

“SORROW AND JOY”

INTRODUCTION: We Americans live inside a great myth.

1. That *Great Myth* is this: The technological, scientific and economic advancements of our age can remove sorrow from us, give us anything we want, and keep us from all harm.
2. Now...It is *never* stated so openly and crassly as I just presented it, but it *is* how we think.
3. The evidence is all around us...
 - a. Bumper stickers: “*I am the proud parent of an exceptional kid.*” (Really? Everyone has an “exceptional” child. Whatever happened to “average kids?”)
 - b. Divorces in America: You owe it to yourself to be happy, and if that means a new spouse...
 - c. The cosmetic surgery industry: You can have the face and the body you’ve always dreamed of having.
 - d. Everyone gets a trophy. (No one should ever lose!)
 - e. The counseling business: We spend billions of dollars every year telling our sorrows to others because no one should ever be sad, disappointed, discouraged, unhappy.
 - f. Our kids deserve whatever they want – good grades, good job, good friends – even if they haven’t earned them.
 - g. We demand physicians to do things only God can do – keep us alive for more and more years.
 - h. Pharmacists are expected to have a prescription (a pill) for all our difficulties; to pay attention to, control our anger, to help us sleep, to help us stay awake, to keep us from worry/anxiety, to settle us down or perk us up, relieve pain, stress and impatience, and to keep us even-keeled year-round.
 - i. We demand that all things be super-fast because it is a sin to make us wait: microwave meals, white teeth in 5-minutes per day for 2 weeks, super-speed internet, “instant access,” 24-hour news, and the world at our fingertips: *iPhone*.
 - j. Our TV Cable offers us 1,000 channels to choose from – inexhaustible entertainment!
 - k. **Rule #1:** *If I want something, ask for something, demand something you’d better give it to me or I’ll make your life miserable until I get what I want.*
 - l. **World’s worst sin:** *making me unhappy*
4. We actually believe that God only has three great concerns: Our *life*, our *liberty* and our *pursuit of happiness*.
 - a. These things are “*self-evident*”
 - b. These things are “*endowments*” from God
 - c. These things are *human rights*
 - d. These things are *worth fighting over and fighting for*
5. **One Problem:** It’s a myth. It’s all a lie. It is not reality.

6. As one great theologian put it back in the 1960's, **Mick Jagger** of the **Rolling Stones**: "*You can't always get what you want, but if you try, sometimes you just might find you get what you need.*"
7. And this is why so many, many Americans are so unhappy. The truth is this: *We live in a fallen world where both sad things and bad things happen. We don't always get what we want. We can't always be happy. We can't forever avoid sorrow. Tears are as much a part of life as laughter. People suffer. Everyone dies.*
8. **Right now**, because of that last word ("*dies*") many of you are "checking out" of this sermon. A few will get up and walk out...
- "*I can't take this kind of preaching! I won't sit through it!*" you say to me.
 - I say to you: "*And this is why you are on medication, in therapy, restless of soul, angry in spirit and sad deep-down inside.*"
 - And running from the Truth won't help you.
 - ...and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* (John 8:32)
9. When American Christians come to the Bible, they tend to treat it like every other aspect of American life – "*how is God's Word going to make me happy and give me what I want?*"
10. In his book, *The Light Has Come*, missionary, theologian, pastor and writer, **Lesslie Newbigin**, says this (p. 220).
- The Bible is concerned with the public history of the world; this reductionist conversion of it into religious psychology is a product of contemporary Western culture which accepts another public "myth" and privatizes the Gospel.*
 - The Bible isn't about you...or me. It's about Jesus.
 - The Gospel is not about what I want but what God wants (and what we *need*).
 - The story of revelation is about God's world invading our world, not about happiness in this life.
 - In fact: *The climax of the great story of redemption is not "and they lived happily ever after," but this:*

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Rev. 21:1-5)
 - Remember:** Our lives unfold in the context of what God is doing in the world.
 - God's story* ("Gospel") is always the central story – the *metanarrative* – and never our individual stories.
11. In John 13-17, Jesus is setting forth the future of the Apostles and their life in this world. Their reality...

