

Where Joy and Sorrow Meet
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John 16:20-33
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The title of the message this morning is ‘Where Joy and Sorrow Meet’. The basic contention of the sermon is that joy and sorrow meet in prayer. That is what Jesus is saying in John 16. He is burdened greatly about the sorrow that His disciples are about to experience, and will continue to experience during their time upon this earth, and He wants to give them comfort. It is really a burden on His heart, it is adding to His own sorrow, the sorrow that they’re going to experience. But the wonder of it is, we’re going to see when we read in just a moment, that He promises them, in the midst of times of incredible sorrow, He promises them fullness of joy. How is that? It is through prayer. When we really understand what prayer is, and we do it God’s way, it is the pathway to joy. So where joy and sorrow meet is prayer.

Friday, I’m sure many of you got the news as I did, turning on the radio, that the Supreme Court had released their decision, and handed down a 5-4 decision that seeks to redefine for our society, for our country, what marriage is. Now we know as Christians, that the Bible teaches that marriage is not the creation of the State, marriage is the creation of God, and so God defines what marriage is. It doesn’t really matter what the State says about it one way or the other. And we were reminded about that important distinction when we had to deal with the grief that comes upon you when you hear a decision like that. You know hearing it, and then reading some of the excerpts of the justices, the things that were said bad, and then the dissenting opinions that were more reasonable. But it was a heavy heart when I first heard that. You know the things that go through your minds, when you learned about it, things like, “What is happening to our country?” “What is life going to be like for our children and our grandchildren?” “What is life going to be like for us?” Those things are realistic burdens, and when you look at life honestly, there are things that bring grief and sorrow. An honest and realistic approach to life, you look at this as one more step in the breakdown of our society, one more step toward lawlessness.

From a standpoint of just America, this is a very bad day. It is hard to imagine one worse. And yet, I would say that Jesus’ message to us this morning is the same as it was last week before this was handed down, that as Christians, we are to be the most joyful people on the planet. And that if anything, after what happened on Friday, we are invited into more joy, because the more you have grief, the more

you have the opportunity to grow in your joy in Christ. The more you have the opportunity to be recalibrated, and reminded of the things that really make for joy. Because when you add it all up, the basis of joy basically, I mean, happiness, gladness, the biblical picture of joy is that we look at, it is based in reality. It is not some kind of pretend thing we put on. It is not happiness, it is not rooted in what happens, it is rooted in reality, the reality of how things are.

I'm thinking in terms of mathematics for a minute. I was a math major in college, and so sometimes I'll think this way. You know if you add the various factors in, if you look at American society and you think, "Wow, that's bad." You put that on one side of the equation. The breakdown of society, look at all the racial violence that is going on, racism, the evil of that. Charleston, the aftermath of that. The encouragement of a lawless mentality on the part of the people. Then this moral chaos that is going to result from the affirmation of homosexual marriage by our government. Now those are bad things, but when you add up all of the factors of reality, when you remember that Jesus Christ lives, that He died, was buried, and rose again, that you remember that He is coming again. When you understand that really in reality He is sovereign over everything that is happening, and that what is happening biblically is He is pulling back His hand of grace, His common grace that restrains evil, is being pulled back. His wrath is being poured out, read Romans 1:18-32 to see this poured out, this laid out. Then what is happening is God is exercising His holy wrath, His glory is being made known in that. He is on the throne and our side still wins. And so that when you add it all up, and this is the way the equation always works out properly added, you ought to be filled with joy. Now the Christian is the person who can look at life square in the face, as it honestly is, the ugliness in the world, and yet the reality of what we know in the word of God, and when you add it all up, it is joy. It doesn't mean we always feel, you know, feel it emotionally, but the attitude of the heart, when we seek God as we ought, is going to be joy.

