

A CHILD IS BORN!

Rejoice! -- Pray!

John 16:16-23

TEXT: *"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." 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'? I tell you the truth, 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. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Is 9
When you heard this passage read again and again at Christmas time, did you also think about today, the third Sunday after Easter Sunday?

The night before his crucifixion, Jesus used the analogy of childbirth to describe how his disciples would feel over the next three days: *I tell you the truth, 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.* While this is Jesus' analogy, I am going to take it up a notch by tying Christmas together with Easter. At Christmas time we rejoice at Jesus' birth. During Lent we mourn over our sins which cost Jesus' agony, suffering and death. But on Easter, we rejoice that Jesus lives! And now, 2000 years later, the Church continues to vacillate between grief and joy as we await our Lord Jesus' final glorious return on Judgment Day. The Apostle Paul used this analogy in this context when he wrote: *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* Ro 8

On this 3rd Sunday of the Easter Season, we are able to tie all of Scripture and Church History together with this analogy based on the Christmas theme: A CHILD IS BORN! Because Christ is risen, we Rejoice, and Pray.

Jesus was speaking of his death the next day, and his resurrection on the third day: *In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.* When Jesus observed that they were confused and wondering about this, he then said: *I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.* On Easter Sunday their grief would be turned to unspeakable joy. But until then, that "joy" would belong to the unbelieving world. To this very day, the unbelieving world rejoices at the poor pitiful state of the Holy Christian Church as we await our Risen Lord's return on Judgment Day. They want nothing of this. They do not want the pain, the humility or the cross. When

Jesus said, *... anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ... any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.* Lu14 When he said this, the great gulf that separates the unbelieving world from those who are being saved is quite visible. If they join a church it is only for the good feelings and elevation of their self-esteem. If they join a church, it is only for some kind of earthly benefit. Not that they should have to bear a cross of some kind. If they join a LUTHERAN church it might be to get their kids a free elementary education with the personal attention of dedicated teachers in a drug and sex-free zone.

Do you know the sad hopeless feeling that fills a pastor's heart when a member comes to him with a problem for which there is no solution but pain and sadness? When a family is torn apart by sin and divorce and the children wonder where is their God? When sickness or other hardship dashes the happiness that once was enjoyed by the family and there is no other counsel left but to say, "Trust God for it is written: *God will never leave you nor forsake you.* He 13. When Jesus was on earth, he healed the sick and raised the dead. But all we have is this book that is Holy because it is set apart from all other books in the world's history. It is the inspired Word of God. Yet when two fine Christian parents sit across from you in your office, hearts breaking because the child they brought into this world Baptized and trained in God's Word and in Christian schools walks into this sinful world and away from their faith, what can be said to them to bring joy back to their hearts?

The apostle Paul wrote: *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.* 1 Co 15 If all this that is preached is only for happiness in this world during our short lives here, then we are truly in a pitiful state. For then we have been lied to and are being lied to by those who preach this. And in this "pitiful" state the ungodly world turns to us and joyfully mocks: "Where is your Jesus now?"

Yet Paul continues: *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* 1 Co 15 Each in his own turn: Christ first has risen; death is destroyed. Then at the End of the World, you also will rise to live forever. For *Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!* On that day, and that day is coming as surely as a baby's due date, we will rejoice! Jesus has promised: *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.*

Like the nine months of a full term baby in the womb, Scripture says we will suffer pain and will mourn. But when the time has come, so does the child! A child is born, and the joy that we are expecting will be realized! So for now, Jesus' advice and counsel is this: Pray! He says: *I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

The Child whose birth was celebrated by all the world at Christmas brought joy to the world with his victory on the cross where he paid for the sins of all the world. He rose again from the dead and declared: *because I live, you also will live.* Jn 14 And this is the power of the joy that is ours through faith in Jesus. He hints at this when he said: *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. Like the woman who gives birth, we will forget the anguish because a child is born!

However, now is our time of grief, so let us not forget nor fail to pray! The promise is clear: *I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.* We know that pain and hardship goes along with child bearing. And not only with child bearing, child rearing has its share of hardships and sorrows. But there is no other way to experience the ultimate joy. But prayer in Jesus' name is prayer that is bold and persistent in that we have been told by God Himself that we must suffer and bear the cross. We must be laughed at, ridiculed and hated by the world of unbelief that appears to be having its heavenly joys now. We have been told these things by our Lord who wants us to talk to him as our personal Lord, and what brings us to our knees in fervent prayer more than adversity and grief? And concerning Jesus who suffered and died for our redemption, the Bible reminds us of this: *We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* He 4 All of this is tied together with the birth of a Child, that child named Jesus. But Jesus himself uses this analogy to tie us all together through faith in His saving name as the people of God who are able and willing to suffer through the pains and grief of this life while looking forward to the time when that Christmas Child returns in glory at the end of the world.

Until then, let us rejoice in what is ours by Jesus' death and resurrection and through faith in his name rejoice and pray. Amen