- a. Jesus is going away. They are to remain in the world.
 - b. Sorrow is coming for them; persecution as well.
 - c. Their joy in the Holy Spirit will come in a most surprising manner – not by God making them “happy.”
 - d. **Jesus is going to die.** And they will be crushed.
 - e. **Jesus will rise again.** And they will know joy.
 - f. **Jesus will come again.** Until then they have work to do.
12. These three realities became the first creedal statement of the early church’s corporate worship: “*Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.*”
13. Am I being morbid? No. If you’ll bear with me for the next half hour, there’s *good news* at the end of this passage...
- a. But it’s good news in the context of *reality*
 - b. The *Sorrow* of Christ's death (16:16-20)
 - c. The *Joy* of Christ's resurrection (16:21-22)
 - d. The *Hope* of Christ's ascension (16:23-24)
14. The reality of sorrow and joy in life:

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." 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'?" So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." 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'? 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. 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. 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 that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:16-24)

I. THE SORROW OF CHRIST'S DEATH (John 16:16-20)

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." 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'?" So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." 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'? 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. (John 16:16-20)

1. The phrase “a little while” dominates this passage:
 - a. 7 times in 4 verses (vv. 16-19)
 - b. **Newbigin:** “Seven times in four verses the words “a little while’ are repeated; nowhere else in the whole discourse is such immense emphasis laid on a single phrase.” (p. 218)
2. What does Jesus mean? He is speaking about His death and resurrection:
 - a. “A little while and you will see me no longer” because I will be crucified, will die and will be buried.
 - b. “...and again a little while, and you will see me.” I will rise from the dead and come to see you on Easter morning.
3. Naturally, such cryptic language was **not** understood by the eleven Apostles:
 - a. *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'?" So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." (John 16:17-18)*
 - b. **Remember:** We have the advantage of the entire New Testament to explain these things to us. At this point, in the Upper Room, the Apostles had not yet received the Spirit.
 - c. *But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' 'But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (John 15:25-26)*

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 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. (John 16:12-13)
4. Jesus perceives their confusion about His words. So He seeks to clarify, as He can...
 - a. *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'? 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. (John 16:19-20)*
 - b. **Remember:** Jesus has already told them, repeatedly, of His crucifixion, death and resurrection, but they could not grasp what He was saying.
 - c. *"Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. (Luke 9:44-45)*
 - d. **Rodney A. Whitacre:** *John: IVP; p. 393.*

Earlier Jesus told the disciples he would be with them only a little longer (13:33) and encouraged them not to mourn. Now he points to the time in the future when their grief will be turned to joy. Earlier Jesus’ statements had triggered questions by the disciples, but

instead of asking Jesus what he means, the disciples question one another. They want to ask him but hold back. Perhaps they despair of getting an answer that makes any sense. Throughout the Gospel Jesus has spoken cryptically, as he is about to admit (v. 25).

5. Jesus further expands on His predictions of their future grief in the near future:
 - a. *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. (John 16:20)*
 - b. “weep and lament”: cry and mourn
 1. *klaio*: to cry, to weep, shed tears
 2. *thrēneo*: to mourn; to wait at death
 3. In John, *thrēneo*, is only used of mourning over death: John 11, John 16:20, John 20.
 - c. i.e., the Apostles will be sad because Jesus dies.
 - d. “sorrowful”: to be grief-stricken
 1. *lupeo*: to hurt, suffer grief, be sad or sorrowful
 2. An inner sadness over Christ's death
6. What will make their grief all the worse is that the world will *rejoice* while they are in mourning.
 - a. As they grieve Christ's death, the world's leader who killed Christ will celebrate His death with joy!
 - b. The Christian and the World usually have opposite emotional reactions to the same spiritual events.
7. **Andreas J. Köstenberger**: *John: ECNT*; p. 475: “His primary point: their joy cannot come without being preceded by grief.”
8. Why? Because joy in our lives is always sifted through a sinful world. Sin always costs. And what it costs is **death and sorrow**.
 - a. *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17)*
 - b. *The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. (Ezekiel 18:20)*
 - c. *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*
 - d. **Every sin causes the death of something.**
 - e. When it comes to sin, you never really “*get away with it.*”
 - f. **Sin always takes its toll, and it always causes sorrow because something always dies.**
9. Thus, a fallen world is a sinful world, and hence it is a world full of suffering, death, and sadness.
10. It is unreasonable for us to go through life expecting that we, our families and our loved ones will **never** taste death and never know sorrow.

