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Grief Into Joy

John 16.16-22

Series: Signs of Life

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I. **Hide and Seek?**

- A. I love to play
 - 1. In fact, in one sense, I made a career an academia playing
 - a. Studying play
 - b. Teaching people how to play
 - c. Teaching other people how to teach people to play
 - 2. The philosophical framework I used to define my area of study in physical activity and sport sciences was described by some as play education
 - 3. You don't hear it often from theologians, but play is one of the defining characteristics of what it means to be human
 - a. That is, to be made in the image of God involves some form of play
 - b. That's because play is fundamentally creative
 - c. In which human beings, using the physical and intellectual capacities God has given them, interact with their environments
 - d. And cause those environments to change in various purposeful ways and meaningful ways
 - 4. We call it "recreation" – which is literally, re-creation
 - a. God is the Creator
 - b. We take God's materials and the capacities He has given us
 - c. And we re-create
- B. There are various forms of play
 - 1. I loved the physical activity forms of play – human movement as the driving characteristic
 - 2. But there are artistic forms of play
 - a. Visual arts
 - b. Musical expression
 - c. All are artistic forms of play
 - d. All forms of re-creation
- C. Play varies according to age and maturity
 - 1. Different kind of play when adults play games with highly complex rules and procedures
 - a. Compared to the kind of play that my grandchildren engage in
 - b. Which is simpler, more frivolous
 - 2. But we can have every confidence that my grandchildren will grow up into more complex games and learn to be just as vexed and frustrated as I am when I play golf

3. But it's all, in the final analysis, play
- D. I get the sense that Jesus likes to play too
 1. He likes to play games with His disciples
 2. And the game that He likes to play with them is not a great deal different than I liked to play when my grandchildren were newborns
 3. That He likes to play a cosmic version of hide and seek
 - a. That He is fond of playing peek-a-boo
- E. Games like hide and seek and peek-a-boo have significant value in human development
 1. Nearly every culture on the planet will find its parents with babies playing peek-a-boo
 - a. It teaches these nascent humans, like aliens having landed on planet earth, something about their very new environment, namely the permanence of objects
 - b. That even when parents seem to disappear, they don't cease to exist
 - c. They're just hiding; but they all return
 2. But the whole process is great fun
 - a. The babies love it
 - b. The parents love it even more! Grandparents even more!
 - c. Laughter abounds
 - d. All the while the babies are learning about their world
- F. It's interesting that in this episode in John 16, there doesn't seem to be much laughter
- G. **John 16:16–18** (NASB95) —
 1. 16 “A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.”
 2. 17 Some of His disciples then said to one another, “What is this thing He is telling us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father’?”
 3. 18 So they were saying, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is talking about.”
- H. The disciples are not laughing
 1. They're perplexed; they're confused
 2. But Jesus is a wise parent – and He understands that His boys are perplexed
 - a. So He does for His disciples what peek-a-boo does for babies
 - b. He gives them comfort and encouragement
- I. **John 16:19–22** (NASB95) —
 1. 19 Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’?”
 2. 20 “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.
 3. 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.
4. 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.
- J. First, let’s see if we can figure out why the disciples are so confused and distraught
1. Why Jesus’ version of “now you see Me, now you don’t, now you see Me” has their heads spinning
 2. Turns out that Jesus’ teaching has layers of meaning
 - a. All of which are important
 - b. All of which contain wonderful, extraordinary reasons for joy
 - c. But all of which challenge the faith of the disciples
 - d. And provoke them to trust Jesus even in the midst of their perplexity

II. Layers

A. Death and Resurrection

1. The most obvious layer of meaning is Jesus death and resurrection
 - a. Remember, He’s tried to teach them that He had to go to Jerusalem, be handed over to the chief priests and teachers of the law, then to the Romans – and be crucified
 - b. And then, on the third day – He would be raised from the dead
 - c. They would be killed, buried – they wouldn’t see Him
 - d. And then they would see Him
2. Now they haven’t been the best students of this instruction
 - a. He told them on multiple occasions that this was going to happen
 - b. And they just couldn’t swallow it
3. Remember Peter!
 - a. **Matthew 16:21** (NASB95) — 21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
 - b. **Matthew 16:22** (NASB95) — 22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”
4. Don’t you just love Peter?
 - a. “God forbid it, Lord!”
 - b. Another way of saying, “God forbid it, God!”
 - c. God incarnate is staring Him in the face, and what does Peter do – he rebukes Him!
5. Moments earlier Peter had given this glorious testimony
 - a. “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”
 - b. **Matthew 16:17–19** (NASB95) — 17 And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
 - c. 18 “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

