

Text: John 16:16-33

Title: Believe because Jesus promises victory for peace.

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Introduction: We are all familiar with the Nike shoe company and their swoosh insignia. The shoe was popularized by basketball player Michael Jordan, whose Chicago Bulls won six NBA championships during his career.

Jordan famously attributed his success to his willingness to keep on failing. He once explained, "I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

The Nike shoe company is named after the Greek goddess Nike, whose name means *victory*. The Greek verb that means *to win a victory* is the verb *nikao*. That is the word Jesus uses in the last verse of our chapter, when He says to His disciples, "Be of good cheer; I *have overcome* the world." Jesus emphatically claims a victory over the world (literally, "I Myself have won the victory over the world").

The disciples had little understanding even that a battle had raged between their Lord and Satan's world. They have just celebrated the Passover meal with Christ, where they heard that there was a betrayer among them, after which Judas Iscariot was sent out, but they knew not why.

Now they have stopped in the temple courtyard before the eastern gate with its golden vine to hear more instruction from their Savior. They are on their way to Gethsemane, where He will tell them to watch and pray.

This final verse also tells us why Jesus stopped to tell them these things – “that in Me you might have peace.” A battle has raged between Christ and the enemy of our souls, Christ has been victorious, and Christ speaks to us the words of our passage in order that this victory might bring us peace in a troublesome world. The disciples were about to experience the most harrowing day of their lives, but Jesus tells them that if they understand what He is saying to them, they can have peace in spite of what is coming.

I enjoy listening to *The Epoch Times* interviews on the podcast, “American Thought Leaders.” At the end of every interview, the host asks his guest whether he has a final thought to share about the topic they were discussing. The final thought expressed at the close of an interview can often be the most compelling point of the discussion.

One commentator noted that these are the last recorded instructions of Christ to His disciples prior to His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. They are the “final thought” of Jesus’s teachings to His disciples. He explains, “Thus in His last recorded words of teaching before the Passion, the Lord claims the glory of a conqueror” (Westcott, 236). The words of this glorious victory bring us peace with three promises Christ gives to His disciples.

I. The promise of the resurrection brings peace (vv. 16-22).

Illustration: The administration of general anesthesia in childbirth was first introduced in 1847 by James Simpson. The practice was opposed on medical grounds, but nevertheless it became popular during the women’s suffrage movement of the late 19th century. Another factor in the popularity of the practice was a paradigm about pain that

prevailed during those days. An article in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* explains this viewpoint:

“Throughout the preceding 100 years, many segments of the public subscribed to the idea that pain served few useful functions either for the individual or for society. Physiologists taught that pain caused permanent damage to the mind and body. Liberal politicians and philosophers similarly identified pain and suffering as a root cause of many social problems. Treat pain, abolish hunger, cure disease, and correct political injustice they said, and many social problems would disappear. The alleviation of pain and suffering, whatever its form, became an obligation and an important stimulus for reform throughout the 19th century. . .

“Associated with this spirit of reform was an unbounded faith that human reason, through science and technology, could identify and overcome all causes of suffering and pain. This social milieu accounts in part [for] both the intensity of demands of early feminists and the response of progressive obstetricians. It also explains their feckless pursuit and use of new drugs and techniques to alleviate pain.”

Application: Jesus mentions the pain of childbirth as He seeks to bring peace to His disciples with the promise of His resurrection (v. 21). His point is not only that pain can transition into joy, but also that the pain must come first before the joy can come. The pain experience is necessary for the joy experience. In the case of Christ, the cross was the only path to the empty tomb.

This analogy was likely familiar to Jesus from the Book of Isaiah: “Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.

Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen" (26:16-18).

Isaiah describes a painful labor that brings no joy at the end. It bears only wind, not a child. This is our human suffering in sin. The suffering caused by sin brings about no joy.

But Jesus refers in our passage to His suffering for us, and that suffering does bring us joy because it ends in resurrection (v. 22). John will later record the joy the disciples felt when they saw the risen Christ: "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (20:19-20).

Like these first disciples, we have gathered on the first day of the week to see the Lord. In the promised presence of our risen Savior, we gather to hear again that His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection brings us peace with God. The promise of the resurrection brings us peace.

The disciples have a hard time grasping this promise in our passage (vv. 17-18). Could they really believe that suffering would lead to joy in this way? It may be that you are having a similar problem. They, of course, had an excuse for their confusion that we do not have.

For them, none of what Jesus referred to had happened as yet. For us, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ has

happened, and so we are without excuse. We have no excuse to be confused about the promise of a gospel already accomplished for our peace. We must believe the kept promise of this resurrection and have peace.

