

WELCOME 11th April 2021 – 2 Easter '21 B

John 16:20-33

Welcome! It's great to be together again. We are delighted you are here. As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources in your hands for you to use *so that worship becomes an all-week experience. As God leads you into the fullness of His word & his work in your lives he will then introduce you to someone who needs to hear the good news from you. Also...somewhere along the way today you're likely to feel a stirring or tug at your heart...song prayer word of scripture...Do not ignore it...That's probably the Holy Spirit prompting you in some way...Let's talk about that after worship when that happens.*

As we move into this week...We were not created to live stagnant lives...to be stuck, bound or broken. We were created ^{w/} a purpose, a calling, a mandate & a mission. In the middle of all that is uncertain, up-for-grabs, or threatening, in this world, **that** call remains unchanged.

That's relatively easy when life is good, but when suffering hits & our pulse races & our anxiety goes through the roof...we wrestle to cope ^{w/} the stress & distress confronting us.

Jesus said...*Here on earth you will have many trials & sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world...1st bit absolutely true but 2nd part we have a hard time believing*

Easter means we are claimed by an assurance & a certainty more powerful than anything on earth. The resurrection of Jesus redefines everything about us & redirects our lives toward a joy that is alive in us & contagious to those around us. It doesn't take away suffering, pain or struggle, but Jesus, risen & ruling over all things, gives us peace that persists in difficulty, joy that endures in suffering & strength of faith to triumph over all that would tear us down or destroy us because he has overcome... the grave, the devil & this world for us.

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Heavenly Father, Creator of the universe, you made the world in beauty, & are restoring all things in glory through the victory of Jesus Christ over death.

We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war or greed, the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear as your people live out justice, love, joy & peace. Make our every moment an opportunity to live for the glory of your name & as a witness to Jesus Christ in whose Name we pray...Amen.

Let's sing & then we'll hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. How does "suffering" challenge you & your faith in Jesus?
2. What gives you hope in difficult times?

2 Easter – '21 B – LIFE PULSE: LIFE BEYOND...SUFFERING

The Texas Rattler for a while was the tallest, fastest & steepest wooden roller coaster in the US. I rode it a bunch. Every Summer, the youth group at the church we served in NTx would do a day trip to the 6-Flags Park...& the big deal was to get Pr John on the all the scary rides. Back then...there was no way I'd let a bunch of 15-16-18 yr olds get one up on me... One day I rode that sucker 8 times in a row... picture to prove it. That's me & Lance Jensen looking cool calm & collected while the folks behind us are losing their minds on the big drop.

But after 8 rides...I got wobbly...actually I could barely stand up...probably should have had one of those HIA things they give to rugby players when they get good conk on the noggin...disoriented, off-balance, scared, unstable...everything out of focus (like my sermons) A few too many "Rattles" sure...but pain will do that too...chronic migraines or other hurts...grief sadness...on going conflict...\$\$ crunch...family strife... persistent unemployment...kids in trouble...None are "tame." Not one is benign. Seep into your bones throw you off-balance...leave you disoriented knocked off your feet ...lose your sense of direction/upset your sense of who you are...worn out...we know...

Jn 16, the night Jesus is betrayed, shows the disciples just like that...disoriented confused pained sorrowing about something they don't fully understand. They'd followed Jesus believing He was the promised Messiah who would run out the Romans, re-establish David's throne & restore Israel to her former glory. But in his last moments w/ them, he repeatedly tells them "I'm going away.....but I'll come back" their pulse races & their anxiety goes through the roof

Jn 13:33 - Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer...but you can't come where I am going. **Jn 14** is awash w/ examples... **14:2** - I am going to prepare a place for you... When everything is ready, I will come & get you, so that you will always be with me where I am... **14:18** - I will not abandon you as orphans — I will come to you... **14:28** - Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. Then in **16:16** - "In a little while you won't see me anymore. But a little while after that, you will see me again."

Over/over Jesus points toward his crucifixion & resurrection...preparing them for the great sorrow that will overwhelm them like a flood...But at the same time, preparing them for the joy that is irrevocable. Every time Jesus tried to explain to the disciples his path of obedience to the Father lead through horrific crucifixion, they were resistant/confused. But on **THIS** night...the disciples profess a deepened understanding & growing comprehension that Jesus is who he always said he was:

Now we understand you know everything, & there's no need to question you. From this we believe you came from God Jesus knows that's going to be short-lived & on this very night their world will crash down upon them & he says: "Do you finally believe? But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone." Jesus knows, but they have no idea what's about to happen. They will be overcome by fear/doubt/despair...fell out of the roller coaster...scatter like mice ^{b/4} the header...like us wrestle to cope w/ stress/distress/sorrow/agony...

And knowing what they will face & how hard their hearts will fall...Jesus promises joy, faith & peace embedded in hope that is always life-giving & life sustaining. Jesus assures us that his rising from the grave...his resurrection is never a conclusion; it's an invitation to enter into a life that is fully alive w/ new beginnings & unlimited possibilities.

