

Jubilate, A✠D 2008

John 16:16-22 "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." ¹⁷ So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" ¹⁸ So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." ¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?" ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. ²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Thomas Jefferson is a liar. The principal author of the Declaration of Independence asserted that "all men are...endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." It's a lie. The Creator has not given you the inalienable right to life. Instead, the Creator warned, "whoever loves his life loses it." The Creator has not given you the inalienable right to liberty. Instead, the Creator placed you under the headship of your parents and under the authority of a government, and invoking His name can't excuse you if you dishonor your father by rebelling against him and declaring your independence from him. And the Creator has not given you the right to pursue happiness. Instead, Jesus said, "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful."

2 Thomas Jefferson might promise you happiness, but Jesus promised the disciples weeping, lamenting, and sorrow. In a little while, Jesus told His disciples, you will not see me. Mere hours later, He would be seized by a band of armed guards and taken away as a prisoner to the Jewish Chief priests and then to the Roman authorities. In a little while, they would see Him no more. But then in a little while they would see Him again, nailed to the cross. For a little while, He would hang on the cross, but in a little while, He would be dead. For a little while His dead body would be in the grave. For a little while the disciples would not see Him. For a little

while, theirs would be weeping and lamenting while the world rejoiced. For a little while, they would be sorrowful, until, on the third day, their sorrow would be turned to joy. But even after Jesus' resurrection, in a little while, namely 40 days, He would ascend and they would see Him no more because He would go to the Father. And again, for a little while, the way of the disciples would be weeping, lamenting, and sorrowing, while the world rejoiced. The world would put the apostles to death and persecute the Lord's church. But only for a little while. Because in a little while, we will see Him again.

3 So, for a little while, yours is a life of weeping, lamenting, and being sorrowful. Peter calls you sojourners and exiles, against whose souls the passions of your own flesh are waging war. You may suffer for doing good. You may be like the author of Lamentations, saying "my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD." Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (Lam 3:17-23). But only for a little while.

4 Happiness is a fleeting emotion. And never have you been guaranteed the right to pursue happiness. Pursuing it will only lead you to greater despair. If you suppose that God has created you to be happy, you'll be sorely disappointed to hear the words of Jesus in today's Gospel lesson. But if you suppose instead that your Creator has endowed you with the inalienable right to receive joy, the words of Jesus in today's Gospel reading will bring you comfort. "So also you have sorrow for now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

5 Repent of equating joy to happiness. They are not the same thing. Joy endures beyond happiness or sadness. Joy lasts through sorrow. Joy even allows room for weeping and

lamenting. Repent of despair at your lack of happiness. And repent of daring to think that God wants you to be happy more than He wants you to be joyful.

6 Jesus describes the life of the Christian like the time of a woman's labor. For nine long months, she has wrestled with the pains of pregnancy. She's battled morning sickness and fatigue. She's endured sore muscles and an aching back. And now, as her hour of labor has come, she's in more pain than ever before. More than she can put into words, more than she can explain to her husband. And don't you dare ask her if she's happy. She's not. But even during her pregnancy, and especially after, once the child is born, she's joyful. This is the picture Jesus gives of the Christian life, ever increasing sorrow and suffering, but the guarantee of eternal joy at the end. The promise of new life enables the woman to endure the pain. The life inside her gives her joy, even in the midst of suffering.

7 When the Israelites complained against God and against Moses, the Lord sent fiery serpents among the Israelites. When they cried out for deliverance, the Lord had Moses make a serpent out of bronze and put it on a pole in the middle of the camp. When anyone was bitten by a snake, he could look to the serpent on the pole and be saved. So may you. Suffering entered the world by the rebellion of Adam and Eve. But even into the midst of suffering, God took on human flesh and entered His creation in the person of Jesus. His substitutionary death on the cross is what has saved you from your sins. So may you look to the cross in the midst of affliction, in the midst of sorrow, in the midst of weeping and lamenting, and find comfort. There on the cross, in the death of Jesus Christ, is your source of joy.

8 That's why today is Jubilate Sunday. Shout-for-Joy Sunday. Shout for joy to God all the earth. Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!" The awesome work of God is to take away your guilt and your sin, to take these onto Himself on the cross. This is the blessed exchange. You receive grace and mercy because Jesus received condemnation and punishment. And so will He exchange your sorrow for joy at the day when Jesus returns. Though for a little while you may have sorrow, no one will take away your joy. Those who now rejoice at your sorrow

will exchange their rejoicing for eternal lamenting. Your sorrow will be short. The Lord who died is He who was born from the womb of the grave three days later. The labor lasted only a little while. And so will you be born again from the grave, just as He is.

9 And for the little while between now and then, you are not left joyless. Here, at His altar, the Lord gives you a foretaste of the celestial joy that will be yours. The Israelites ate the Passover meal in haste, with their shoes on, their robes tucked in their belts, and their walking sticks in hand. They were ready to depart. So this meal is one that quickens you for the journey. It prepares you to depart. As you feast on the very Body and Blood of Jesus who gave His life for yours, as you feed on forgiveness, you get a taste of the eternal joy that will be yours then and even begins to be yours now. And no one will take your joy from you.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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