- d. 19 “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”
6. And then...
- a. **Matthew 16:23** (NASB95) — 23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”
7. We don’t want to be too hard on Peter
- a. They only thing Peter did differently than the other disciples was that he opened his mouth
 - b. The others thought the same thing
8. They did not believe Jesus when He told them He was going to die, be buried, and then, on the third day, be raised from the dead
- a. They would not see Him
 - b. Then three days later, they would see Him
9. That’s glorious!
- a. Isn’t that glorious?
 - b. Isn’t that worth rejoicing that Jesus rose from the grave?
 - c. That even though they witnessed the gruesome torture, beatings, and crucifixion
 - d. That He is risen!
10. Is the resurrection meaningful to you? Is it cause for rejoicing – not just for Jesus, who lives – but for you believers?
- a. If there is no resurrection; if Christ has not been raised – then we’re all toast
 - b. There is no salvation
 - c. Our lives on this planet are just a blip on a cosmic radar screen
 - d. Our beings are no more than mere molecules; bits of cosmic dust
 - e. **1 Corinthians 15:13–17** (NASB95) — 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.
 - f. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.
 - g. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.
11. Rejoice that Christ is raised!
- a. Rejoice that He is alive!
 - b. Rejoice that He conquered death!
 - c. Rejoice that in the resurrection, your sins have been paid, you have been justified!
 - d. Rejoice that you are freed from the bondage of your sin!
12. They would rejoice!

- a. But they had a hard time seeing the joy through the perplexity of suffering
 - 13. That's one layer of meaning
 - a. "A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me."
 - 14. But that's probably not the only meaning – or even the primary meaning that Jesus had in mind
- B. **Ascension and Pentecost**
 - 1. Remember, this whole section of John – Chapter 14-16 – has been about the promise of the Holy Spirit
 - 2. Just in this Chapter Jesus put it this way
 - a. **John 16:5-7** (NASB95) — 5 "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'"
 - b. 6 "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.
 - c. 7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.
 - d. John 16:10 (NASB95) — 10 "... because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;"
 - 3. After the resurrection, Jesus showed Himself to the disciples on multiple occasions
 - a. And even to the broader group of disciples – Paul says more than 500 believers saw Him
 - b. And then, He was taken up; taken up to the Father
 - 4. **Acts 1:9** (NASB95) — 9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
 - a. Now they see Him; now they don't
 - b. And they stare, perplexed
 - 5. Why perplexed?
 - a. Jesus told them He was going to the Father
 - b. And in fact, He told them it was to their advantage that He would go to the Father
 - c. Why?
 - d. Because He would send them the Holy Spirit
 - 6. We've seen in recent messages – the Holy Spirit would come with extraordinary ministries
 - a. To both the world
 - b. And to believers
 - 7. Believers
 - a. Guide them into all the truth – give them the gospel, our NT!
 - b. He would glorify Christ – remind them of everything Christ said and did
 - c. He would take what the Father had given to Christ and give to them!

- d. He would reveal Christ to them by indwelling them
- e. With the Spirit of Christ Himself!
- 8. The resurrected Christ would be taken up – and they would no longer see Him
 - a. But then, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came
 - b. And indwelt believers
 - c. And then they would see Jesus with spiritual eyes
 - d. With the eyes of faith
 - e. They would see Jesus in a way they could never have imagined
 - f. They would experience the sanctifying, indwelling, righteousness-infusing Jesus Christ
- 9. And that is a glorious thing!
 - a. Do you think that is a glorious thing?
 - b. Is that something in which to rejoice?
- 10. If you don't – I don't know if you're a Christian
- 11. **John 16:16** (NASB95) — 16 “A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.”
 - a. You see Him now!
 - b. Do you?
 - c. With the eyes of faith, do you see Him?
 - d. With spiritual eyes – with the eyes that the Spirit gave you when you were born again – do you see Him?
- 12. If you do – you must surely rejoice
- C. **Indwelling and Parousia**
 - 1. Based on the context of this section of John – section about the promise of the Holy Spirit – I think that's probably the primary meaning Jesus has in mind
 - a. But there is yet another
 - 2. Jesus indwells us now – by His Spirit
 - a. But there is still a sense in which Jesus is hidden
 - b. He's there – we see Him with the eyes of faith
 - c. But our sin and our frailty obscure our vision of Jesus
 - d. Obscure Him from others as well
 - 3. The theologians used to refer to God as Deus Absconditus – the hidden God
 - a. There is a sense that Jesus is cloaked
 - b. Just as in His incarnation, He deity was cloaked in His humanity
 - c. He now cloaked in our humanity
 - d. We are His temple, His dwelling place
 - e. Individually and collectively as the Church
 - f. But our vision of Him is fuzzy, obscure
 - 4. “A little while, and you will no longer see Me...”
 - a. We do, but we don't – not fully
 - 5. But even that is a temporary hiddenness
 - 6. **Parousia** – **Gk word for the coming of Christ** – His second coming