- a. Our children are *not* all “exceptional”: Many are average, more than a few are handicapped or disabled, and some end up in prison, in pain, dead.
- b. Not all Christians who marry live happily ever after: divorce and difficulties face every marriage – one or the other.
- c. We cannot all be among the “beautiful people”: some of us are invalids, most of us have a defect or a deficiency; very few are truly handsome or beautiful.
- d. One, and only one, gets the trophy; all the rest lose. And everyone is a “loser” sometime or other...and often so.
- e. Our kids *deserve* only what they’ve earned. The rest is a gift of grace or a result of our failures.
- f. Each of us begins to age, decay and die on the day we were born.
- g. There are quite a few things medications cannot cure.
- h. Life is full of delays, disappointments and difficulties. There are **no** quick fixes to real problems.
- i. The **truly worst thing** that can happen to you is for God and others to give you everything you want!

11. **Grief is not incidental to life and something that happens only to “other people.” Sorrow, grief and dying are a part of the world’s DNA. We cannot fall apart when sorrow slams into us!**

12. **Illustration:** *Every once in a while people in grief will say to me, “Pastor, why did this happen to me? Why didn’t God keep this from us? I am angry at God over what He’s done to me!” Here are my answers:*

- a. This hasn’t happened just to *you*. All of us face similar sorrows.
- b. God does not tell pastors *why* He does things. God answers to no one.
- c. Why are you *angry* at God because of the wages of sin?
- d. *Who has spoken and it came to pass,
unless the Lord has commanded it?
Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
that good and bad come?
Why should a living man complain,
a man, about the punishment of his sins? (Lamentations 3:37-39)*

13. But I also have to say: *Sin, death and sorrow do not have the last word!*”

II. THE JOY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION (John 16:20-22)

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. 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. 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. (John 16:20-22)

1. **Key promise:** “...but your sorrow will turn into joy!”
2. The sadness of Good Friday and the Cross will turn into Joy on Easter Sunday at the empty tomb.
3. Jesus informs us that the joy of His resurrection will wipe away the sorrow of His death. *Life overcomes death.*
4. And here is how He illustrates this: a *parabolic image* of a woman in childbirth:
 - a. *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. (John 16:21)*
 - b. A common image used by God in the Old Testament to tell of the coming “day of the Lord.”
 - c. *O LORD, in distress they sought you;
they poured out a whispered prayer
when your discipline was upon them.
Like a pregnant woman
who writhes and cries out in her pangs
when she is near to giving birth,
so were we because of you, O LORD;
we were pregnant, we writhed,
but we have given birth to wind.
We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth,
and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.
Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.
You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light,
and the earth will give birth to the dead. (Isaiah 26:16-19)*
 - d. **D. A. Carson:** *Gospel of John: Pillar NTC; p. 544.*

The combination of intense suffering and relieved joy at childbirth is in the Old Testament a common illustration of the travail God’s people must suffer before the immense relief and joy brought about by the Advent of the promised messianic salvation. The model of a woman in childbirth generated a popular metaphor in the Judaism of Jesus’ day: ‘the birth pains of the Messiah’ refers to a period of terrible trouble that must precede the consummation.
5. Jesus now applies this Old Testament metaphor to the disciples in the Upper Room:
 - a. *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. (John 16:22)*
 - b. They too, that night, were sad to hear that Jesus was leaving them...
 - c. They too would soon know the deep grief that Christ was crucified, dead, buried...gone!
 - d. They too would mourn over the weekend; thinking that Jesus had been wrong...about everything! He failed.
 - e. And they too would know “joy *unspeakable*” on Sunday morning – 3 days hence...

