

What makes Jesus going a good thing for disciples?

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[0 : 00] do keep it open at that passage in John chapter 16 as we work through it together. Just as we do come to God's word, let me lead us in prayer as we ask for his help. So let's pray together. Father God, we give you thanks for your word. We thank you too for your Holy Spirit who indwells all believers. And we thank you that your Holy Spirit is at work even this day. We thank you that he works to teach us and to make things in your word clear to us. And so we ask that as we work through this passage that your Spirit would be at work in each of our lives, each of our hearts, and making clear these words as Jesus taught his disciples. We pray that your Spirit likewise would teach us this morning. Would he do each of us good in our faith, challenge us, and encourage us as we pray these things for your glory and in Jesus' name. Amen. I don't remember many things about being a young boy, but one memory that sticks in my mind was my first day of primary one. My teacher was Miss Woolridge, who as far as I can remember was lovely. But what overshadows the whole thing, the whole experience of that first day, is my mum taking me to school to P1 and then abandoning me.

Even as I tried my best to cling on to her, crying my eyes out, mum please don't leave me here. She peeled me off and she left me with Miss Woolridge, who I didn't even know. And I'm sure she probably told me at the time, James, this is for the best. This is a good thing that I'm going to leave you at school. I wasn't buying it. I was a mummy's boy. How could my mum leaving me with this strange woman be for my best? My mum actually often watches online, so this could be the topic of conversation over lunch this afternoon. But of course, my mum was right. As I look back on that situation, her leaving me at school was for my good, for my advantage. It would have been a little bit weird if she stayed with me right through school. And so I'm glad, in hindsight, that she did leave me there. And in a similar sense, Jesus begins this section that we're looking at this morning by telling his disciples that him going away, him leaving them, is actually for their good. It's for the best.

And on the face of that, it seems like Jesus has lost his mind. How could him going away be for the good of his disciples? Jesus, he has been there entire life the last few years. They left the lives that they knew to go and to follow him, to learn from him, to serve him. And after all of that, Jesus now turns to them and says, actually, it's probably best that I just leave you now, that I go away.

That's what he's saying in verse 7. If you've got a Bible, he says, I tell you the truth, it's to your advantage that I go away. So that's going to be the big question that we're thinking about this morning, is what makes Jesus going away such a good thing for his disciples and by extension for us as we gather this morning. So within the passages that you read for us, there's three key ways we're going to look at that show us that Jesus going away is a good thing. So we're going to work through each of them in turn. And so firstly, we see that Jesus going away is good because it means that the Holy Spirit can come. That's from the start of the reading up to verse 15. Jesus going away is good because it means the Holy Spirit can come. Now I can understand why the reality of Jesus going away, it wasn't welcomed by his disciples. But it does make sense that it is a good thing. During Jesus' ministry, when he was here on earth, his work, all that he did, it was restricted to where he was physically. He took on flesh, meaning that he could only be in one place at any given time.

But he is saying now that if he goes, if he goes back to the Father, then that'll mean that the Holy Spirit can be sent into this world who will indwell all believers and therefore continue the work that Jesus had been doing, only without that restriction of being in one place at a time. Jesus is clear in verse 7 that if he doesn't go away, then he can send the helper, which is referring to the Spirit.

