

## In Nomine Iesu

### *Jubilate, the Third Sunday after Easter 2024*

#### **A little while and we too will see Him – John 16:16-23a**

“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.’ 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”?’ So they were saying, ‘What does he mean by “a little while”? We do not know what he is talking about.’ 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”? 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. 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. 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. In that day you will ask nothing of me.’”

Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

Jesus was preparing His disciples for His death on the cross when He said: “A little while and you will not see Me and again a little while and you will see Me.” He spoke these words in the room where they had celebrated the Passover for the last time and, after that, received the sacrament of the altar for the first time. In the next 24 hours He was betrayed by Judas in the garden, condemned, crucified, taken down dead from the cross and buried, His disciples having abandoned Him to those who hated Him and desired His death. They hid like frightened mice. In those three dark days of guilt they would lose all hope in the promises He had made to them. They would not recall what He had said to them that night He was betrayed. Their doubts and fears would overcome their faith. Dear friends, His words were spoken to them, but **they were recorded so that we would believe** that we too will see Him in a little while.

### I

The text is easier for us to understand **because we were not there**. For us everything is clear because we can look back through time with the trustworthy New Testament to guide us. It is as if we are looking at a detailed road map of the United States as we drive from coast to coast. Every detail of the map can be checked against that which we see on clearly marked road signs. But for Jesus’ disciples it was different. For them it was as if they were lost in the forests and mountains as some of the early explorers of our nation. They wandered about never sure of where they were. But from our map, the New Testament, we see where **they** were and where they were going. The great events of Holy Week are all before us. We see Jesus’ path as it began at Bethany after He raised Lazarus from the dead. We trace it from there to the village of Bethphage, where He mounted a donkey, and rode through the gates of Jerusalem, welcomed by the huge crowd as the promised heir to David’s throne. We follow His path through betrayal and abandonment to judgment and condemnation. We see clearly. But there is more to disciples’ unbelief than appears at first, more

than can be explained by the understanding that comes to us by looking backwards through time.

Consider, the eleven did not accept the women's report that Jesus had risen from death. They did not believe what the two said who walked with the risen Lord to Emmaus. When Jesus Himself appeared to them in the locked room they did not recognize Him, even as they were speaking with the two who had run from Emmaus to tell them they had seen and spoken with Him. Luke wrote: "As they were speaking of these things, Jesus Himself stood among them. They trembled and were filled with fear, for they supposed that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you so troubled and why do such things come into your mind? Look at My hands and feet, for it is I. Touch Me and be persuaded. For a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.' This He said and showed to them His hands and feet." (Luke 24:36-40)

Even with all this, the twelve still did not believe and understand. Why? How could it be? Jesus had told His disciples at least three times before they came to Jerusalem that He would be betrayed, condemned, suffer, die, and rise from the dead on the third day. He prepared them the night before. Now, as they heard the reports of His resurrection together, it was already the third day. Everything He said had come true. Hadn't they accepted His words? No! They had accepted them. What then was the problem?

The problem is this: We can talk about death theoretically. We can calmly believe there is a solution to the greatest threat to our life and happiness. So it was for the twelve. When Jesus walked with them they were confident and unafraid. When death struck Him, it was overwhelming in its power. When a member of our family dies or a dear friend, we feel its power. Its nearness casts an ugly shadow over everything. Jesus' disciples all heard what happened to their dear Master. The Apostle John himself even saw Jesus die on the cross. Others carried Him dead to the grave as the women watched. With Jesus' death the twelve lost all confidence. They forgot all His promises. All that remained was the grim reality of death. For them it was not possible that Jesus could be in their midst that first Easter evening. He was dead. Death had overcome Him.

## II

But by His presence Jesus called on them to believe what was unbelievable. For this very reason Jesus had spoken to them in advance the words: "Verily, verily, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will turn into joy." He knew what their reaction would be to His death. He had prepared them, but ... Here is the key that opens to us the meaning of Jesus' words and the whole of God's word. Before the twelve could believe that Jesus had overcome death, they had to trust the word of God – trust what the prophets of the Old Testament said of the Savior who was to come and what the Savior said to them directly. But before they could trust and understand, Jesus had to open their understanding. How? John's Gospel gives an account of the same events in the locked room: "That evening - the first day after Saturday - when the disciples were gathered behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be to you.' When He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Jesus again said to them, 'Peace be to you. As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you.' After these words,

He breathed on them and said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.’” (John 20:19-22)

With these words Jesus gave His disciples the ability to believe what is unbelievable. You see, when Jesus rose from death on Easter morning, He showed the world that He had overcome death. He alone had defeated death. God’s word says: “The sting of death is sin and sin receives its power from the Law.” (I Corinthians 15:56) Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, (John 1:29) suffered the punishment deserved by everyone for the sins he or she has committed. In doing so He satisfied the demands of God’s law for everyone and, thus, **removed the true cause of death from us all, from you.** In other words, He disarmed death. Death could not hold Him, as His resurrection on Easter morning proved to the women at the tomb, to the two on the way to Emmaus, to the eleven, and, in these latter days, to us.

Still, the power of death is strong. Its influence over us is overwhelming. Someone or something has to break through the barrier of our guilt, our sense of the inevitability of death, which we know overshadows all of us, for the good reason we are all guilty. When Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to the twelve by means of His word of forgiveness, He opened their hearts and minds to believe the truth, to believe that the true cause of death – which is sin! - had been removed. With His word of forgiveness He swept all their sins away, and with them, every obstacle that hindered them from believing, just as a mighty river in full flood will sweep away even the greatest of barriers. To believe Christ’s word of forgiveness, that in Him we sinners are accounted not guilty – but righteous! - is to pass from death into life. It is to pass from our guilt-laden unbelief into the God-given certainty of salvation, that in Christ Jesus God and man are reconciled and the curse of Eden removed.

+++

“A little while and you will see Me no more and again a little while and you will see Me.” Christ’s words are as important for us today as they were for His disciples then. For we too stand in the shadow of our own death, perhaps in a little while. If, on that day, we stand alone, death will overcome us, as it overcame the disciples in the hours after Jesus’ death, and we will die in unbelief, die separated from the God who loved us and gave His only begotten Son for us. But if we believe in Him, who “abolished the power of death and revealed life and immortality in the Gospel,” (2 Tim. 1:10) we will not stand alone. We stand with Him who has overcome death, who promises: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, even though he will die, he shall live. And everyone who lives and believes in Me, shall never die.” (John 11:25-26) Dear fellow redeemed, with those words Jesus prepares us for the day of our own death, which He has transformed into the gate that leads to eternal life.

Believe the unbelievable. Believe in Him who overcame death - who, by His death and resurrection, has freed you from the guilt and condemnation of your sins. Such faith brings with it a peace, freedom, confidence, and joy the likes of which the world does not and cannot grasp. Receive the forgiveness of sins which Christ proclaims to you, for it sweeps away all doubt and unbelief. And then know that Jesus says to you also: “I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” (v. 22) Yours will be the resurrection and the life. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**