- f. *Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. (John 20:18)*
6. It is here, in this text and with these words, that Jesus explains to us the difference between *joy* and *happiness*.
- a. **Joy** only comes about at the end of a season of travail, when difficulty has given birth to something living that cannot die.
 - b. **Happiness** costs you nothing, but it dies quickly. It must be repeated again and again, but regardless of how many times it happens, it always dies away.
 - c. **Illustrations:** My beloved Buckeyes are terrible! They are under NCAA investigation, face NCAA sanctions, have lost their good coach (good man), are 3 and 2 so far and will likely end up 5 and 7, miss a Bowl game, and will probably lose to Michigan for the first time in 10 years!
 - d. *Truly, truly, I say to you, "You Buckeyes will weep and lament, but those Michigan vermin will rejoice at your sorrow!"*
 - e. The Buckeyes will rise again and will triumph over Michigan and others.
 - f. But...the only thing their victories on the field give to me is *happiness*. And to keep me happy, they need to win every Saturday, win all their Bowl games, keep winning the Big 10 Championship, and always beat Michigan.
 - g. *The Ohio State Buckeyes cannot give me true joy!*
 - h. Having worked, studied and struggled through four years of academically rigorous courses earned for me a degree from *The Ohio State University*...and that has brought me **joy!**
7. The difference between *joy* and *happiness* is obvious...
- a. If your kids are always "*exceptional*," because you say so, it makes them happy; if they develop extraordinary character, it gives them joy.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:11)
 - b. Dating makes you happy (and sex is fun), but a tested and proven marriage, matured over the years, brings joy.

*He who finds a wife finds a good thing
and obtains favor from the LORD. (Proverbs 18:22)*

*An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels. (Proverbs 31:10)*
 - c. To be called pretty makes a girl happy and to be seen as handsome makes a boy glad; but the esteem of others yields joy.

*Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates. (Proverbs 31:30-31)*

*What is desired in a man is steadfast love,
and a poor man is better than a liar. (Proverbs 19:22)*

- d. To always get a trophy makes you happy; to learn how to give to others makes you joyful.

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)

- e. Grades earned by cheating or an “A” that is the result of a helicopter mom’s rage, can make you happy – for a brief time; but the reward of honest study gives you a lasting, joyful satisfaction.

*"Stolen water is sweet,
and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."
But he does not know that the dead are there,
that her guests are in the depths of Sheol. (Proverbs 9:17-18)*

- f. Youthfulness is fun and vigor makes one happy; but it is old-age that brings honor and joy.

*The glory of young men is their strength,
but the splendor of old men is their gray hair. (Proverbs 20:29)*

- g. Good health makes you happy; life is easier that way. But the health of the soul makes us joyful

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. (3 John 2, 4)

- h. The quick result makes us happy; the lifelong work of God in our souls makes us joyful.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

- i. **The worst thing that could happen to you is this:** *To get everything you want in life and be “happy” every day, then to die, go to hell and be separated forever from the joy of the Lord...*

- j. *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26 NASB)*

8. **Death is not** the worst thing that could happen to Jesus Christ or to us. Death is the birth pangs of a “joy unspeakable and full of glory” in heaven and, later, in the resurrection.

9. **John Gerstner:** *Repent or Perish*; pp. 6-9.

We need to remember this all the days we live, no matter who we are. In and of ourselves, we deserve hell. If we remember that every one of us in this world, no one of us excepted, not even Jesus Christ, deserves anything other than hell. Christ deserved it also because He took our guilt upon Himself. We deserve it because we have incurred our own guilt. There’s no such thing as the problem of pain! You tell me how excruciating it is and I’ll still look you in the face and say there’s no problem. Why? Because we’re sinners. We deserve the eternal wrath of God. I don’t care who you are or where you are. That you are breathing at all is incredibly gracious. What needs explaining is not that there’s pain in the world. If there wasn’t any pain, we would have a problem.

How can God be holy and this world be wholly sinful and there be anything but pain? It's incredible that there is non-pain. Where did we get the idea that there was a problem of pain? You don't find too many people wrestling with the problem of pleasure. But that is the problem. Why does any of us draw a free breath? Why does a person not have a heart attack? Why is anybody not suffering? That's a problem! Christ solves that problem. Temporary freedom from pain is given you so that you may repent and not perish. The only answer to the problem of pleasure is that God is pleased to give hell-deserving sinners an opportunity to repent. That is the only reason anybody lives a moment out of hell – that he may escape hell forever. People who pay no attention to the Bible, or religion, or conscience can really be “shook up” by having someone in the family die. Did they really believe they were people who deserved better treatment? That a fair and just God couldn't possibly do this to THEM? That shouldn't surprise us. We have been told that we were born dead in trespasses and sins, under the wrath of God. If we die unchanged, we are going to die forever under His wrath. God is shaking us up by these accidents that aren't accidental. If we do not remember that, death can come any moment and find us not ready except for hell. So here is our solemn warning, friends. When accidents befall, God is screaming at us. Accidents are not accidental.

