

VCEFC Daily Devotion 4-3 to 4-9

April 3: John 16: 16-24 Your grief will turn to joy...

Notes:

- v. 16-18 The disciples' bewilderment is quite comprehensible. It is not easy for them to understand that Jesus' instruction on His departure and return refers to His death and resurrection. Even if Jesus did tell them He was going to rise from the dead, He would still need to reassure them when the event did take place.
- v. 19-20 The disciples will both weep and make the lamentation for death. By contrast "the world" will rejoice at the death of Jesus because it sees Him as its enemy. But the situation of the disciples will readily be transformed, their anguish will be turned to joy because of Jesus' resurrection.
- v. 21-22 The image of a woman in labor and the new life she brings into the world point to the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. The anguish of the disciples will turn to gladness for Jesus who has left them in death will meet them in resurrection life, which signifies the beginning of a new creation. The death and resurrection of Jesus will provide the believers with new life and new relationship with God.
- v. 23-24 The joy of the new time introduced by Easter is to be characterized by two notable features: first, the joy of understanding; the disciples will no longer have to question Jesus in the kind of bewilderment which they had just known, for Easter will be as a shaft of light from heaven on the way of Jesus, and the Spirit will be their leader into all truth; second, the joy of efficacious prayer, since the Father will hear and grant their prayers in the name of Jesus.

Meditate:

1. What is the basis for our prayers being answered?
2. How is joy compatible with suffering? How can we look beyond suffering to see the joy behind?

April 4: John 16: 25-28 My Father loves you because...

Notes:

- v. 25 After using the figure of vine and the branches(15:1-8) as well as the image of the woman in labor (16:21), Jesus concludes His farewell discourse by speaking directly and plainly about the Father.
- v. 26-27 The Father loves the disciples because they love His Son Jesus and believe in Him as the one whom the Father has sent into the world. They have become the children of God and have direct access to the Father Who cherishes them and welcomes them into His presence in Jesus' name. There is no need for Jesus to ask the Father on behalf of the disciples.
- v. 28 This verse is the summary of the entire Christology of the Gospel of John. It takes the shape of a perfect four-line chiasm:
(A) I came from the Father
 (B)and entered the world
 (B') I am leaving the world
(A') and going back to the Father.

The focus of this chiasm is Jesus' incarnation and ascension. A and A' describes Jesus' incarnation and ascension in relation to the Father. B and B' describes Jesus' incarnation and ascension in relation to His mission in the world. True faith in the Gospel of John involves believing in Christ' descent from the Father and ascent to the Father.

Meditate: The promise of the Father's love is available to us today. If we love and obey Jesus, we will be empowered to live a new life with the presence of the Holy Spirit. But all too often we want love but reject obedience. We want to receive the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, but we want them while living quite independently of God's will for our lives. St. John of Avila (1500-1569) commenting on the indwelling Holy Spirit, said, "He who desires the Holy Spirit, let him love and obey and desire Jesus Christ forever!.. There are no better chains with which to hold the Holy Spirit than by loving Jesus Christ." Jesus Himself has told us that loving is not merely a matter of saying "Lord, Lord"(Matthew 7:21); it requires acknowledging God's sovereignty by obeying His will and commands. (John 14:15; 15:10)

Obedience to God involves making decisions according to God's commandments rather than according to the demands of our fallen nature. It means coming daily before the Father in prayer, repenting for our unbelief and disobedience, and believing that God will speak to us through His Spirit. It means reading scripture as a way of allowing God to make known how He wants us to live as His sons and daughters.

Commitment to Jesus and to the right use of the gifts of the Spirit will bring us new life- life filled with the blessings promised to us by the Father. Let's invite the Holy Spirit into our hearts every day as we humbly seek to obey the word of the Lord.

April 5: John 16: 29-33 In me you may have peace

Notes:

- v. 29-30 The disciples are excited because they begin to understand what Jesus is talking about, although it soon becomes clear that they still do not fully understand Him. Their conviction that Jesus has come from God has been confirmed because He not only answers their questions with clarity and authority, but also knows what they want to ask (16:19).
- v. 31-32 Jesus' answer should be "Now believe?" or "Do you now believe?". The disciples think that they finally understand Jesus, but they have not yet exposed to the ultimate test of their faith- when Jesus is crucified. In spite of their good intentions, they will leave Jesus in the hour of His greatest suffering. But if Jesus is to be forsaken by His disciples, He will not be abandoned by His Father, "my Father is with me," giving Him support in His darkest hour as in every crisis of His ministry.
- v. 33 Jesus' last word to His disciples is not of condemnation but encouragement. The peace He promises them, together with the joy (16:22), are two primary realities of the saving sovereignty that Jesus brings, and they are gifts of the present- even in tribulation, which is the precursor of the triumphant kingdom of God. And the victory that brings the kingdom has already been won! "I have overcome the world", declared the Victor who, by His enduring suffering in obedience and unflinching love, will conquer the evil in the world (the prince of this world). And in Him every disciple shares His victory.

