

In a Little While

Քիչ Մը Ատենէն

John 16:16-33

Last week I preached in Beirut Lebanon in the online service of my former parish at the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church. They lost their young pastor Sevag Trashian from a sudden heart attack. They are asking different pastors to record sermons and send them. I sent the sermon to a young seminary student who just graduated from NEST (Near East School of Theology) and I asked him where he would serve as a new graduate. He said the Central Committee of the Near East Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches appointed him to serve in Kessab, Syria.

Where is Kessab?

Kessab is a rural region in the Northwest of Syria on the border with Turkey. It contains six Armenian villages. A Pro ISIS militant group invaded Kessab a few years ago and looted this area, burned the churches, including the Armenian Evangelical Church of Kessab. After 88 days, they miraculously left, and the local Kessab people came back to their destroyed and looted town. They did not give up, they slowly rebuilt their homes, schools and churches.

Who wants to become a pastor in Syria these days? Shant Agishian.

I spoke with him and encouraged him. I encouraged young pastor Shant. I reminded him about the congregation that is waiting eagerly for a new pastor. There are young people in Kessab, there are children, families, all need a good pastor to lead them. It is not an easy place to be a pastor. Imagine, he just finished school. This is his first field to serve.

Last Sunday Badveli Kevin covered the first half of John 16.

Jesus is departing from the world; the triune God is at work; we are talking about arrival of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Helper who will do many things,

about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. (John 16: 9,11 NIV11)

Today we move to second half of the chapter. Jesus uses a phrase “**in a little while**”, which is recorded **seven times** in this short passage.

What is going on? Let us read:

Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

¹⁷ At this, 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?’” ¹⁸ They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.” (John 16:16-18 NIV11)

The disciples got confused. What is Jesus talking about?

¹⁹ 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’? ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ²¹ 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. ²² 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. ²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (John 16:19-24 NIV11)

-In a little while... you will not see me, then you will see me

Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” (John 16:16 NIV11)

We are talking about **Jesus dying on the cross**, the hour has arrived; “Jesus is departing from the world in his glorification and the world will no longer have access to him. When he returns in resurrection, it will be his followers’ final opportunity to see him as he has always been.”¹

-In a little while... it will be hurtful.

Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. (John 16:20 NIV11)

So with you: Now is your time of grief... (John 16:22 NIV11)

Basically, Jesus talking about what will happen right after the Upper Room event. Jesus will face challenges which will cause grief and mourning.

(Judas’ betrayal, Jesus’ arrest, trials, beating and humiliation, choosing Barabbas, the crucifixion, death and burial). These are not easy things to see....

-In a little while... grief will turn to JOY

Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. (John 16:22 NIV11)

Jesus gives the example of a pregnant woman who gives birth to a child. Even though I experienced this as a father, only women can fully understand how the birth of new baby, which is hurtful and painful, can turn into joy in a moment. I heard this from my wife.

-In a little while... “you will see me” Jesus says twice (16:17, 19).

On the resurrection morning,

Mary saw him (20:18),

the disciples did (20:20, 25a),

and seven days later Jesus invited Thomas to “see” him (20:27, 29).

John himself knows that this promise of “seeing” was at the heart of his confidence about Jesus

“That ... which we have seen with our eyes ... this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). There is no doubt that it is the resurrection of Jesus when the joy promised in 16:20 will be fulfilled.²

Brothers and sisters, the resurrection of Jesus is not just any event. “Seeing Jesus” is the evidence that the tomb is empty. There is history before resurrection and there is history after resurrection. Brothers and sisters, this is historical confirmation that God opened a new page with humanity. The hour has arrived that God will be glorified, and His glory will be revealed all over history. The disciples were new people after the resurrection of Jesus, and the story continues...

So how about us? We did not “see” Jesus. Those verses are good for the disciples. How about us? Why are we called blessed?

“Blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed” (John 20:29 NIV11).

Sometimes I say I wish I was there with them to “see” Jesus. I envy them. Then I say to myself there is reason God brought me to life at this time. There is a reason we believe in Jesus in these times. Don’t you see that?

-In a little while... things will be changed (asking/receiving/praying)

In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.²⁴ **Until now you have not**

asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

²⁵ "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. ²⁷ No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸ I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." (John 16:23-28 NIV11)

There is joy in the atmosphere. Yes, there is tribulation, but you will not lose God's joy.