3X on this night Jesus says "I have told you....so that..." so that you & I know these promises are ours...his gifts to them are for us & his resurrection is ours as well. He marks the path for life beyond suffering...beyond pain heartache trouble...

Jn 15:11 - I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! **Jn 16:1** - I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith. **Jn 16:33** - I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me.

Let's talk about joy... **I tell** you the truth, you will weep & mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. – **Jn 16:20** Picture the scene in a few hours' time... Jesus hanging dying on the cross...the disciples at a safe distance ashamed of their cowardice sobbing knowing there's nothing they can do & in their ears the mocking jeering mob hurling abuse at the near-lifeless Jesus. Jesus knew the miseries of his dying would be compounded by merciless ridicule. Now the disciples know...even the scoffing joy of the killers is part of God's plan. Jesus assures them: Though it is sure it will not last... **So you** have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, & no one can rob you of that joy. **no one can rob you of that joy:|**

Joy is the deep abiding confidence in the final triumph of God's love over everything else. Joy is the deep abiding confidence in God even we don't fully understand what God is doing right now. Joy expects God's grace & goodness & abundant blessing is just up ahead & rushes to live in that abundance. Jesus promises our struggle & suffering & sorrows here on earth will in him become irrevocable enduring incomparable indestructible joy. Just as the pain of a woman in labour is the means by which a baby is born; so the pain of his death produces the joy of our salvation & the joy that persists in us in every circumstance of this life.

I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith/fall away/to keep you from stumbling. Jesus knows his absence from among them will be a blow to their trust. He knows their faith will be shaken. But he promises an even greater gift than his immediate physical presence: the Holy Spirit. **Jn 16:7 & 14** - *But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate/Helper won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you...He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.*

This is an incredible gift of the crucifixion/resurrection of Jesus...The Advocate, Helper, the Spirit of truth, that the Father sends is the Spirit of the risen Christ. To have the Spirit of Christ at work in us, glorifying the risen Christ & making real for us all that the Father has for us in him & in his triumph over death — this is how our trust is sustained our faith deepened & strengthened. Through every grief, every struggle every pain insult injury...we are being kept by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 77 is an amazing Psalm...a lament where the writer cries in anguish over the bitter situation of his life...Ultimately he feels he's fallen out of favour w/ God & is being punished...His suffering is immense. His pain undeniable. But in vs 11-12 there's a shift: **But** *then I recall all you have done, O Lord; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works.* The Spirit rehearses in our minds & reminds our hearts what the Father has done to make us his own. The Spirit reminds us of our living hope given to us when God raised Christ from the dead...like the Psalmist, we replay over/over again what God has done to free us from sin death & the devil...by the death & rez of Jesus Christ. This is how our trust is sustained our faith deepened/strengthened. Through every grief/struggle/pain/insult/injury...we are held by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Easter means we are claimed by an assurance & a certainty more powerful than anything on earth. Peace is a living sense of the presence, purpose, & promise of God in the midst of whatever's going on in life no matter what we face in life...the assurance that Jesus is w/ us, & nothing can separate us from the love of Christ...the certainty that Jesus is God's fulfilled promise that he will guard your heart & guide your life & be w/ you in all things until all things are made new & complete in Him.

Is 26:3-4 (God) *You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock.* The word *perfect* is not in the Hebrew text...But the word *peace/shalom* is...2X. The Hebrew reads: "God, you, will keep in shalom shalom (peace peace, abounding & astounding peace, superlative peace, peace beyond all human understanding) all who trust in you."

God will establish his wholeness his completeness his peace his confidence & assurance --- God promises to build his peace into your life & in all who trust him - whose thoughts are fixed/locked on to God's Word Promises Presence. There is no peace no security no assurance in anything else. Scripture reminds us that whatever we think we can hold onto in this world for our peace for our security for our stability our safety our sense of wholeness our sense of power and control...will not see the front porch of eternity. Perfect peace is the gift of God to those who allow Him to fix their minds on Him, who receive the gift of trust in Him, & who depend on Him as the Rock, Foundation, & Fortress of their lives.

Here on earth you will have many trials & sorrows.
But take heart, because I have overcome the world

The resurrection of Jesus redefines everything about us & redirects our lives toward a joy that is alive in us & contagious to those around us. It doesn't take away suffering, pain or struggle, but Jesus, risen & ruling over all things, gives us peace that persists in difficulty, joy that endures in suffering & strength of faith to triumph over all that would tear us down or destroy us because he has overcome... the grave, the devil & this world for us. We were not created to live stagnant lives...to be stuck, bound or broken. We were created w/ a purpose, a calling, a mandate & a mission.

Take it home...

What is one way you are going to live out joy, peace, & faith this week? Preferably in a way you can share with someone else...30 secs... **GO...Swap...**

Let's pray with that in mind...

Lord Jesus fix our hearts & minds on you now & always. Hold us close when life seems terrifying & troubled. Release your Spirit in us so that in all times & places we can live trusting your presence & power above all else. Let your victory over the world be real for us now and forever. Amen