

He Loved Me...

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 16:16-33

Topic

The eleven disciples were confused when Jesus said they wouldn't see Him, then they would, but then they wouldn't

Title

***"Now You See Me, Now You Don't,
Soon You Will, Then You Won't"***

Former Department of Military Instruction Director at the US Military Academy Colonel Robert "Tex" Turner famously said, *"I woke up in a cold sweat. I had a nightmare that I was still in Ranger School. Thank God that I was in Vietnam. Compared to Ranger School, combat was easy."*

Each month hundreds of Army Ranger candidates report for their chance to face the toughest physical, mental, and emotional challenge they will likely ever encounter. Only a small number make the cut.

Navy SEAL training is not designed to get you in shape. You must arrive in excellent physical condition and pass the rigorous physical screening test before you can be considered a SEAL candidate. A majority wash out.

2nd Lieutenant Jake Jensen, West Point graduate with honors, was being considered for the elite international force, MIB. Answering future Agent J's question, Jensen said, "We're here because you want the best of the best of the best, sir!" He failed.

There is no easy way to say this: Jesus' twelve disciples failed.

They completed three and one-half years of rigorous training, during which they were, all the time, with Jesus. He taught them many things, e.g., how to pray. They participated in two-by-two missions, returning with stories of spiritual success. They often spoke, either openly or secretly, about their readiness to serve the Lord in the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Then came Thursday night prior to Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday:

- Philip expressed his uncertainty as to who Jesus was.
- As Jesus was sharing the bread and the wine at the Last Supper, Luke tells us that the disciples began to fight over who was the greatest.
- Judas betrayed Jesus to the religious authorities. He would afterward hang himself.
- Jesus asked them to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. They repeatedly fell asleep.
- Peter denied the Lord three times under very little pressure to do so.
- With the exception of John, who was at the Cross with the women, the disciples scattered, leaving the Lord alone.
- Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem. Instead, they went back to the Sea of Galilee and returned to their fishing business.

If this were Ranger School, or SEAL training, or the MIB, *all of them would have failed to make the cut.*

They made God's Kingdom Cut.

Jesus said to them, "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, **but** your sorrow will be turned into joy... And in that day... I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you... These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Have you felt like you have betrayed or denied the Lord? Maybe you have. Failed to pray? Sure, we've all been there. Been puffed-up with pride? O yeah.

It sounds to me as if Jesus will restore you, refresh you, and reiterate His love for you.

Keep this perspective as we go through the text. I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 When You Sorrow, Jesus Encourages You To Rejoice**, and **#2 When You Scatter, Jesus Expects You To Return**.

#1 - When You Sorrow, Jesus Encourages You To Rejoice (v16-24)

The Lord is coming in the year 2060.

That is the prediction of Sir Isaac Newton. When he was not inventing calculus, or formulating the theory of universal gravity, he was commenting on the Bible. His contemporaries considered him a theologian. The historical jury is out on whether or not he was a believer, on account of his rejecting the Trinity, and secretly holding to a few other heresies.

I mention him now only to point out he spent half his life muddling with *alchemy*. He was looking for the mythical 'Philosopher's stone' that would turn base metals into gold.

God turns your sorrows into gold.

Job, the chief sufferer in the Bible, said, "When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10).

Jesus has not held back in this, His final talk to the eleven before His death. Trouble would follow them like Pig-Pen's dust cloud. They would be the Lord's solid gold servants.

Joh 16:16 "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."

For "a little while," the eleven would not see the Lord as His body lay in the tomb.

They would see Jesus for another "little while" after He rose from the dead in His heavenly body. Then He would ascend to Heaven, to remain there until He comes to resurrect and rapture the Church.

Joh 16:17 Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "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 go to the Father'?"

Joh 16:18 They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying."

To them, it sounded like a "Who's on first?" skit. Cut them slack.

Even with the completed Bible, and the Holy Spirit, contemporary commentators disagree on the exact interpretation of some of the things Jesus said the last night before He died.

Joh 16:19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"

Jesus was God, and so we think, "Of course He knew what they desired to ask Him." Really, in this case, you didn't need to be God in order to know what they wanted to ask. It was obvious.