Now, what we're going to see today is that the pathway to that, the way you lay hold of that though, is not as simple as just a math problem. Some math problems aren't that simple, but this is even more complicated. It is not just adding up numbers, the way to achieve joy, we're going to see that Jesus is saying, "The way that you are going to find joy in the midst of sorrow is by learning to pray, and to take hold of God in prayer." When you learn to pray like Jacob, who wrestled with God, and would not let God go until He blessed Him. When you learn to pray like that, and when you pray like that, the inevitable result is joy unspeakable, full of glory. And that can happen in any circumstance in your life. You know it is even a matter of great joy to think about the fact that we can never be deprived of our

opportunity for joy, no matter what happens, because our joy ultimately is in God, and in fellowship with Him. In your presence, oh Lord, there is fullness of joy. At Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore. And so it is in being with God that we find our greatest joy. So the title ‘Where Joy and Sorrow Meet’—prayer. Let’s read John 16, we’ll begin reading at Verse 20 and read through Verse 33. Now He’s just told them that He is going to be leaving them, and so He has talked about the cross, and then He says in Verse 20:

John 16:20-33 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. 21 Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. 22 Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

23 In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

25 “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. 28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

*29 His disciples *said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.” 31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? 32 Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You that You have given us Your Holy Spirit, and we ask that You might now pour out Your spirit upon us. That He might illumine our minds to understand Your word, and to take it to heart, to love our Savior more, and to be changed into His likeness. We pray this in His name, Amen.

It is interesting to note how the burden of Jesus' heart, it is weighing upon Him, certainly for Himself, the cross, but also for His disciples. The state of the spiritual, emotional, mental state of the disciples is a great burden to Him. In Chapter 14, Verse 1, remember, this is part of the same *Farewell Discourse*, the things that He says to His disciples on His final night before the cross, are contained in Chapter 13 through Chapter 17 of John, five chapters in that one precious night. In Chapter 14:1, He had said to His disciples, after He told them that He was leaving, He said, "Let not your heart be troubled." The verb there pictures, "Don't let your heart be agitated, stirred up. I'm leaving, and your circumstances are going to be troubling, but don't let your heart be troubled."

He says the same thing in Verse 27, later on He says, ***Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you;... This is Chapter 14, Verse 27, ...not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*** You see His burden for the well-being of the disciples. Chapter 16:6, ***But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.*** Sorrow has *filled* their hearts. Do you ever feel like that? Sorrow just floods in and fills your heart. Everything looks bad. This is what the disciples were experiencing, and He knew it was going to get worse before it got better, and here the shepherd heart of the Savior is encouraging them.

Now then in Verse 20-22, the word 'sorrow' in Chapter 16:6 is translated 'grief and grieve' in Verses 20-22. It occurs four more times there in that passage, so that is five times in Chapter 16. Look, He says, ***Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament,...*** One of the things that we're going to have to see, if you're going to have joy in the midst of sorrow, there are two points basically. The first point is going to be pretty brief, relatively, and the second point is where we are going to spend our time. To find joy in the midst of sorrow, what you have to do is pray, but we're going to talk about how to pray. First, there are two points. The first point is *Face Life Honestly*, the second point is *Seek God Fervently*. This is the way to have joy in the midst of sorrow— *Face Life Honestly*, look it square in the face. And then— *Seek God Fervently*, and we're going to talk about what that looks like, what prayer looks like.

1) Face Life Honestly:

But first of all, *Face Life Honestly*. Don't be afraid to look at the way things really are in the world. A lot of times we'd rather just distract ourselves, wouldn't we? That's one of the reasons people entertain themselves. "Let's just watch a movie," and in movies generally everything works out great. I mean, most of the time. Or watch a TV show. There is nothing wrong with doing some of that at some level, but if we're doing it to escape, what we need to do when we're burdened with sorrow is go to God, we need to pray. But still, don't be afraid to face life honestly. The disciples had reason for sorrow, they really did. Jesus was going to be taken away from them after three, three and a half years of walking with Jesus, He was going to be taken away from them so that they would not be able to walk with Him physically every day, as they had. They were going to see Him crucified, they were going to see evil triumph, and come in like a flood in an almost unimaginable way.

The storm that they were going to go through was more than they could bear, and they would be scattered. Peter would deny Jesus. He says in Verse 20, when He is talking about the sorrow that comes, He said, ***...I say to you, that you will weep and lament,...*** These two words are very strong words for sorrow and grief. To weep and lament, both words mean to be filled with such emotional pain that you voice it loudly. The emphasis is on the latter, especially the first word. Weep means 'wail'. "Truly I say to you that you will *wail* and lament." It is not tears just coming down your cheeks. This is you are weeping, tears are coming down your cheeks, but you are crying out in agony, emotional agony. ***...truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve,...*** and there is that word, "You will have great sorrow. Your heart will be gripped with it, but your grief will be turned into joy."