## II. The promise of prayer brings peace (vv. 23-28).

Illustration: In his treatise, "Call to Prayer," Bishop J. C. Ryle compares our prayers to a check from a checkbook. The check can be made out to a payee and show an amount on it, but without a signature on the bottom line, the check is a worthless piece of paper, because it is unauthorized.

Application: Ryle says our prayers are like that worthless piece of paper, except for the fact that the name of Jesus appears at the bottom of them. He has authorized our prayers. We can pray directly to the Father because we pray in Jesus's name, on the basis of His accomplishments, His standing, and His authorization freely given to us (v. 23).

Notice that the privilege of prayer is specifically designed by Christ for those who can no longer ask Him questions (vv. 19, 23). He has promised to meet with us this morning, and we believe that promise, but we still cannot ask Him questions directly as the disciples did in our passage. Instead, we ask the Father in prayer in Jesus's name.

Our joy and peace are connected to obeying Jesus's command to pray in Jesus's name. The disciples had to learn how to do this (v. 24). In a few minutes, they will all fail miserably at this in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus speaks plainly of this need of ours (v. 25). Just like Jesus has spoken plainly to us about the Father, we can speak plainly to the Father about our need. Hebrews 4:16 calls us to come boldly before the throne of grace to obtain grace

and mercy in our time of need. The word *plainly* in v. 25 is the same word *boldly* in Hebrews. We can pray with transparency about the true needs of our hearts and lives.

In chapter 17, we will find that Jesus prays for us, but here we find that His prayers are no substitute for our prayers (v. 26). Like Him, we must be faithful to pray. We can do so with confidence and transparency, not only because we are authorized by Jesus's name, but also because we belong to the Father's family (vv. 27-28). The one who knows the Father best of all tell us that the Father loves us with the natural love of relationship (*phileo*). We pray not only to the Father in heaven, but also to our Father who is in heaven, not someone else's Father, but our Father.

Ryle puts the peace of the promise of prayer this way: "There is everything on God's part to make prayer easy, if men will only attempt it. All things are ready on his side. Every objection is anticipated. Every difficulty is provided for. The crooked places are made straight, and the rough places are made smooth. There is no excuse left for the prayerless man." With no excuse, may there be no prayerlessness among us, for the promise of prayer brings peace.

III. The promise of preservation brings peace (vv. 29-33).

Application: In chapter 13, Peter told Jesus that he would lay down his life for Him (v. 37). Jesus admonished, "The cock shall not crow until you have denied me thrice." Here, all the disciples, undoubtedly led by Peter, confess, "We believe that you came out from God." They had seen how Jesus knew their thoughts and could give them an answer before He was even questioned. They believed He knew all things. They believed He came out from God (vv. 29-30).

But Jesus saw the test of their faith coming (v. 31). The *now* of v. 31 is a different word than the *now(s)* of vv. 29-30. The word in verse 31 means something like *under these circumstances* (as in v. 12). Jesus asks His disciples not about timing, but, "Under these circumstances do you believe?"

Peter's faith-test was coming, and with it the faith-test of all the disciples was coming. It was a test prophesied hundreds of years earlier by the prophet Zechariah: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (13:7). Each disciple was about to fail miserably his faith-test, and Jesus knew it (v. 32).

Have we ever failed a faith-test and left Jesus alone? Have we ever left His name unspoken, left His light under the bushel, left His people abandoned? We have, and when we did so, it was because we sought each our own things. Jesus desires our joy (v. 24). The key to joy is Jesus first-Others second-Yourself last. Jesus warns that the result of seeking our own things first is that we become scattered. When Y is first, J and the O simply disappear. Westcott describes what selfishness can do to God's people: "The bond which had held them together in a society was to be broken." Have we not experienced similar breaking of bonds?

And so left with the prospect of this failure on the disciples part, what then is the final thought? Is it one of defeat, discouragement, disappointment, and despair brought on by the failed faith-tests of ourselves and our fellow disciples? No, not at all.

Jesus's final word is, "These things I have spoken to you in order that you might have peace. In the world you shall

have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." This is the promise of preservation, which brings us peace in spite of our frailty and failure. In the end, our victory cannot be threatened even by our faithlessness, because it depends solely on our Savior's perfect faithfulness.

Conclusion: A final command comes with this final thought – "Be of good cheer." Yes, we are called to a sometimes difficult and discouraging work, but be of good cheer because the world that gives us tribulation has been defeated by our Champion.

In obedience to this command, secure in the promised peace of resurrection, prayer, and preservation, these eleven frail men arose from the ashes of their failed faith-tests, were empowered as witnesses, and turned the world that their Jesus had conquered upside down with their good news for His glory. It is our cause to do the same today.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*