

EASTER VI (ROGATE) – MAY 22, 2022 – JOHN 16:23-33 (ESV)

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

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

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." 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? 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."

Do you remember the first time you left your young child in the care of someone else, either to run some errands, or for you and your wife or husband to go out on a "date night"? Sure, you were apprehensive about being away from your baby; scenarios of the worst case happening were foremost in your mind. But, what about the child? What were they thinking? Especially if they were of a certain age (and this differs from child to child), they just KNEW that mom and dad weren't coming back.

They'd drawn close to you; after all, you provided them with food and drink, changed their bottoms when they were dirty and wet, gave them the tender loving care and reassurance that they needed all the days of their lives. When you disappeared, they were convinced that you weren't coming back! They would cry incessantly, not trusting this other person with whom they hadn't formed nearly as tight an attachment as with their parents. Even after the fear subsided on your part, and you began to enjoy the evening as a married couple without children once again, at least for a little while, the terror for your child might continue even longer. They were crestfallen, abandoned, and even though not alone, certainly not happy about being with someone else, even if it was for a short time.

That's kind of, in a nutshell, what the disciples were going through in this passage from John's Gospel. They had been with Jesus for over three years at that point; they were used to learning at His feet, accompanying Him throughout the countryside, where He healed many with frail and diseased bodies, and exhibited the proofs that He was and is God Almighty. When the people weren't happy about the teaching that Jesus shared with them, the disciples were able to point to Him as the culprit, and the religious leaders and the teachers of the Law were able to place their anger upon Jesus, and not upon the disciples. They had been converted to the truth of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit working in their hearts; where once there was nothing but emptiness and pain, now there was faith, hope and anticipation about the future. Now, He begins talking with them, privately at first, about leaving and going back to the Father in heaven. They couldn't believe it! He was going to "throw them to the wolves" – He wanted them to continue on preaching and teaching, but without Him by their side. How dare he!? He got them into this lifestyle, lured them away from their lines of work, and now was planning to abandon them. The nerve of this Jesus! They were angry, hurt, and sought to lash out at Him for not staying longer with them, guiding and leading them.

Have you ever wondered just where God is during our most difficult struggles? Even though it's hard to admit, part of the difficulty in dealing with the trials of life is hearing the temptations of the evil

one. His lies have told us that God has abandoned us. How many times have we asked ourselves, when we're good and sick, why it is that God allows pain and suffering, illness and disease, to afflict us His people? It's a natural question. The "great accuser", which is one of the names for the devil, capitalizes upon our doubt and fear, extrapolates it to our entire lives, and tries to get us to think that God has just abandoned us. Just like the little child when mom and dad go out on date night, we think that Jesus is never coming back. We think that we're going to be stuck in this unfamiliar, crazy world forever! Even though we don't cry out with tears or screaming like little children, fear still besets us, doesn't it? Sin is found in our thoughts, word and deed, sad to say.

Thanks be to God that He doesn't leave us in this state, where we're left feeling bereft, and just abandon us to the earthly grave forever that our sins deserve. Rather, He's got a plan to bring us to Himself, when His time is right, when our Last Day comes. That's what Jesus tells us about in this passage from John's Gospel, where He talks about the reasons that we have true peace, the reasons that things have been set right between us and God eternally, solely by the working of God Himself. Let's take a look at some of the reasons for this true peace that we have as a present possession, that Jesus spells out in the passage. There's a reason that the disciples commented that Jesus was now "speaking clearly" with them – we're dealing here with one of the most outward presentations of the Gospel that we see anywhere in the Bible.

Our text continues with v. 24: *"Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."* We are dear children of our heavenly Father; He delights to shower us with His blessings. It isn't that He begrudgingly hands over just enough to have us get by in this world; rather, He blesses us with what we need, and then more with abundance. As we've learned through our studies in Peter's letters, we are made His people, a kingly people, blessed by Him, special to Him

You are God's own prized possession; the Father sent the Son to this world in order to be killed, so that your sin would be atoned for and disappear. You are so precious in His sight that when Jesus ascended back into heavenly glory, the Father sent the Holy Spirit to be with you, to guide you in all truth, to create and sustain faith in your heart, so that you wouldn't be lost and confused, but reinforced and reassured that you truly matter to God. Part of asking for what we need is having the confidence that He will answer, according to His will. Otherwise, we are tempted to leave Him alone, to let Him deal with those who are in "much worse shape than us." Know that you are precious in His sight; that if you were the only one that would have been saved by His dying, rising again, and second coming, it still would have been worth it in His eyes. You are the "apple of His eye", the "crown of His creation" – even though this world's tyrant rage, we are equipped to go into battle, because God fights for us and with us.