He speaks in the next verse about a woman in labor who has pain. I mean, the image of that, "The physical pain of labor is something like the grief that you are going to experience, disciples. And as you go through it, be encouraged that in the same way that labor pain gives way to joy, sorrow for the Christian gives way to joy." But that is powerful, the image of labor. Patti and I have been blessed with two children. Each child was born through natural childbirth. The first, almost by choice, the second by necessity. Jonathan, she wanted to see if she could go natural and waited too late, and they said, "It's too late to have an epidural," when she said, "I'd like an epidural now." And so I was by her side as she gave birth to both of them. The second time, we got to the hospital too late, and there was no way to have an epidural. And so, I remember her, everybody that came into the room, her first question, "Can I have an epidural?" and each of them, they basically tried to

just ignore the question and move right on, she was ready to deliver. But the pain of childbirth is incredible. He says, “That is the picture of the anguish that you will feel emotionally.” And life has a way of bringing that kind of pain, and we need to understand, it is real. Pain is real, you don’t just pretend it is not there. You don’t just ignore it. That is not the way you deal with this kind of emotional pain if you want to find joy in the midst of it. You have to first of all face it squarely, and the disciples had to face the reality of what life was going to be like. That is why Jesus had told them, “You’re going to be persecuted. They are going to hate you. You are going to be abandoned by the Jewish population. You are going to be hated by the Gentiles, but you can still have joy, and you can still be of good courage if you seek Me in prayer.” So that is the message to us—*Face Life Honestly*, whether it be the state of society, or the state of your health, or the health of someone you love, face it honestly.

2) Seek God Fervently:

But then secondly, *Seek God Fervently*. This is where joy and sorrow meet is in the fervent seeking of God through prayer, when we seek God fervently. The Lord, in fact, wills. In fact, I’ve been working on the subject of prayer, and it is neat to me how the Lord timed this out so perfectly. I started a series on prayer on Wednesday nights last Wednesday, and here we are in John 16 where it is clearly talking about prayer so much, and then John 17 the prayer of Jesus. So it is like, I couldn’t have drawn it up better, and I did not plan that. Those of you who know me well, figured that as much, but maybe too many “Amens!” there. I don’t know, that is a little discouraging. I have an opportunity for some joy in the midst of grief and sorrow now. Lord, they have such a poor opinion of me.

No, but talking about prayer, and reading about prayer, in the Scriptures and in the writings of the Puritans, the Reformers, what you see is that people throughout history have understood, as they read the Scriptures, that the way God works in our lives, when He wants to bless you He sets you to praying. “You have not because you ask not.” How do you get more of God, how do you get more blessing? You ask Him. When do you want to ask Him? When God makes you desperate for it. That is the way God works! That is the way He has worked from Genesis through Revelation. It is the way He has worked through history. He makes you desperate.

John Calvin, in something I was reading from him, was saying that the Christian, the true believer even, doesn’t find himself calling out to God until he absolutely must have God, so that the Lord brings crosses, and burdens upon us to draw us to Himself. So when you face life honestly, you are driven to prayer, so that is why it

is good to face life honestly. The more you look at how things really are, the more you realize, “I am inadequate for these things. I can’t handle it. I must have God’s help.”

Now what is prayer, what should prayer look like? A prayer that is really going to lay hold of the throne of God, lay hold of God in prayer, what does it look like? I’m going to suggest to you that there are two main parts of prayer. We are talking about the second point, *Seek God Fervently/Pray, Face Life Honestly*, and now we are really at the meat of the sermon, *Seek God Fervently/Pray*, and there are two steps basically that I want us to look at and they are, first of all, you *Pour Out Your Heart to God*, and then you *Look Into the Heart of God*. You pour out your heart to God and then you seek to look into the heart of God. Now let’s look first at pouring out your heart to God.

A) Pour Out Your Heart to God:

Jesus is talking about just that in these verses. When He says in Verse 23:

John 16:23-24 ~ In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

One of the key words in this passage is the word ‘question’ there in Verse 23. ***In that day you will not question Me about anything.*** The same word as in Verse 19 when the disciples, remember, are perplexed, they are confused by what Jesus has said, when He said, ... ‘***A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me***’? And so they were debating back and forth, “What does He mean by that?” and Jesus said in Verse 19, it says, ***Jesus knew that they wished to question Him...*** The same word as in Verse 23, ***In that day you will not question Me about anything.*** He is saying, “Listen, in that day, after the cross and the resurrection, after the giving of the Holy Spirit, in the new day that I am bringing, the day of salvation, when the people of God have access to the throne of God, and have the Spirit of God living in them, I’m telling you, you won’t have to ask Me anything.” Now does He mean we are also going to know everything? No, He doesn’t mean that. The context tells us how He means it. He says, “You won’t have to ask Me anything. You won’t have to question me about anything. Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.” What He is saying is, “You don’t have to ask Me anymore, disciples, you go directly to the Father, and you’ll take your questions to the Father.” So the key

thing is, not just their access, but what they are to go to the Father with—their questions, their perplexity, their concerns, their worries, their fears.

So pouring out your heart to God, I want to talk about three things we need to do when we pour out our heart to God. The first is express your cares, concerns, worries, and fears freely. He wants you to. This is what Jesus has accomplished. He has given us the opportunity to go into the throne room of God, our Heavenly Father, and pour out our hearts to Him. So this means when you have what happened on Friday, and you are tempted to fret because of evildoers, what are you supposed to do? You are supposed to wait on the Lord, to seek Him. What does that look like? It means you go to God with your questions and concerns openly and honestly. You don't go saying, "I know I'm not supposed to worry about this, and I'm just praising You Lord that You've got it all under control, and I pray that You will reverse the decision of the Supreme Court." I mean, it's okay for you to pray for that, but this is not what the prayer He is talking about here is. It means you go and you say, "Lord, if things continue like this, how are we going to make it?" You go to God with that. You say, "What is the world going to be like for my kids? Lord, I don't understand why this is happening." "I've been praying about this," maybe you've prayed about this almost every day since you knew that the Supreme Court was hearing this decision, going to be rendering this decision. "I've prayed, and I've asked You Lord to stop the bleeding of society. Why didn't you stop them from doing this?" This is saying, "Go to God with your questions just like that." That is what the psalmist did anyway. They are always saying, "How long, oh Lord?" "Why, oh Lord?" This is what God wants. Prayer is not us taking a laundry list, or a grocery list, and just reading it. I'm not saying you shouldn't have prayer lists. I think you should, but the way that you pray is not just to say—it's like, imagine a grocery list. "This is what we need at the store. We need cereal, milk, and so, Lord, this is what I need. I need cereal, milk, bacon, tomatoes, bread." We're making bacon and tomato sandwiches, apparently. That's where my heart is. "Lord, my heart's on bacon and tomato sandwiches."

We don't just recite requests in an impersonal way. That's not prayer. Prayer is a relationship. We go to our Father and we say, "Father, what I'm concerned about is this, and my heart is breaking over this. I don't know how. How can I stand up under the pressures that are going to come when I've got family members that may now pursue this kind of thing, or I've got friends that may now pursue homosexual marriage, and the questions that are going to come? What are we going to do? Lord, how do I handle this?" You go to God and you say those things to Him. You go to God and what is prayer? It's laying down the burdens of your heart before your Father. That's why he says in 1 Peter 5:7...

1 Peter 5:7 ~ casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Lay them down. That's where prayer starts. You have to, after you face life honestly, you go to God fervently, and the reason you're going fervently is because you've got all these burdens. That's what has driven you to prayer. One of the things that should encourage you as you go to prayer, moments like that, this is why Thanksgiving should be all along. Be anxious for nothing. What are you supposed to do with anxiety? But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. That's the passage we read earlier in Philippians 4. One of the things you can be thankful about when you are praying is, "Lord, thank You for this piece of news that came over the radio that has now led me to be burdened, so that I'm now seeking Your face, and I might not have been if everything had been fine. I probably wouldn't have been. Thank You." Express your cares, concerns, worries, and fears freely.

Sometimes you don't even know where to begin. Sometimes when I'm praying, I don't know where to begin. I know my heart is heavy and I feel overwhelmed, but I don't even know what I'm overwhelmed about. Do you ever feel like that? I don't know where to start, and you start right there. "Father, I don't know why I'm feeling like I'm feeling. I don't know what I even need. I don't know where to even start telling You what's wrong with me." Then the word of God informs you and we say, "Wait a minute. You know, and You've given Your Spirit, according to Romans 8:26, that the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought." Isn't that wonderful? He sent forth His Spirit in our hearts to teach us to pray, and when we can't even voice a word, the Spirit is groaning for us before the Father. He knows the mind of the Father, and the Father knows the mind of the Spirit. In other words, there's perfect communication. This is Romans 8:26-27. There's perfect communication between the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit is interceding for us before the Father, helping us to pray. So pour out your heart. Tell Him that. "I don't know where to begin, but I know I need You." That is the beginning point of real communion with your Heavenly Father. So first of all, pour out your heart to God. How do you do it? Express your cares, concerns, worries, and fears freely. Secondly, express your wants and desires openly. Jesus is very emphatic about this. He says:

John 16:23 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

“Listen, I want you to ask.” He’s commanding, “Ask.” Verse 24: *...ask and you will receive...* That’s an imperative command, and we’re to express our wants and desires openly. We’re sitting here with this burden. We start to cast it upon the Father. We lay it down, and we tell Him what we want. “Lord, I want You to send revival so that America turns around, and we repent, and the whole country turns around.” Start there. There’s nothing wrong with that request, but even if there is, start out expressing it to God. A lot of times I think, at least in my life, what I’ve done is I’ve tried to clean up my requests before I’ve made them. Like, the Lord’s over here, and it’s sort of like my prayer life at times has been like this. It’s supposed to be an open, transparent relationship with my Father, really telling Him what’s on my heart, and I know I can’t clean myself up. But I feel like what sometimes I’ve done is I’ve said, “Would You please wait outside the door? I’m going to work on things a little bit, and I know I shouldn’t really say this,” and so I start working on it. What I need to do is just go directly to Him, and I need to do it humbly, and I need to do it with more and more of the word of God filling my mind, because that’s how the Spirit works to correct me and change me. But the process starts with me being open and transparent with Him, and you express your wants and desires openly.

One of the most beautiful places that this is so powerfully made known is in the prayer life of Jesus. I want you to turn to Mark 14. Now, this is Gethsemane, and this is something to meditate on, because this is amazing. When you think about the fact that what Jesus prays for, He pours out His heart to the Father, and He expresses His wants and desires openly to the Father, even though what He wants and desires, He knows is not the Father’s will. That’s enough to kind of shake up our boxes that we get trapped in, because we believe the Bible teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have had an eternal plan of salvation that they’ve agreed upon, and yet look with me at what Jesus says. Verse 32:

Mark 14:32 ~ They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed.” 33 And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.

Mark tells us about Jesus’ emotional battle that He’s having. He experienced the pressures and the incredible stress and agony of facing the cross. Now, He did so perfectly, without sin, but it was real. The pressure and the difficulty was real. He began to be very distressed and troubled, and then listen to what He says to His dear friends, his three closest, Peter, James, and John:

Mark 14:34 ~ And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death;...

He said, “I’m almost so grieved, that I could die right now. Now, Jesus isn’t one given to hyperbole. He’s not like you or me that might say something out of term, like, “This is the worst day of my life,” when it’s really not that bad. He says:

Mark 14:34 ~ And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.” 35 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. 36 And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”

Why did He pray that? He prayed that because it was His Father’s desire for Him as the Man Christ Jesus to pour out His heart genuinely to the Father. He prayed that in Verse 36 because His Father wanted Him to pray that. He wanted Him to open His heart. The Father values His people. Isn’t that amazing that the Father was pleased with that prayer? In fact, Hebrews 5 tells you He was pleased with the prayer. In Hebrews 5:7-8 it says that in the days of His flesh, He offered up loud cries to His Father, to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Now He doesn’t end there, but He starts there. He starts with praying what’s really on His heart.

“I feel like, Father, I wish that there was another way. Find another way.” If Jesus did that, how could we not? Express your desires openly and honestly. That’s what your Father wants you to do, because if you don’t pour out your heart when your heart is full of grief, the only way God can fill it with joy is you’ve got to pour it out. If I have this cup and I want to fill it with something else, what do I have to do? I have to pour out what’s in it. And if you don’t pour out your heart, God can’t fill it. So prayer is beginning to pour it out. So there are three steps to pouring out your heart to God. First, express your cares and concerns, worries and fears freely. Secondly, express your wants and desires openly. And thirdly, express your submission sincerely. Prayer is not just about unloading. It’s about talking with your Father who loves you, but ultimately in a submissive, worshipful, and reverent disposition. Jesus says:

Mark 14:36 ~ ...“Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”

The heart that really knows God, says, “Lord, You know best. I would want You to do this, but You know what’s best, and so I surrender to You.” When we pour out our hearts to God like that, then He’s able to really work, when we’ve really laid our burdens down. And now we’re ready to do the second part of prayer, which is to look into the heart of God. You pour out your heart to God, seeking God fervently, pray, by pouring out your heart to God, and then looking into the heart of God.