Meditate: "In this world you will have trouble". What kind of trouble have you encountered because of your faith in Jesus?

For us, trouble usually mean deciding to do what is right despite the temptation to take an easier way out. This could mean adopting an unpopular position on a family, political, or social issue and enduring criticism as a result. It could mean sacrificing our free time and comfort to serve the poor and needy.

Our difficulties may differ in nature from those of the early disciples, but the peace they experienced is the same peace that can be ours. Jesus encourages us to "take heart", i.e. to have courage and confidence, because Jesus has won victory over the world. By setting our minds on the things of heaven, the problems we face in the world will never overwhelm us.

April 6: John 17:1-5 What is eternal life?

Notes:

- v. 1 "The time has come", it is the event to which the whole life and mission of Jesus has moved. The petition, 'Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you' is the keynote of the whole prayer. It expresses the desire of Jesus to devote His life to God as an acceptable sacrifice through His death, so that God may raise Him to the throne of His glory. At the same time, God the Father is glorified by the Son for the revelation of His redeeming love and saving power.
- v. 2 The glory of the Father and the Son is expressed in the bestowal of eternal life upon humankind. The redemption of Christ and the kingdom of God is universal in scope, but the gifts of eternal life are only for those whom the Father has given to the Son.
- v. 3 Eternal life consists in the knowledge of God and of Jesus the Son. Such knowledge advances beyond the intellect to include relationship and communion. It means entering into the fellowship of the Father and the Son, which is the heart of spiritual life.
- v. 4 When Jesus looks back on His earthly ministry from the perspective of eternity, He confidently acknowledge that He has glorified the Father through His life work.
- v. 5 The prayer for glory is for a restoration of that which the Son enjoyed with the Father prior to creation. It will happen after Jesus' glorification through the cross, resurrection and ascension.

Meditate:

1. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus, which is the foundation of eternal life?
2. Reflect on how deeply Jesus' suffering is related to His glorification.
3. Jesus' authority over all people came through His ultimate act of obedience on completing the work God gave Him to do. How does it help you understand the true source of power?

April 7: John 17:6-12

Notes:

- v. 6-9 There are several reasons for the necessity of Jesus' prayer for His disciples.

1. God gave the disciples to Jesus. He chose the disciples out of the world for the possession and the service of His Son.
2. Jesus revealed God to them.
3. The disciples have obeyed the word of God brought by Jesus. They have adhered to it and sought to live in its light.
4. They have come to know that all that God gave to Jesus has come from the Father. This is faith- knowledge coming to maturity.
5. These gifts of God to Jesus are the words that Jesus has spoken. The disciples have received them, and so recognized them as authoritative and normative for life.
6. They believed that Jesus has been sent by God for a mission to reveal the Father and to establish His salvation for all mankind.

Jesus especially prays for the disciples because they have been chosen to help the church to fulfill its calling: to continue the mission of Jesus Christ to the world. Thus, His prayer for the disciples is indirectly prayer for the world also.

- v. 10 All those belong to the Father equally belong to the Son. It reflects the oneness between Jesus and the Father. Jesus is confident that the disciples will glorify Him by completing their mission in the world through the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
- V. 11 Precisely because Jesus is on His way to the Father, His prayer for the disciples has become an urgent necessity. Jesus addresses God as “Holy Father” only here in the Gospel., expressing the two notions of transcendence and intimacy characteristic of Jesus’ personal attitude to God and of His teaching about God. Jesus prays for the Father’s protection of His disciples by the power of His name, which refers to both the character and the power of God. With God’s powerful presence with them, the disciples may be united to share in the intimate relationship with the Father through their faith in Jesus.
- V. 12 All of Jesus’ disciples are safe, except for Judas, who is the enemy of the righteous sufferer (Psalm 41:9) and the one doomed to destruction (the son of perdition). He has heard the words and seen the deeds of Jesus, yet he did not receive with faith and obedience the one sent from the Father. When life is rejected, destruction becomes one’s destiny. Jesus has offered Judas a special sign of love at the meal in the upper room. But Judas chose to respond to the evil one. Thus, Judas was not lost against his own will. Jesus offered him life, but He did not compel Judas to accept it, nor does He force anyone to accept Him

Meditate:

1. Are you a true follower of Jesus like the disciples? Do you obey Jesus’ words as authoritative for your life, and accept the responsibility to carry on Jesus’ mission to the world?
2. Why was Judas lost? What lesson have you learned from Judas’ failure?