Jesus speaks of the future in this passage – this is pure Gospel, milk and honey to our palates, salve to seal up our wounds, reassurance to our desperate ears. He promises peace that is beyond understanding – peace not like the world gives, but a peace that will be between us and God, so that there is no more fear and trembling on our part, but only an unsurpassed joy that we don't even have words to describe. That's what we secretly seek, by the way – peace with God – even if we aren't capable of expressing our need in this way. The knowledge that God is not angry with us anymore, that His anger has been put away, and that, just like the father of the prodigal son, He waits for us with outstretched arms, running toward us to welcome us back into His presence. That's why the Last Day holds no fear for the baptized and redeemed children of God. It's the culmination of the promise of God throughout all of human history, that things will be made right by His doing, not ours. The devil and his evil angels can destroy the body; they can even take our physical life; but they can never touch the soul; they can never steal eternity with God from us.

The Last Days, which we live in today, aren't promised to be pretty! In fact, tribulation will come; things will be extremely difficult for those who remain true to the confession that they've been given by the Holy Spirit in their hearts. But, you will never sin so much that you will fall from the love of God in Christ Jesus. In fact, the Holy Spirit will continue to urge you to repent, and be restored to the sight of God once again. That's why Jesus is able to be so positive in this passage – things are going to be tough, so tough that the disciples will all scatter. The men hand-picked by God, the ones that committed years of their lives to study at His feet, even they will fall away when things get too tough. That's a comforting narrative for us – if there's hope for the disciples, and all of the ways in which they disappointed and turned their backs on Jesus in His hour of need, then there's hope for us, too. Our hope is in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He can, and does, find a way to bring us back to Himself, in His time and according to His plan, which is perfect

Why are we such people of hope? Because Jesus has overcome the world! There is nothing that the devil can do to defeat us – Jesus has won the victory already. It's kind of like the score is 98-0 at the end of the first quarter – the game continues on (unless there's a "mercy rule", like there is sometimes in High School ball), but everyone knows who the winner is going to be already. The world continues on until the time ordained by the Father to come to an end, but Christ has already won the game, when He died on the cross to take the punishment of the sins of the world upon Himself, and when He rose on the Third Day, putting to death all of the plans and schemes of the devil. The devil can try all that he wants to, but scoring all of those points unopposed is not only unlikely, but it's actually impossible – that's where our human comparisons break down, as they ultimately do, because we don't have the words to describe just how wonderful the salvation of our God truly is.

It might sound like Jesus is watering down the hope in verses 26 and 27: *"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; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."* A cursory look at this

passage might make us think that He's not going to be looking out for us anymore; that He won't ask the Father for us anymore; that there will be an end to His grace and mercy. However, if you read the next sentence, the truth is that He will not ask the Father for us, at the Last Day, because He won't have to – the Father loves us, and we will experience His love first-hand, because we will be in heavenly glory with Jesus and the Father forever. We're trading one blessing for another – Jesus' intercession for the absolute presence of the Father, in heaven, forever. That's a trade that I think is worth waiting for!

Just before Jesus would begin to undergo His Passion, His death, and His resurrection, He clued in the disciples on some of the specifics of what was going to take place. He reassured them that even though they might feel abandoned and forsaken, they were anything but these things. Rather, the Holy Spirit, the promised Helper, was coming soon, right after Jesus ascended into heaven, to be with them, to guide them, to lead them, to keep their hope alive and full. They were to be given power from on high, as we'll point out in just a couple of weeks on the Feast of Pentecost, to keep them strong and in the faith until life everlasting. Even though they were in for a season of strife, difficulty and persecution, God the Father would work through the Holy Spirit to guard them and to keep them. Things were going to look bad, but the world would be wrong in ascribing this tribulation to God the Father's abandonment of them. Rather, it was necessary in order to strengthen their faith, and they would be given the fortitude to see them through.

When you see things and situations in life that don't seem surmountable, when you think that God has left you by the side of the road to fend for yourself, when you experience persecution for the faith that might make you want to just give in and, in the words of Job's wife, "curse God and die," know that the Holy Spirit is with you to lead you and guide you. He has baptized you in the waters of the font, where the same God that brought His people of Israel through the Red Sea, and saved Noah and all his family from the flood, will also bring you to Himself, and protect you from the flaming arrows of the evil one. You are God's child; you are baptized into Christ. You eat of the Body and Blood of Jesus, the fruits

of His sacrifice, every Sunday in this His church, for the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your bodies and your souls. You are not abandoned by God; rather, you are nourished and sustained by Him until life everlasting. Take heart; His kingdom is coming soon, in His time, and He will bring you to it by His will and His provision. He has truly done everything for our salvation. Amen.

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

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.