B) Look into the Heart of God:

Back to John 16, how is it that it moves from the incredible grief and lament that Jesus says they’re going to feel in Verse 20, “You’re going to wail in agony. Your heart’s going to be filled with grief like a woman in labor,” and yet in Verse 24, “Your joy is made full. You don’t just have joy. You’re filled up with joy.” It comes because you see who God is. In Verses 25 to 28, what He describes is a transformed relationship with God.

John 16:25 ~ “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

Plainly and openly. The idea is that which is hidden is now open. What He’s saying is the real source of joy for you as you pour out your heart to God is that God will pour out His heart and reveal Himself to you. You look into the heart of God. In Verse 26 He says:

John 16:26 ~ In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf;

He’s saying, “Look, you’re going to ask in My Name, but I want you to understand that when you ask in My Name, you’re not really asking Me, and I’m not taking the request to the Father. No.”

John 16:27 ~ for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

You ask, and the Father will answer, because He Himself loves you. What happens in prayer is that you come to understand first of all as you look into the heart of God and you pour out your heart to God, you understand that the Father truly loves you, and God’s will is to show you that more, and more, and more. And the

burdens that drive you to prayer, and you pour out your heart to God, His desire is to let you look into His heart and see His Fatherly, perfect love, that He Himself truly loves you. I mean, you think about the wonder of it, that God cares about you and wants you to pour out your heart to Him in the first place. Why would He care about my petty concerns? I mean, I'm wrong-headed about what I'm even worried about. I shouldn't be thinking like this. I'm not seeing life rightly, but He wants me to come to Him in the same way that a parent wants their child to come to them. You don't get all discouraged and bent out of shape because your child comes to you selfishly as a little toddler and asks, "Mommy, I've got a problem and I need help. Daddy, I need you to help me." The parents are glad that they strung together, that they almost made a sentence with what they just said. They want Daddy. The child when he's scared, he doesn't run to a stranger. He runs to his daddy. Isn't that wonderful? And so when you're a parent and you now have a human being that does that, that runs to you like that, it fills your heart. You look at that child and you're so delighted that the child has come to you. He's saying, "This is why God calls Himself Father." He wants you to come openly and share your heart with Him, even though you haven't cleaned yourself up. He's going to clean you up. You can't clean yourself. He already knows that.

So what happens in prayer is our eyes are opened to see that the God of glory, the Lord who spoke and the world came into existence out of nothing, the God who fills the heavens, the God who is so great that the nations are but a drop in the bucket, that God who holds the universe in the palm of His hand, that God is to you, if you know Jesus Christ, if you've repented of your sins and placed your faith in the sufficiency of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, if you have turned to Christ in faith, that God tells you, "Call Me Father and come to Me." So you glory in the Father's love. Looking into the heart of God, you glory in the Father's love, and you also glory in the Son's love, because He talks about in this passage several times, "...if you ask for anything in My Name..." Verse 23.

John 16:24 ~ Until now you have asked for nothing in My name;

John 16:26 ~ In that day you will ask in My name,...

I think that implied in that is submission to God's will in the character of Christ. You don't just ask for anything. I mean, you may start there, but the Lord is going to straighten you out if you're asking for unbiblical things. *In My Name*, there's an element of submission, but it also means on the basis of all that Jesus has done. You come to God realizing the only reason I'm able to come to You is because of who Jesus is and what He's done, His love for me. It's an astounding thing.

The Old Testament, and this is where meditation helps us in our prayer life to grow, reflecting on the ways of God. Think about what an amazing thing it is that you can enter into the throne room of God. I can enter into the throne room of God with our concerns today. Imagine that you were an Israelite after the Exodus, when they set up the tabernacle system, and you understand that the tabernacle was the place, the tent of meeting. It was a tent where God met with man, and there was a fenced off area, a curtain around it. So there were the tabernacle courts, basically, that only spiritually clean people could go into. If you touched a dead animal or anything like that, you couldn't go in. There were certain restrictions that limited who had access even to the courts of God's tent. But then once you got into the courts of God's tent, that's as far as you could go unless you happened to be the select group of the Levites who were priests. The priests could minister from the altar and then walk into the tent of meeting. And at their appointed times, the select number could walk into the tent where God dwelt. But even then, they were separated from the place where God truly dwelt, by a veil. There was a place where God's presence truly dwelt. It was in that tent behind a veil that no one ever could go behind, save one person once a year, the high priest. On that day, the high priest could go into the presence of God bearing the blood of the offering, and pouring it out on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, but only one time a year, because a holy God cannot dwell with sinners like you and me. And this was a picture to show us that. It was so awesome, and the throne of God's glory was a throne of dread, a dreadful place.

