

John 16:16-22

What makes you weep and lament? And what causes you to rejoice? Perhaps many things. But with regard to those things which matter the most, you may be surprised to hear that you are the exact opposite of the world.

You are like a fan at a Cubs/Cardinals baseball game. When Cubs fans stand and cheer, Cardinals fans weep and lament. But when Cardinals fans stand and rejoice, Cubs fans are filled with sorrow. They are never happy at the same time. Nor are they sorrowful over the same things. They are opposites in this, just as we are with the world.

Why is this? Jesus tells us in our text for today. He says to His disciples, "*You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.*" This would happen on Good Friday when Jesus would die and be buried. "*A little while, and you will see Me no longer,*" He says. His disciples would not see Him because He would die and be placed into a tomb. This would cause them great sorrow and anguish. But while the disciples are weeping, the world, says Jesus, will be rejoicing.

What causes you to weep and lament? Whatever it is, it causes the world to rejoice. Have you seen images of ISIS terrorists cheering over their Christian victims whose bodies they have slaughtered? They, the world, are rejoicing, but this causes us great sorrow.

Closer to home, when the world's courts oppose God and strike down laws which would protect the lives of unborn children, the world stands and cheers. But we who love God and His Law, as well as those it protects, are filled with sorrow.

The sorrow of Jesus' disciples is always vitally connected to whether or not He is seen. The greatest anguish that Peter, James, and John, and all the others felt, was during that three-day period when Jesus was dead. Their hearts had been cut out of them. Their life had been sucked away. They were in utter and complete misery. They lost all hope for they lost sight of Jesus. He was dead. No longer was He with them. They were sheep without a shepherd.

The opposite of this was taking place in the hearts of Jesus' enemies. The world was rejoicing because He was dead. They loved it. This was a grand slam for them in the bottom of the ninth inning. Finally, they were rid of that trouble-maker.

The greatest sorrow for one of Jesus' disciples is, as He puts it, when "*you see Me no longer.*" Our sorrow and our joy is directly connected to our Lord. When we lose sight of Him, we are filled with sorrow.

But do you think we are willing to admit this? Not at all. We trick ourselves into thinking that life is good even while our soul is sorrowing because we have lost sight of Jesus. You know how it was after your Confirmation Day. You were all pumped up and just knew that you would never miss church...ever. You would read your Bible and Catechism daily. You would hunger for the Sacrament whenever it was offered. You would continue to study the Word with the pastor and congregation.

But we lost sight of Jesus, and it didn't take long. Our intentions fell through. Our schedules crowded Jesus out. We were slowly becoming sheep who were losing sight of the Shepherd, and our souls were sorrowing as a result.

We changed teams. We went along with the world. We rejoiced, not in receiving Christ in bread and wine, but in landing a weekend job. We rejoiced, not in seeing Jesus in the reading and studying of His Word, but in using that time each day for ourselves.

Can you picture yourself joining with Jesus' enemies, cheering and rejoicing with the world that He was dead? But that's exactly what we do when we ignore His Word and Sacrament. For then, He may as well be dead to us as alive. And we actually prefer Him dead. For then He doesn't interfere with the living of our life.

Repent now before it's too late. For Jesus is here now in mercy to forgive you. "*A little while,*" He says, "*and you will see Me.*" And when you see Jesus, you will be filled with joy.

Seeing Jesus again after His resurrection, His disciples had such joy that they no longer remembered the sorrow and anguish they had when He was dead. This is the joy Jesus brings to you. He is not dead anymore; He lives. And He is here to be seen by you with eyes of faith so that your life is filled with joy.

He stands in the batter's box. He knocks your sin out of the park. The game is over. Satan is weeping. The world is sorrowing. But you? Your sorrow is turned into joy, for Jesus is here with you. You had lost sight of Him. Just last week you lost sight of Him when you walked head-first into sin; when you turned away from His Word; when you were too ashamed even to pray.

But it's okay now. You are forgiven. Jesus is here with mercy in His heart for you. He does not remember your sin. He forgives it. There is not one of you here who needs to leave today with sorrow and guilt. "*A little while,*" says your Lord, "*and you will see Me.*" That *little while* is now. Sin had closed your eyes to your Savior, but He opens them for you to see His face smiling upon you. He opens your eyes to see Him in love embracing you to Himself - not because you kept yourself free from sin last week, but because, like me, you are full of sin; but you are cleansed, washed, baptized in the blood of Christ.

So do you understand? Our sorrow and joy in life is connected to Jesus. When we lose sight of Him, our souls are plunged into darkness and sorrow, even if we refuse to admit it. But when we see Him again in His Word and His Sacrament, we have joy in the forgiveness of our sins.

There is no need to live in sorrow. This place is a house of joy, for here you always see Jesus. Here your Savior always takes your sorrow, and your sins, and your guilt, and you leave His presence rejoicing. Amen.