

John 16:16-23

Jubilate: 4th Sunday of Easter

7 May 2017

St. John's, Chicago, IL

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today, two planes with Concordia students and their instruments depart O'Hare and will land tomorrow in South Africa. They will spend over two weeks touring and performing concerts, in this anniversary year of the Reformation. The two weeks will be a time when parents and their students will see each other no longer, for a brief period, but then, they will!

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me."

Far better than even seeing our loved ones who have been away, is seeing Jesus! It is such an amazing, incredible gift that not only will we live eternally, but that He will resurrect our bodies and bring them to Himself to live with Him for eternity.

But you stand in disbelief. You question His return to give the gift of resurrection. You like to leave most "spiritual" conversations with friends with a generic "heaven" for

"good" people, rather than the bodily resurrection, with those in the body of Christ going to be with Him, and those who have rejected Him, not.

"You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy." Unless, of course, you are fighting Him on this. You find the sorrow strangely comforting, that you cannot see Jesus, and so it is easier to imagine Him distant and far away. It's more relaxed, that way. You know, Jesus isn't looking over your shoulder then, and you can get away with your twisted thoughts, your vulgar words, and your corrupt deeds.

How does your sorrow turn to joy? It all comes back to that ***"little while."***

And again a little while. We may not know how many years until we fall asleep in Jesus, or until He returns, but we are confident that we will be raised to join Him and to be reunited with all who have departed in the faith.

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." These words get a little harder to understand, when the little while has been almost 2,000 years.

"You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice."

"Where is God?" you question, any time something tragic happens. An accident. An incurable disease. An

innocent student caught up in crossfire from a gang shooting.

As you question, the idea of Jesus being just "a little while" seems difficult. You feel He is delayed and doubt Him even more.

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.

Your Risen Savior has Good News for you. He always keeps His Word. His promises are sure and certain. When He says you will not see Him, and then you will, He means it. Because He is eternal, no matter how long the stretch of time is, it is just a little while for Him.

Yes, Jesus is returning! He is risen, and even though He is not walking this earth in the same way as He did with the apostles, He is with you, and He will come back. He comes now through His preached Word and His sacraments, and is here in His body, every bit as much as then.

Your dear Christ has overcome the evil of this world. He is victorious over your own defiance and unbelief. He has defeated your complacency and silence when you should be crying out for the weak and innocent. The darkness of this little while of not seeing Jesus cannot help but give way to the joy and light of the little while past, when we

see Him. The overwhelming sin and devastation cannot keep you. Christ Jesus makes your sorrow turn into joy.

21 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.

22 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.

Because Jesus is risen and lives and reigns to all eternity, He gives the gift of resurrection to you and to all who are in Him. Paradise is opened to you, and death has lost its appalling power over you. So you will not be left to die in your sins, but our "victorious King" who has "washed us in the tide / flowing from His pierced side" into the font has rescued you and has given every reason that your sorrow turns into joy!

"I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." The Lord Jesus is keeping His promise. He is seeing you again in His gifts. And He will completely fulfill that promise when you are resurrected and feast forever with Him in His kingdom. The doubt is taken away. The distrust removed. He causes your hearts to rejoice, ***and*** like that new mother who has just gone through the anguish of labor, you too forget all the bad, and simply are overcome with joy at the

birth of a child! And ***no one will take your joy from you.***
Amen.