10. For the Christian, there is only one thing that is a **tragedy**.

a. *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

b. The **tragedy** is to die Christless and live forever in a Christless eternity – hell!

11. **Please allow me to say something here:** *If you lost a loved one 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 years ago, and if you are still grieving, still find it difficult to talk about them, still have flashbacks, still become grief-stricken at every funeral you go to, then you are not embracing the Joy, the Hope and the Reality of the Resurrection. Your faith is lacking something Christ offers to all of us: the Joy of His Resurrection. Grief has a legitimate season (some longer than others) but only a season. For the Christian, grief must eventually turn to joy, if not, I ask that person, “Are you resting in the Risen Christ?”*

12. By the way: This is **not** my opinion. This is what the Apostles say is true!

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:13-17)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in

him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:3-9)

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3)

III. THE HOPE OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION (John 16:23-24)

In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:23-24)

1. Jesus says, "*In that day...*" (i.e., on Easter Sunday, on Resurrection Day, in the New Testament era, the last days...)
2. i.e., one Jesus has risen and ascended into heaven to sit at God's right hand.
3. We can pray to God the Father, in Jesus' name, and God will give us whatever we ask "*that your joy may be full.*"
 - a. **Not...**whatever you want/demand
 - b. **Not...**whatever makes you "happy"
 - c. **Not...**whatever keeps you from sorrow
 - d. **But rather...***that which brings spiritual joy*
4. People *often* say to me, "Pastor, I asked God for such-and-such, and He didn't give it to me. I can no longer believe His promises about prayer."
 - a. *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:13-14)*
 - b. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (John 15:16)*
 - c. *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24)*
5. **Note carefully:** "Whatever you ask that (1) glorifies God, (2) bears much fruit, (3) makes your joy full
6. You asked for God to give you certain things. He did not, and you're saddened. Did God break His promises of prayer?
 - a. No. You asked for healthy children. God gave you a *special child*. That child knows God in a way that you and I can never know; and God is using your little one, in the lives of other people, for much fruit.

- b. No. You asked God for a job. But that job would not glorify Him as much as your unemployment has. He is honored when you rest in Him, not by a fat paycheck.
 - c. No. You wanted your loved one to live – your dad, your mom, your spouse, your child – but your loved one, once they caught a glimpse of glory, did not want to remain here. *Their joy is now complete...perfect.*
2. God **did not** break His promises; He kept every one of them...
- a. You asked for good things; He gave you glorious things.
 - b. You asked Him to keep you from the distress of pain; He guarded you from the danger of pleasures.
 - c. You asked Him for life; He gave your loved one eternity.
 - d. You wanted just to be *happy* but God wanted more than that for you – He wants your *joy* to be full!
 - e. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
O LORD of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!* (Psalm 84:11-12)

CONCLUSION: I realize that, at times, we don't *feel* like these things are true...

1. We can see death. We can't see resurrection yet. We feel the pain, the sorrow, the unhappiness of this fallen world.
2. Here, beloved, is where we "*fight the good fight of faith*"
Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)
3. We move beyond **feeling** to **fact**, and beyond fact to **faith**:
 - a. We **feel** let down, even forsaken, by God...
 - b. The **fact** is that God is always good, always gracious, and always sovereignly faithful to us:
*For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.* (Psalm 100:5)
 - c. And **faith** bids us focus on the *Resurrection and Living Christ*.
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)
4. **Sorrow and Joy** are the twin realities of the Christian life in the real world.

- a. We don't always live "happily ever after."
- b. We don't always get what we want.
- c. But we **do** live forever in the Risen Christ, we **will** rise again to join our loved ones in glory, and we **are** now afforded the hope of the resurrection.

5. **Kristy Getty:** "*See What A Morning*"

*See, what a morning, gloriously bright
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light
As the angels announce, "Christ is risen"*

*See God's salvation plan
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice
Fulfilled in Christ, the man
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead*

*See Mary weeping, "Where is He laid?"
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again*

*The voice that spans the years
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us
Will sound till He appears
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead*

*One with the Father, Ancient of Days
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty
Honor and blessing, glory and praise
To the King crowned with pow'r and authority*

*And we are raised with Him
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered
And we shall reign with Him
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead*