

Sermon: (In) A Little While

Text: [John 16:16-33 ESV](#)

Gary L. Wackler

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Introduction: There has always been a great deal of misunderstanding about Jesus. His own disciples rarely seemed to comprehend what was being said by their Master.

Jesus had said: [John 16:16-19 ESV](#) ¹⁶ “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” ¹⁷ 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?’” ¹⁸ So they were saying, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” ¹⁹ 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’?”

Jesus was speaking of his soon-coming crucifixion and resurrection, and the disciples seemed to be more concerned about what he meant by the Greek word “little” (μικρον). Timing is always so indefinite with Jesus whose perspective is eternity. “Coming soon” depends on one’s perspective (MCC sign on M-20). But what did Jesus mean 2000 years ago when John records his words in the last chapter of the Bible (NT)? [Revelation 22:7 ESV](#) ⁷ “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

“Coming soon” in Revelation is now dragging on and turning into a long time from our perspective.

Maybe the disciples had heard “in a little while” at home. You hear these kind of things even today from children who might not be all that eager to clean a room.

I am still waiting on a homemade teddy bear already named “Dr. Strauss” I was promised in 1985. I have to admit I have used the phrase a time or two: “in a little while.” If you are skeptical by nature, it is like saying: “Your check is in the mail.”

But Jesus was talking about sorrows and griefs over his leaving and the trouble that would scatter all the disciples all over the world. And then he goes on by saying:

John 16:20-28 ESV ²⁰ 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. 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. ²³ 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. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. ²⁵ “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for 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 have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

His disciples were talking about timing, and toward the end of our passage, it even seems they were beginning to understand: **John 16:29-31 ESV** ²⁹ His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! ³⁰ Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” ³¹ Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”

Q. Why the reversal of attitude about Jesus’ talking (teaching)?

A. Jesus had read their minds (v.19). Jesus always knew what they were thinking. Kinda scary isn’t it?

“The Jewish idea that the ability to anticipate questions and not need to be asked is a mark of the divine. In Josephus, Ant. VI.xi8;#230, Jonathan swears to David by ‘This God...who, before I have expressed my thoughts in words, already knows what it is.’ The same idea is found in Matt vi 8: ‘Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.’” - Brown, *John*, pp. 725-726

The NIV reads in **verse 31** - “You believe at last!” Jesus answered, yet the ESV leaves the same statement a question where it reads: “Do you now believe? You see, this could be a declaration or a question, but in light of the disciples’ dispositions at the crucifixion and even the next verse, what do you think? **John 16:32 ESV** ³² Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

It seems then from [verses 30-31](#) that In A Little While
I. The Disciples Will Understand.

At the cross and afterwards, the disciples will understand more about the level of commitment required to follow Jesus.

Peter would deny Jesus as being the Christ (Messiah).
And the rest seem to run for their lives and go into hiding.

It seems that just the time when the disciples start to believe, Jesus turns up the level of commitment and reveals even more to his would-be-church. If they want to kill me, they will want to kill you, he had told them. The disciples will begin to understand how powerless they are without Jesus by their sides. [Romans 5:6 ESV](#)
6 For while we were still weak ($\alpha\sigma\theta\epsilon\nu\omega\nu$), at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Instead of *weak*, the NIV renders this word “powerless.” This same word even can be translated “sick” like in [James 5:14 ESV](#) 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. Even the man at the pool in [John 5:7](#) is called an invalid (same Greek word).

One of the first prerequisites for being saved is the realization of your own inadequacy and powerlessness. And in an another way of stating it: you need to realize how sick (spiritually) you are. A person can wait too long to call the doctor. It is that way spiritually, too.

Unlike the world, Christ and His Church are able to use those who are initially weak and even what some may call failures. Jesus saw something special in the disciples very few would have seen. **Illus.** Charles Colson of Watergate fame went to jail and came out a changed man. He became a great writer and defender for the Christian faith. He spoke at the NACC one year. When is the last time you saw a public failure and ex-con be a keynote speaker at a national Christian convention? That is what the Great Physician can accomplish with those who recognize their need of a Savior.

Yet, Jesus used these disciples of his that denied him, abandoned him and ran and hid like cowards. He transformed them into bold witnesses. What is the difference; what happened? The Resurrection and the Holy Spirit! [Look at Acts 2!](#)

In a little while the disciples would come to understand the world has a different agenda and philosophy about living.

Years ago I used to play golf on Sunday mornings. It was my only real day off!
Joke: There was this preacher who was an avid golfer. Every chance he could get, he could be found on the golf course swinging away. It was an obsession.

One Sunday was a picture perfect day for golfing. The sun was shining, no clouds in the sky, and the temperature was just right. The preacher was in a quandary as to what to do: play golf or give the Sunday service.

Shortly, the urge to play golf overcame him. He called his assistant, told him he was sick and asked the assistant to take care of the Sunday church service for him. He packed the car up and drove three hours to a golf course where no one would recognize him. Happily, he began to play the course.

An angel up above was watching the preacher and was quite perturbed. She went to God and said, “Look at the preacher. He should be punished for what he is doing.” And God nodded in agreement.