In fact, the high priests, when they would go behind the veil, they had in their garments, bells, and it was customary for the high priest to as he would go from the Holy Place inside the tent behind the veil into the Holy of Holies, by himself of course, to have a rope tied around his ankle. And the other priests would stay outside the veil not daring to peer behind the veil, listening for the bells. If the bells ever stopped, it meant God had killed the high priest because of his sin. That's why the rope was there, because he would be pulled out by a rope. No one dared go behind the veil.

When Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary, when He breathed His last, Matthew's Gospel tells us that at that moment, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. The way is open because of Jesus. So when you go to God in His Name, and you realize I'm talking to the Lord of glory, He's hearing my prayers, He loves me as a Father, how can this be? It's because of Jesus. It's because of the wonder of my Savior, and I have a Savior that is my High Priest now, that can sympathize with me in my weakness, according to Hebrews 4, that He has been tempted in every way like me.

He's a friend that sticks closer than a brother. He understands me. He was tempted in every way so that He could then come alongside me in my tribulation and encourage me, and strengthen me, and pray for me. So you glory in the Son. What happened is you started pouring out burdens, and now you're glorying in the Father's love, you're glorying in the Son's love, and you're glorying in the Spirit's love, because if you're having a prayer time that started out moaning and groaning about what's happening in America, but now you are overwhelmed by the beauty of God, what you know is the Holy Spirit has been at work in your life in these moments. You are able to do that and to scale those heights, because the Spirit is mighty and He's at work in your life. So then you're glorying in the Father, you're glorying in the Son, you're glorying in the Spirit, and you're glorying in the fact that God loves you and wants to walk through life with you.

So He has ordained that you and I live in this day. Wouldn't you like to have lived 100 years ago, in some ways? It was better back then. It was really a lot worse in a lot of ways too, right? But you live, according to the word, in the day that God chose for you to live. Your Father, He set out this path for you. He loves you. He knows better. And by the time you finish praying, "I don't want to change anything, Lord. I'm glad that You're at work in society. What You're doing in our world is You're allowing the world to get darker so that the brightness of the Light of God's glory will shine brighter in His people." The world is going to see that this idea of homosexual marriage is not going to make them happy. It's not going to satisfy the heart, because God made them, and He made them male and female. But we don't need to be angry. We need to be clear and loving, and we need to set before them a standard and joy. We need to walk in joy. This is an opportunity we have as basically political conservatives for all of our political conservative friends who are probably really depressed. We shouldn't be depressed. In fact, there's an opportunity for an answer. "Hey, why are you not depressed? Why are you not ready to move to another country?" Well, that's a good question. Actually my citizenship is in another country. It's in Heaven.

So the Lord takes our grief and He turns it into joy, and our joy swallows it up, and we find ourselves praising God even for the affliction. That's why Paul says, "I glory in tribulation. I glory in my weaknesses, because when I find out how weak I am, it drives me to You, and then I find Your strength and Your sufficiency." How good it is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. That's what ought to be the song of our lives and what people see, the fragrance that comes from us. No matter how bad the world gets, what people ought to hear from you and me, and smell in our lives, is how wonderful it is to follow Christ.

Let's pray together...

Father, we thank You for the glory of the reality of salvation, that You have chosen for Yourself sinners to be Your dear children, and You have announced the day of Your favor, and You have ordained that the message of salvation go out across the earth to every creature. We're thankful, Lord, that You have allowed us to live in this day, and we're thankful that living in whatever day we would have ever lived in, the most important thing is to walk with You and to be with You in it. We marvel that You are a God, though You are so great, Your majesty beyond our comprehension, You're a God who delights to fellowship with redeemed sinners. You delight in Your children, and You do that because of Your One and Only Son who thrilled Your heart, the Lord Jesus. We pray that You would help us be people of prayer who find our delight in You. We pray these things in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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