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## **The Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**May 22, 2022**

### **Looking and Longing for Jesus**

Even for believers, life on earth is hard. Although we find Jesus in his Word, we often wish he could be present with us in person so we might see his smile and feel his touch. Jesus understands and points his followers of all time to the day when we will join him in heaven forever. We long for the day of complete joy, but we rejoice in the joys Jesus brings every day.

### **Sermon**

**John 16:16-24**

**Jesus said to [the apostles], “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” At this, some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.”**

**Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’? Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.**

Introduction – Life is full of questions, isn’t it. Hundreds of them every day. Some questions have easy answers: What time are we leaving? How much will that cost? Who were you talking to? Some questions don’t have easy answers: Why did he do that? How serious is it? When will it stop raining? Some questions don’t have answers, at least not now: How serious is global warming? When will the pandemic end? Have we saved enough for retirement? We all ask questions. Sometimes we get answers and sometimes we don’t.

Our faith is full of questions, too. We all ask them. Some of our questions have easy answers: Who wrote the psalms? How many books are in the Bible? What are the names of the apostles? Some questions are more involved: How does Jesus want me to live my life? Why did Jesus have to die? Will non-Christians go to hell? And some questions don’t have answers, at least as far as we can tell: When will Judgment Day come? Where is heaven? Will I know people when I get there? We all ask questions. Sometimes we get answers and sometimes we don’t.

In the Gospel for today, the apostles had questions. They were faith questions but they were also practical questions. They were confused and worried and wondered what was going on. Jesus had an answer but the answer seemed puzzling, almost cryptic. Even with the answer, they were scratching their heads.

We’re going to look closely and carefully at Jesus’ answer this morning. We still have questions, plenty of them, but Jesus shows us the key that unlocks the mysteries. With his first followers and now with us

## Easter Takes Our Questions Away

It removes our confusion

It guarantees our success

1. The time is the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested. The place is the upper room where Jesus served his holy meal for the first time. Jesus and the apostles were standing and getting ready to leave. But Jesus has more to say about what was coming. This is what Jesus said that raised the apostles' questions: **In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.** They looked at one another with question marks in their eyes. The whispering started: **What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me?' What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying.** Here's Jesus' answer: **Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.** Was that the answer? Doesn't sound like it.

It was definitely an answer and it was exactly the right answer. **In a little while you will see me no more**, Jesus said, and then he said **you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices**. In just a few hours—just a little while—Judas and a band of soldiers would storm the Garden of Gethsemane and arrest Jesus. The disciples ran. Within 24 hours Jesus would be dead. Heartbreak, terror, shame, and a lot more questions. Their mood was exactly the opposite of the mood in powerful Jewish homes and splendid Roman palaces. Relief, laughter, victory. Then Jesus said more: **After a little while you will see me** and then he said **Your grief will turn to joy**. The grief would last from Thursday night to Sunday morning—just a little while—and then everything would change. Jesus walked through doors and walls to see them on Sunday evening and he did it again the next Sunday. He met them on the seashore and served them breakfast with lots of fish. He walked and talked with them in Galilee. They saw him ascend to heaven, but they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. On this Thursday night Jesus was answering their questions more completely than they could imagine. **A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.** They had questions on Thursday night, but Easter would take their questions away.

Jesus' resurrection is the critical event of Christian faith. It's the climax of God's plan to save us. Easter explains everything that went before it and decides everything that comes after it. The apostles still had questions after Easter. They knew Jesus had died and they knew he had risen, but they still wondered what it all meant. On that same Thursday night Jesus told them, **The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.** The Holy Spirit would answer their questions and increase their joy. But the Spirit wouldn't arrive until all of Jesus' work was done. Jesus said, **Unless I go away, the Spirit will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.** It was Easter that set the Holy Spirit in motion.

The Spirit is still in motion today. He doesn't do his work with tongues of fire and a mighty wind like on Pentecost. When we have questions, he provides the answers in the Word. The Spirit enlightens us with his gifts; he opens our minds to believe what the Bible tells us. So why do we still have questions? The trouble is that we don't always look for the answers in the right places. We let that nasty sinful nature that hangs around in us take us to places where there are no honest answers or real solutions. We try to figure things out on our own, with our own experience and our own common sense. And the questions just get bigger and more intense and pretty soon life is nothing more than one humungous question mark. Life doesn't have to be that way. The resurrected Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes us to the Word. The Word takes us to the resurrection. And so Easter takes our questions away. And when the questions dissolve, our confusion begins to drift away and the joy takes over. Little by little.

2. The problem the apostles had on that Thursday night was that they couldn't see the whole plan, not yet anyway. They didn't grasp that Jesus' death would take away their sins and the sins of the world. They couldn't fathom his resurrection at all. Jesus said, **Until now you have not asked for anything in my name.** They hadn't looked to Jesus or listened to Jesus with a clear understanding of what his work did or what it meant. But all of that changed after Easter. **In that day,**

Jesus said, **you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.**

What do we pray for? Well, you tell me what you pray for and I'll tell you what I pray for. If we share that information, we'll probably notice that our prayers usually are pretty selfish. Lord, make me well; Lord, give me money; Lord get my neighbor to move. The Lord hears those prayers, but he doesn't always answer them the way we want. If we only pray for what we want and not for what God wants, life gets pretty empty pretty fast and we're never quite sure where God wants to go.

Jesus is inviting us here to pray with his finished work on our minds. He wants us to pray knowing and believing exactly what he has done for us. And so we pray knowing that he has taken away our sins and that he has taken away the sins of the world. We pray knowing that Jesus is alive and that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. We pray knowing that faith, hope, and love are the most precious gifts God gives. Knowing all that impacts what we pray. We pray, God, forgive my sins, and he does. We pray, God give me power to live my life for others, and he does. We pray, God show me the path to heaven, and he does. We pray, lead those I love to faith in you, we pray, give me a role in spreading the good news, we pray, open my heart to share eagerly and give generously. When Jesus' work guides our prayers, it also directs our actions. We speak our prayers and we spend our lives under the motto "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." With Easter our questions about life go away and our success in life is guaranteed. Not little by little, but absolutely and positively!

Life is full of questions. Go ahead and ask them. And remember this: Easter takes our questions away because Easter has the answers. Amen.