The preacher teed up on the first hole. He swung at the ball and hit a perfect drive, straight as an arrow, four-hundred yards right to the green, where it gently rolled into the cup (as they say in basketball, “nothing but net”). A picture perfect hole-in-one. He was amazed and excited.

The angel was a little shocked. He turned to God and said, “Begging Your pardon, but I thought you were going to punish him.”

God smiled. “I did. Just think about it... who can he tell?”

People aligned with the world do not see the long view and consequences of their lives. The World reacts to the events and the news of Jesus’ crucifixion differently.

Verse 20 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.

Because of the cross the world would rejoice!

Those who would soon be what we call “Christians” would weep and mourn and lose hope.

Yet, the resurrection would reverse the situation and the world would find itself mourning over their untenable condition and wail over what they realized they had done. Listen to Jesus in Luke's gospel. **Luke 23:27-30 ESV** ²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸ But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'

This reversal of emotion is illustrated by the figure of childbirth: **John 16:21-22 ESV** 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.

Then also from the disciples' perspective: "In a Little While"

II. The Disciples Will See Jesus Again.

There is a sense of both the resurrection and Jesus' second coming in this passage. The historical reality of the resurrection coupled with our own entrance into new life brings hope and expectation to our living now!

Even though many times *we* would wish to be with the Lord, we still realize our duty and obligation - our calling to be disciples here and now!

Much of the pain and suffering that is endured in leaving home for the first time or moving away from the familiar, from friends and family, is also temporary because of the availability of travel and technology like "smart" phones and reunions.

Jesus' return to life would bring the disciples joy and even understanding. It was through the resurrection that their eyes were opened to all the O.T. prophecies as well as what Jesus had told them.

As the "little while" turns into a longer wait than even the apostles (including Paul) may have anticipated, we need to be watchful, ready, and yet ever busy with the work of the Kingdom: praising our Savior and introducing the world to Jesus.

There can be problems when people in authority leave us for a while.

Illus. 10th grade was one of those moments for me. It was World History class. I had been disciplined once before in my academic career in 2nd grade for kissing Lucinda McCann. Who would have thought that it would be eight years later and the teacher would return unexpectedly and that I would receive my first in-school detention. And still in 10th grade no one expected John F Kennedy to be assassinated during World History class. Life and death happen unexpectedly, but not without consequences.

Jesus, even though physically absent, is still here living in His Body, the Church, through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is not confined to one person, but is found in all believers. The Spirit is busy directing, encouraging, convicting and loving others through us.

In our story, in the meantime, the early disciples were made a less-than-positive promise. Jesus told them that in a little while:

III. The Disciples Will Have Peace.

They would have peace in the middle of the storms of life, just like the time on the lake when the disciples thought they were going to die, and Jesus comes to them on the lake.

³¹ Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³² Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. ³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Jesus talks about this world as if it were a foreign place, and not at all what our experience will be, SOMEDAY. The promise for all Jesus’ disciples in this world is trouble, tribulation, distress, pressure, and affliction.

The problem of suffering is as old as Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden and Job’s dilemma of how good and righteous people, who are trying to do what is right for God, are still victims of terrible events sometimes. There are generally three kinds of affliction/suffering:

1. Afflictions that come from sharing the fallen nature. Blame Adam and Eve! We experience natural catastrophe, sickness, death and bereavement over loss.
2. There is affliction that God permits because Satan is still the Prince of this world.
3. There are afflictions that come directly from God's hand that are intended to purify us/make us better. God, the Father, disciplines those whom he loves.

In this, we must be careful not to always blame God or Satan for things we bring on ourselves through irresponsible living.

Generally, we do not need to be necessarily saved from a particular situation. We just want to know WHY, but the answer to peace is only found in WHOM. God is in ultimate control and has our best interest at heart as his children, so there is no need to worry or be troubled. We can be "in trouble," but we not be troubled. The joy of the disciples will be out of the world's reach to destroy. Robert Schuller called this joy: "the divine spark."

Bultmann says, "It is not personal sadness at the loss of a loved one, at the decease of a great man. It is rather the situation of loneliness in the world, the situation in which men find themselves when they are called out of the world by Jesus and yet at the same time still in it, given over to its hatred."

There are only two spheres of existence: "in Jesus," or "in the world."

Romans 8:16-17 ESV ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Conclusion: If you look at the world, behind the joy of the world lies anxiety and the thought that at any moment everything could change and their joy be stolen from them.

Jesus has overcome the world because of his death, burial and resurrection. We also can be victorious over the world with all its false and empty promises, through faith in Jesus Christ. **I John 5:4 ESV** ⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

In a time when relationships are expendable and commitment is an archaic concept, the Church must remain faithful to her Husband. She dare not abandon His mission (our mission) or her Lord in times of trouble.

Jesus' return will bring joy for the faithful. If Jesus came TODAY, would you be happy to see Him face to face? To experience that eternal joy a person must place his faith in Jesus, repent of his sins, confess Jesus as Lord and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sin.

Will you do what is required to become a part of this holy family?

We pray you will!