April 8: John 17: 13-19 You are set apart by God for a purpose.

Notes:

- v. 13 In His prayer Jesus reassures His disciples of the full measure of His joy within them through their participation in the mutual relationship of love between Jesus and the Father through the Holy Spirit. For the disciples to be reminded of these things should suffice to enable them to share His joy to the fullest.
- V. 14 It is the acceptance of the word of God that distinguishes the disciples from the world and prompts the world to hate them. The word of God is the light of life to those who receive, and a judgment to those who reject.
- V. 15-16 Although the world is hostile, the disciples will not be removed from the world for they must remain in the world as witnesses to the Gospel of Christ that forgives the rebels and gives life to the full. Hence, Jesus prays for the Father's protection of the disciples from the evil one, who is behind the world's opposition to God manifest in Christ.
- V. 17 To sanctify means to set apart or consecrate for a God-given task (Exodus 28:41, 40:13). The instrument of this sanctifying work in the disciples is truth. And the truth is God's word as revealed to the disciples through Jesus' works and words. (17:8, 14) Jesus Himself is the Word (1:1) and the Truth (14:6). To be sanctified in the truth is to be set apart or dedicated to the person of Jesus.
- V. 18 The sanctification of the disciples is for the service of God in the discipleship of Jesus. They are sent into the world, as Jesus was sent by the Father, to continue Jesus' mission to the world.
- V. 19 "For them I sanctified myself" refers to the significance of Jesus' death: it is seen as a sacrifice for others, whereby a new covenant is initiated for the inheritance of the kingdom of God, and so the fulfillment of the passover hopes of another Exodus. The self-sanctification of Jesus to death brings His mission of mediating the salvation to the world to its climax. His dedication unto death is made in order that the disciples too may be dedicated to the same task of bringing the Gospel to the world in like spirit as he brought it.

Meditate: Being sanctified in the truth by the word has to do with receiving, obeying, and living out the word of God. It involves allowing our minds to be made one with the mind of God as we read scripture and beg the Holy Spirit to bring it to life for us. It means taking on the mind of Christ in the course of the day by asking the Spirit to prompt us and help us examine our consciences. Just as Jesus' mind and will were one with the Father's, so can ours be one with His. Jesus wants to sanctify us in the truth so that we can participate in God's work of bringing salvation to the whole world. Our goal should be to become a truer representation of Christ to the world. Let us ask the Lord to set us apart for his purposes. Let us commit ourselves to proclaiming His truth through our words and through our daily lives.

April 9: John 17:20-26

Notes:

v. 20-21 In the eve of His death, Jesus prays for all who will believe in Him through the apostles' message. He has us in mind, and all the things He could have asked the Father to give us- steadfast faith, hope, love, power, courage- He prays that we will have the same unity among ourselves that characterizes the life of the Trinity. Jesus' highest desire for us is that we will be one, as He and His Father are one. This unity is rooted in

the being of God, revealed in Christ, and in the redemptive action of God in Christ. The prayer “that they may be one” can be defined as “that they may be in us.”

v. 22-23 John links the oneness of all believers with the mutual indwelling of the Father and Son. If the Father is in Him and He is in the disciples, then the Father is in the disciples. In this way, all believers are drawn into the very life of God whose nature is perfect love.

v. 24 The last request Jesus makes of the Father looks beyond this life to heaven, where His believers may see His glory, the pre-existent glory He had before the foundation of the world., the glory that comes from the Father. The glory Jesus reveals to His disciples during His earthly ministry is but a glimpse of the glory they will see in Him when they live in His presence.

v. 25-26 Even though the world does not know the Father, the disciples have come to know the Father in and through Jesus. They are in a relationship to God in Christ that marks them off from the world. Jesus affirms that He will continue to make the Father’s name known to the disciples so that they’ll have a deeper understanding and fuller grasp of the love of the Father for the Son, and will be transformed into bearers of that love to the world.

Meditate:

1. In chapter 17, the verb “give” is used 13 times to refer to what the Father has given the Son and what Jesus in turn gives the disciples. Make a list of the various things the Father has given the Son, and the Son His disciples. What does all of this say about the nature of the Father and the Son?
2. In what ways that we can live in the unity that Jesus intends for us?
3. Let us examine our relationships and repent for the ways we allow, and even encourage, disunity in our families, communities and places of work. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to show us where we are intolerant of others because of their race, religion, economic status, or even their appearance, dress or way of speaking. As we ask forgiveness, God Himself will build up His church through our witness; His work will be furthered by our unity.