If it was supernatural knowledge, it was what we call a word of knowledge. We've been pointing out that Jesus was God from eternity and took upon Himself a body when He came to Earth. He was God, but voluntarily set aside the independent use of His deity. He relied instead on His Father and God the Holy Spirit. This knowledge about what the disciples were thinking would be a word of knowledge, from the Holy Spirit.

Joh 16:20 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.

"Be turned into" expresses our Lord's amazing capabilities. It isn't alchemy, but from sorrow, *He produces joy*.

Joh 16:21 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.

Childbirth seems painful. I wouldn't know; not just because I'm a man, but back in my day, men waited. In a special waiting room. Eating donuts & drinking coffee. Talking to other manly men. Away from the shrieking and the carnage of birth. Clean up that baby and then I'll hold him. As Archie and Edith Bunker sang, *Those were the days*.

The childbirth illustration has a lot to do with Israel and her Messiah and the promised Kingdom of God on Earth.

In His prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus compared the future seven year Great Tribulation to birth pangs. The Earth and those who inhabit it will be in a seven year labor. Their birth pangs start slow then accelerate. That awful time of intense suffering will give way to incredible, lasting joy when Jesus comes in His Second Coming.

As for us, in the current Church Age, the world will get worse-and-worse. I feel like that old Wendy's commercial, "Where's the beef?"

Where is the joy?

Joh 16:22 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.

David Powlison writes, *"In the hands of a loving God, sorrow and suffering become the doorways into the greatest and most indestructible joys."*

They would not "see" Him before suffering and dying for Him. *But He would see them.* Catch that. Jesus emphasized He would see them. He can never not see you.

He saw them as they were martyred:

- Five of the eleven would be crucified.
- James, son of Zebedee, was decapitated.
- Bartholomew was decapitated, too, but first he was skinned alive.
- Thomas was speared to death.
- Matthew was stabbed to death.
- The other James was stoned, and when he didn't die, clubbed to death.

Edward Klink writes, *"The definitive and permanent nature of the disciples' joy is not based upon the absence of any future grief and affliction but by the placement of all grief and suffering into the larger context of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

Rejoicing is encouraged by our knowledge of the future of the world:

- We live in the Church Age.

- The Church Age will end with the coming of Jesus in the clouds to resurrect dead believers and rapture living ones.
- At some point after the rapture, the Great Tribulation begins.
- Jesus' Second Coming occurs at the end of the seven years.
- In fulfillment of what has been promised to the physical descendants of Abraham, Jesus rules the Kingdom of God on Earth for one-thousand years.
- Final judgments on the wicked, final resurrections of the righteous, and eternity, round-out the future.

More exciting still, you know *your* future:

- You were saved, and placed into the spiritual body of Jesus. You were born-again, and God the Holy Spirit now indwells you.
- He guarantees you are going to Heaven at the resurrection and rapture, before the Great Tribulation.
- Jesus will complete the work He has begun in you.
- He will present you faultless in Heaven.
- You'll live in your mansion, in the city of gold, the New Jerusalem, hovering over a restored Earth in the restored heavens.
- For all eternity you will enjoy perfect fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Don't forget that you will experience reunion with your believing loved ones.

Your future ought to stir-up your joy regardless your sorrow in this world.

Joh 16:23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

Joh 16:24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

"Ask Me nothing" means that they will have access to the entire God-head and not Jesus only. Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross and His resurrection bring us into a greater fellowship with God.

On Earth this was represented by the tearing in half from top to bottom the veil in the Temple that separated God from sinful men. We might say that God has an 'open veil' policy insofar as contacting Him anytime, 24/7. As Glenn Campbell sang, *It's knowin' that His door is always open.*

It is pointed-out, from these two verses, that (technically) we pray to the Father, *through* the Son, in the *power* of the Holy Spirit. A.W. Pink writes, “*Consequent on Christ’s exaltation, the Spirit in and with believers would draw out their hearts in prayer, teaching them to present their petitions to the Father in the all-prevailing name of the Son.*”

We should, however, quit parsing everything into a formula or method. *This isn’t a prayer template.* It is encouragement to talk to God all of the time, from an intimate love relationship.

What about receiving whatever we ask for if we ask in Jesus’ name? This cannot mean that I can ask for a Ferrari and expect to have the keys delivered to me at my convenience. It is simply not true that I can ask for anything I want and expect to receive it.

Start with the words, “that your joy may be full.” Fullness of joy is what we can confidently ask for and receive.