[5 : 19] But if he does go, he will send the Spirit who in verse 8, Jesus says, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, which actually is a huge part of the work that Jesus has been doing during his ministry. He has been at work exposing the world's guilt, showing that what it does is evil. And so the Spirit, he's not going to come and then just start doing something different, something new, but he's going to come and he's going to continue doing the very work that Jesus himself has been doing. We've already read of the work of the Holy Spirit during our time in this section of John. But this part here touches on a slightly different aspect of the Spirit's work. The work of the Spirit within the believer is where the emphasis has been so far. But in these verses, in verse 8 to 11, we see another aspect of the work of the Spirit. We see that he isn't just going to be at work in the lives of believers, but we see that he will be at work in the world. He's described here as being at work in the lives of people who are in rebellion against the living God. This means that the Spirit's work in the world is very specific. He works in the world to convict the world, to expose the world's sin, their failure to live righteous lives, and also to reveal that they, because of how they've lived, are under judgment. So this morning, if you're here today as a Christian, then that is only because the Holy Spirit has worked in your life while you were in rebellion against the living God. The Spirit came and he convicted you because of the way that you were living, because of your sin, because of your lack of righteousness. And as kindness, he exposed your guilt and the fact that you deserve to be judged for the way you were living. And as he did that, he went on to reveal the Lord Jesus as the one who deals with that sin, who deals with the guilt that is exposed by the Spirit. And this reminds us that our salvation, it's not about us working things out for ourselves, but instead about the Holy Spirit working in our lives to make these things known and clear to us. And so verse 8 through 11 shows us how the Spirit works in the life of an unbeliever.

And then verses 12 through 15, we want to speak about almost exclusively how the Spirit will work in the apostles, those who Jesus is speaking to in this upper room. Verses 12 through 15 show how the Spirit will work specifically in them. Jesus says in verse 13 that when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak. And He will declare to you the things that are to come. There's quite a lot wrapped up in that verse. Most immediately, Jesus is speaking here about the events that are just about to take place, His death and His resurrection. These events that are about to come, they're going to have so much significance, so many implications, which is why the Spirit will come and He will guide the apostles to understand the truth about the significance of these events. And as He declares these things, giving understanding also what it means for the life of the believer and for the life to come after Jesus goes, these verses surely, they're also referring to the New Testament scriptures, which were written down by the Spirit declaring and carrying along the authors, leading them to record all the truth.

So we now have that apostolic teaching, the truth declared to them by the Spirit, written down in our Bibles. And so these verses, they aren't saying that believers will receive new revelation from the Holy Spirit that hasn't already been revealed in Scripture, because the Scriptures themselves are a complete revelation. They reveal all that is needed. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17, that all Scripture is breathed out by God, profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training and righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. We don't need further revelation from God because He's given us in His Word all that we need. So we don't look to the Spirit for new things. But that doesn't mean the Spirit no longer works, because He absolutely does still work. We need Him to still work. The fact we are here this morning shows us that He still works, because He convicted us of our sin, righteousness and judgment. Verse 15, though applied specifically to the apostles in the upper room. It also applies to us in a different way. We read there, all that the Father has is mine.

Therefore, I said that He will take what is mine, that is the Spirit, He'll take what is mine and declare it to you. And that is what happens to us when we read God's Word. The Spirit takes God's Word and He declares it to us. That's why we're so focused on having His Word at the center of all that we do as a church.

Because as God's Word is read and preached, we are convinced that He speaks to us by His Spirit, helping us to understand His Word, to apply it to our lives, as well as helping us to see Jesus clearly in it. This is why it was a good thing that Jesus was going away. Because it meant that the Holy Spirit could continue the work that Jesus started as He comes and as He convicts the world, as He guides the apostles in all truth. And that the Spirit could then continue to reveal Jesus to many people through the pages of Scripture. It's also good that Jesus was going away because it meant that His people can have lasting joy. That's our second point. That's from verse 16 through 22. It is good that Jesus is going away because it means that His people can have lasting joy. This section here begins with the disciples being confused after Jesus said in verse 16, a little while and you'll see me no longer.

[13 : 08] Again, a little while and you will see me. That does sound a little bit cryptic and you can see why they were confused in verses 17 and 18. In verse 18, we read that they were saying to each other, what does He mean by a little while? We do not know what He's talking about.

And so Jesus tries to help them to understand what it is that He means. So He says in verse 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. So from that verse, it seems really clear actually what Jesus is talking about. It's His death and His resurrection, that His hour is coming. He will be killed on the cross.

And at that moment, His disciples, they will weep and they will lament as their master is executed like a criminal.

They will be filled with sorrow. They will be filled with sorrow. But in that moment, the world will rejoice. They will rejoice as they see God's anointed King being killed. They'll think in that moment that they've won, that they've had the victory over God's King. But that will soon be turned on its head as Jesus will not remain dead, but He'll be resurrected as He triumphs over sin and over death for us.

He'll overcome the world. And because of this, that deep sorrow that they felt at His death, it'll turn to joy. And it will be a joy that no one, that nothing is able to take away or to remove, which is what Jesus says in verse 22. He says, no one will take your joy from you. And what a promise that is to give to all believers, especially if you keep in mind the passage that Ali preached on last week that spoke so much of the hatred that the believer will face in this world. What a comfort these words are this week. As Jesus said, that even though the world may despise us, even if the world hates us the same way that it hated our master and killed them, we can still in Him have a joy that stands in the face of anything that this world throws at us. And that's because Jesus' work of salvation. It's a completed work. And it gives us the ability to be joyful, even when life is difficult, as we cling to the promises that are ours through faith in Christ.

[16 : 22] They would be sorrowful because they thought they had lost Jesus, but that sorrow would be turned to joy when they saw Him. And that's worth saying here that these verses, they're not saying that life will always be rosy, that we won't face times that cause us sorrow. But these verses are telling us that as Christians, even in those times, we have reason to be joyful.

John Calvin, one of the great reformers, he writes saying that Christians rejoice even while they truly sorrow because their rejoicing is in the hope of heaven. While joy overcomes sorrow, it doesn't put an end to it. The joy that we have in Christ as our Savior, it ought to outweigh any sorrow that this life throws at us. And that's the point Jesus is making as He uses labor as an illustration. He says in verse 21, when a woman is given 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.

I'm obviously unqualified to comment on this, but it seems accurate. Although giving birth is such a traumatic experience, the joy of that child being born, it far outweighs the pain and the anguish of pregnancy and labor. It doesn't make it easy by any stretch of the imagination. But the joy outweighs the pain. And in the same way, Jesus is saying that the joy the Christian has, it'll last forever.

Even if we face a time of real difficulty, pain, sorrow, the joy that we have, it always triumphs over the sorrow that we face. And so it is such good news that Jesus was going away because He is now giving lasting joy to all of His people that nothing can take away, not even death. It's also good that He's going away because it means that He'll send His Holy Spirit into the world. And so having looked at those two things, let's finish our time by looking thirdly, that we see that it's good that Jesus is going away because His people can have peace in the world. Verse 23 through to the end. It's good that He's going away because it means His people can have peace in the world. Of course, there's a bit of an overlap here between the last and joy that we've just focused on and the peace with God that we enjoy as Christians through faith in Christ. Joy and peace, they're very much linked in that sense. And so we're not going to focus so much on peace in regards to our restored relationship with God because we just be repeating much of what we've just said. And so our focus is going to be much more on how we can live in this world surrounded by an experience in the brokenness while still having peace. That the Spirit being sent, the last and joy that is secured through Christ, these things, they work out in a practical way which permits us to have peace as we live in this world because our trust is in the one who has overcome the world. Verse 33, that's the main reason that Jesus has said all these things He's said through the upper room discourse through chapter 13 into chapter 17 as well. And He's said all that He's said in order that in Him, His disciples and by extension us may have peace. Even though in the world we'll experience tribulation we can take heart because He's overcome the world. And so although our section ends here with Jesus speaking of peace, it's not just exclusively about our verses. That's incorporating the entirety of the teaching that He's given in the upper room. It's all been given in order that His people may have peace. And if the peace was exclusively referring to us having peace with God and that lasting joy of a relationship with Him, then these four chapters, it would be a bit of a kind of overkill to spend so much time on just on that. And so I want to finish by encouraging us that there is peace, not just in sense of a relationship with God to be enjoyed, but as we live in this world, though we'll experience tribulation, there is peace for us to have each day. So verses 23 through 28, the big emphasis here is on the reality that in Christ we have direct access to the Father.

