen, but that He is risen for you, and so is sealed to you the forgiveness of all of your sins.

I said before that since Jesus' ascension, no one has seen Jesus, but that will not long be the case. Jesus has gone to the Father to prepare a place for those who are in Him. He is gone there for you, dear Baptized! But, just as He had predicted and promised His crucifixion and resurrection, so He has also promised His return from His ascension. The very same Word penned by the eyewitnesses record that promise.

- "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3)
- "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)
- "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)
- "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)
- "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)

This is Jesus' promise to you, as told by John, Luke, and Paul. Others also make mention of the Christ's return, and that when He comes, the Holy Spirit will raise you and all the dead, and give eternal life to you and to all believers in Christ. (cf. [Small Catechism](#), Creed, Article III) This is the promise to you because you have been bought with a price—the holy, precious blood of Christ, and His innocent suffering and death. For the sake of Jesus Christ, you are redeemed and forgiven for all of your sins. Therefore, if you are ever curious as to when this promise of Christ will occur, well...in a little while.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.