There is joy in prayer (23b-24)

We have direct access to God. You can pray in the name of Jesus. You can pray directly to God the father because of Jesus. One theologian summarized this way

"The name of Christ is both the passport by which the disciples may claim access into the audience chamber of God and the medium through which the Divine answer comes."³

There is joy in praying in the name of Jesus. Think about it. We have direct access to God. You don't need mediation.

In Aleppo, if I need to reach to high rank governmental official, I had to go many layers until, (maybe) one would arrive to that door. Not with God. Jesus says ask in my name (24). Jesus will mediate on our behalf. God loves us, as he loved his son, **"I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. ²⁷ No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me"** (26b,27)

St Augustine said about this:

"The Son does not ask the Father, but the Father and the Son alike listen to those who ask."⁴

What does it mean to ask for anything and it will be granted?

This statement is misunderstood by many. God is not a genie that grants our wishes.

In reality, do we want Jesus to give us whatever we ask? How dangerous will the world become if we were granted all we asked for! (Just think about being a parent and granting your child whatever your child asks).

Jesus said once to the mother's request: **"You don't know what you are asking,"** (Matthew 20:22)

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives...”
(James 4:3)

Our author John writes later in his letter:

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15 ESV)

In the vineyard metaphor, Jesus asked us to abide in him, remain in Him. **If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.** (John 15:7 ESV)

We should not use this kind of prayer for personal gains. It does not work. To ask someone in His name is to ask in a way that is in accordance with his character (in biblical times people’s names reflected their characters).

Let us ask ourselves:

Am I asking according to His will? Am I asking to bring glory to God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit?

Finally, the disciples get what Jesus is talking about. Well, almost. The hour will come when the Spirit will help them to see things differently.

³¹ **“Do you now believe?” Jesus replied.** ³² **“A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.**

³³ **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**
(john 16:31-33 NIV11)

Those are the **final words of Jesus’ teaching** to his disciples before his prayer and then arrest...

Again, we see how fragile the disciples are. They will leave Jesus alone; they will arrest Jesus and they will scatter all over.

Jesus does not give up. He encourages them...

Jesus knows that there will be a world of trouble, and they will need **joy and peace** (20, 33)

He is the source of that joy and peace, because he will win the war (and won); he will win over the prince of this world, Satan, (he won), and this evil will be condemned and judged.

Application.

-In a little while... you will not see me, then you will see me

-In a little while... it will be hurtful.

-In a little while... grief will turn to JOY

-In a little while... things will be changed (asking/receiving/praying)

For disciples in a little while happened in two ways. They did see Jesus coming back from the grave. Thus their grief and sorrow turned to joy.

But I look also from the perspective of Pentecost, when the Spirit came, and the church was born. Apostle Paul and many others have not seen Jesus the way disciples saw him. Yet, we live in post-resurrection. We have the Word of God in our hands. We live in the end times when we wait for the Second coming of Christ. While we are waiting (in a little while) in this troubled world we can experience “see” Jesus in our spiritual eyes. That is the word of the Holy Spirit the Advocate.

To go back to the story of who wants to be a pastor in Kessab. Six years ago, in 2015, another new graduate was assigned to serve there. We prayed with this young man. He was anxious how he would serve there. He arrived to the town. It was his first Sunday. Almost 100 parishioners came. The same afternoon he restarted the junior high group. I called him and that time and asked him how he was doing. He visited 18 homes so far. There was excitement in the town; a young preacher was in town. Every single night the war escalates in the neighboring mountains. He heard explosions and saw lights. It was a scary place. I encouraged him. I prayed with him. **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** I will pray same prayer with Shant now. He will go in June.

Paul says:

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT)

Asking means giving the control to God, making yourself vulnerable to him. YOU GIVE UP CONTROL.

Dallas Willard said once:

“You must arrange your days so that you are experiencing total contentment, joy, and confidence in your everyday life with God – that and that alone is what makes a soul healthy.”

Jeremiah says:

“BLESSED are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.” Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT)

Amen

1. Gary M. Bruce, *John, NIV Application Commentary* P440
2. *ibid* P 441
3. Hoskyns John 579 (NIV 442)
4. Gary M. Bruce, *John, NIV Application Commentary* P443