I have a disease. I can pray God heal me. He can; He sometimes does. But what I really require, as His servant who has the treasure of the Gospel in my perishing body, is to have supernatural joy that is full of the glory of God.

In my new relationship with Father, Son & Spirit, I can have that supernatural joy. In fact, I do have it, since the Holy Spirit is in me. I believe that it comes from the Lord, and I simply ask for it.

Why doesn’t God give without asking? For one, I might not want it. I might insist that He get me out of my sorrow, rather than produce joy in it.

Christians can get stuck on wanting God to answer a certain way, not wanting to be joyful in sorrow, but by being delivered from it.

It is from our weakness God is shown strong in the dispensation of the Church Age.

Walter Cradock said, “Take a saint, and put him into any condition, and he knows how to rejoice in the Lord.”

There are a lot of resources that give you 5, or 7, or 10 steps for having joy. We promote a no-step program. The apostle Paul was confident that joy was a fruit of the Holy Spirit. He is in you; you can have joy.

#2 - When You Scatter, Jesus Calls You To Return (v25-33)

J.C. Ryle writes, *"The Savior of sinners will not cast off those who believe in Him, because they are babes in faith and knowledge. He can see reality under much infirmity, and where He sees it, He is graciously pleased. The followers of such a Savior may well be bold and confident."*

The disciples would scatter, abandoning Jesus. He assured them that He would be alright, and that He would make things right between Himself and them. He was, every moment of that awful night, pondering them, protecting them, praying for them. He does no less for you.

Joh 16:25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.

- Figurative language was, in part, intended to confuse folks who kept hardening their hearts in unbelief that Jesus was Messiah.
- Figurative language, to the believer, could be an aid to understanding. Parables and proverbs and signs and the like could make principles and precepts come alive.

I don't think Jesus was telling them He had deliberately kept them in the dark. The problem was that they could only know and understand so much without the aid of God the Holy Spirit to teach them. He had not yet been given. Afterwards, they would be enabled to know and understand "plainly about the Father."

Joh 16:26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you;

Joh 16:27 for the Father Himself loves you...

Jesus emphasized again that they would have immediate access to the throne of God. It was "in His Name," meaning on account of what He did by dying on the Cross. The Father sees us as being in Jesus. He can thus lavish upon us His love. He can justify sinners while remaining just.

Joh 16:27 ... and have believed that I came forth from God.

Joh 16:28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."

They “believed” Jesus was the Messiah predicted in their Scriptures. It was a basic, introductory belief. There were many things they could not yet believe. His returning to “the Father,” instead of establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth, left them dizzy. But it was necessary.

Joh 16:29 His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!

Joh 16:30 Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”

You might say to the disciples, *I feel ya*. They wanted so much to understand. They wanted so badly to shine as the Lord’s disciples, in whom He had invested so much of Himself.

By saying Jesus was talking plainly, they were assuming that His promise in verse twenty five was fulfilled. But it couldn’t be until they received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They were misunderstanding Him.

Joh 16:31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?

Joh 16:32 Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone...

Their belief, however informed or uninformed it might be, would be challenged. They would fail in the trial, scattering like sheep without their shepherd.

The scattered sheep illustration comes from the Old Testament Book of Zechariah. It has at least three prophetic applications:

1. First, Jesus applied it to His disciples scattering.
2. Second, the scattering of the sheep refers to the scattering of the Jewish nation when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD.
3. Third, it will be fulfilled in the last half of the future Tribulation period, as antichrist seeks to exterminate all Jews.

Joh 16:32 ... And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

“It’s OK, guys. The Father can’t let Me down. And neither can I let you down!”

Are you, in some way, scattered? Not walking with the Lord as you once did? He calls you to return, and to rejoice. Yes, you failed Him. But you made the Kingdom cut when you were born-again, and the Lord desires your restoration.

Michael Keaton was the keynote speaker at a Kent State graduation. He ended his talk, by telling the graduates he had two words for them. Two words that would summarize everything he had said. Two words to inspire them. After a dramatic pause, he leaned into the microphone and said, *"I'm Batman."*

One verse, the last verse, summarizes this entire talk.

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

I don't think that it requires much commentary. What it calls for is much believing. Jesus has "overcome the world." To the extent I believe He has, I will "be of good cheer," having His "peace" in my "tribulation."

Do you believe that?