Until this point they would ask Jesus for things He says, but when He goes they will have their own direct access to the Father. They can come to the Father with anything that is on their minds or heart and they can bring it before Him in prayer, which is a fundamental truth to grasp in order to have a sense of peace in the midst of a chaotic world. Every single person who trusts in Jesus, they have this privilege of direct access to the Father. We don't need a go-between, we don't need a particularly holy person to pray on our behalf because we're not worthy of praying to the Father. We each, as believers, have unhindered direct access to the Father through Christ. Whatever we're dealing with in life, we can pray to Him based on the work of Jesus at the cross. These verses, they emphasize that whatever we ask in Jesus' name, the Father will answer and He will give it to us. We've had verses like this before in our studies of this upper room discourse and we've noted that that's not Jesus just saying, here's the blank check, you can have whatever you like, but it's in the context of God being glorified, when our prayers are focused on God's glory and in line with His desires, we will see them being answered.

[23 : 20] And it seems to me that this amazing truth of direct access to the Father, that ought to give peace to the Christian as we live in this world. Things that can cause us anxiety in this life, they can be brought directly to the Father. And as we pray about those things, we have the promise from Romans 8, 28, that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to His purpose.

And so in our anxieties, we can pray trusting His purposes, knowing that He is ultimately in control and He's working out His purposes. That an anxiety that's probably relevant to us as a church just now, perhaps shared by some of us sitting here this morning, is this hope of purchasing a manse.

When we hear of the money that we need to raise, when we hear of the money that we're going to have to borrow, the long-term commitment of paying all that money back, I'm sure that that has caused some of us to feel anxious.

And yet these verses right here before us, they speak so powerfully into that anxiety. As a church, we desire God's will in what we do. We desire His name to be glorified.

And we've prayed about this for a long time, long before I was part of the church here. And we are now seeing God answer this prayer. And so if there are feelings of anxiety surrounding it, we can have peace as we entrust it into God's hands, knowing that He is a sovereign Lord over His creation and over His church.

[25 : 24] There's many other instances that may cause us to feel anxious as we do life in this world. But it is always a comfort that we can come to the one who has overcome the world.

And we can trust in Him for every situation, meaning that we can have peace, because He is the one who is ultimately in control. At the close of our passage, we read in verse 29 and 30, that disciples, that they now understand, they say, they know now that Jesus knows all things.

They know that Jesus has come from God. And yet Jesus responds really by rebuking them. They think that they've worked everything out.

But Jesus' words, as He replies to them, highlights to us that they've not come to a full understanding. As He tells them that they will abandon Him.

They will scatter. Which happens when He's arrested. And yet, it's to these very individuals, to these men who He knows are about to leave Him in His hour of need, about to scatter away, to run away.

[26 : 49] To these people, Jesus wants to impart peace through His teaching. They're about to fail Him.

And yet, Jesus doesn't treat them as they deserve. He wants them to know that they can have peace through Him. And that's because there are such failures.

It's because they would abandon Jesus, because of all the things they had done when they had messed up, that they needed Jesus to go away.

They needed Him to go to the cross. It is to their advantage that He goes. Because He'll send the Holy Spirit to indwell them.

Through dying on the cross for their sins, they'll enjoy a lasting joy that the world cannot take away.

[27 : 50] And by Him going away, they'll have peace in this life, as they have their relationship with God restored, and enjoy direct access to the Father, where they can take all their anxieties to Him, knowing that He is ultimately in control, and is at work in the world, for the good of those who love Him, that are called according to His purpose.

And it's good news for us this morning here in Harrington, that Jesus went away, because we, like the disciples, needed Jesus to go to the cross.

Just like His closest friends here, we're going to abandon Him, we're going to scatter, flee, deny even knowing who He was. We too have messed up in so many ways.

And this chapter speaks so relevantly to us today. It is to our advantage that Jesus went away. It's to our advantage that Jesus went to the cross.

Because it's at the cross that He completed the work of our salvation. So that we, this day, might have a joy that lasts.

[29 : 06] That nothing in this world, not even death, can take away from us. And so may each of us, at this day and every day, have our confidence in that lasting joy that is available through trusting in Jesus as our Savior, and enjoy peace as you live as His people in this world.

Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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