7. Used in Matthew 24 to describe the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven
 - a. **Matthew 24:27** (NASB95) — 27 “For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.”
 8. He may be hidden now
 - a. But He will appear; He will be hidden no longer
 - b. **Revelation 1:7** (NASB95) — 7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.
 9. And when He comes, there will be joy in heaven
 - a. **Revelation 5:12–13** (NASB95) — 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”
 10. Will you rejoice at His revealing, His coming?
 - a. Are you longing for His appearing (2 Timothy)
 11. **John 16:16** (NASB95) — 16 “A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.”
 - a. A little while – doesn’t seem like a little while
 - b. But it is – in the grand expanse of eternity, it is just a little while until Jesus returns
- D. Layers of meaning
1. Death and Resurrection
 2. Ascension and Pentecost
 3. Indwelling and Parousia
 4. All occasions for great joy and rejoicing

III. **Reasons to Weep**

- A. But that’s not to say there weren’t reasons to weep
 1. Jesus doesn’t minimize their weeping
 - a. He doesn’t dismiss their distress
 - b. There is no resurrection without the crucifixion
 - c. There is no redemption without suffering
- B. **Personal loss** they would suffer when Jesus was taken from them
 1. These people had left everything to follow Jesus
 - a. They had left family and business and houses for Jesus
 - b. And then He would be gone!
 2. They were grieving – just as we grieve when we lose a loved one
 3. Remember – it is a glorious thing when a believer goes to be with the Lord
 - a. But it is a time of loss for us here

- b. It is a time of grieving
 - c. And in the case of Jesus – it was the incarnate Son of God who was lost to them for a time
 - 4. They had reason to mourn
 - C. **Attitude of the world**
 - 1. The world – the anti-God system antagonistic to God and to His people
 - a. They think they have won
 - b. The world is rejoicing when Jesus was crucified
 - 2. And that just is like rubbing salt into a wound for believers
 - a. Like an opposing football player taunting the players on the other team when they score a touchdown
 - 3. The world figured they'd gotten Jesus out of the way
 - a. Erased Him from the planet
 - b. Never again to be vexed by this man who claimed to be God
 - 4. That's sticking the knife in and twisting it for the believer
 - D. **Disappointments** and dashed hopes
 - 1. That had staked so much on this Jesus
 - 2. Road to Emmaus: "We had hoped He was the One who was going to redeem Israel"
 - a. All seemed like a pipe dream when Jesus was taken from them

IV. **From Grief to Joy**

- A. But all of those reasons to weep would turn to joy in the resurrection
 - 1. **John 16:20** (NASB95) — 20 "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."
- B. How is that possible?
 - 1. Jesus uses an analogy even more powerful than a game of hide and seek
 - a. He uses a woman giving birth
- C. **John 16:21** (NASB95) — 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."
- D. I confess that I really don't know much about this
 - 1. Hard to imagine what a woman goes through in order to have a baby
 - 2. Jean's first obstetrician was describing the drugs they might use for a woman in labor
 - a. He of course had seen dozens, hundreds of women, giving birth
 - b. And he said if it was him, they'd have to give him the drugs the moment he found out he was pregnant
 - 3. Another fellow once observed that he could understand how a woman could go through pregnancy and childbirth, enduring the pain
 - a. But what he couldn't understand was how she could do it again
- E. Jesus – once the baby is born – "she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world"
 - 1. Again – I'm no authority on the subject

- a. But Jesus says, the joy is so great that the pain is forgotten
- 2. “Your grief will be turned into joy”
 - a. The very thing that caused you grief – will now become the source of joy
- 3. The crucifixion and the resurrection – together account for our redemption
 - a. And we rejoice!
- 4. The ascension and Pentecost – together provide for the indwelling presence and power of Jesus in our lives
 - a. And we rejoice!
- 5. The indwelling and the Parousia, the coming – together bring redemptive history to its conclusion in glory
 - a. And we rejoice!

V. **Imperishable Joy**

- A. And it’s not a short-lived, temporary joy
 - 1. Like we experience so frequently in the ups and downs of our lives
- B. It’s an imperishable joy
 - 1. **John 16:22** (NASB95) — 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.”
- C. No one – will take away your joy!
 - 1. No circumstance will rob you of the joy of the Lord
 - 2. No disappointment is too great to steal your pleasure in God
 - 3. No antagonistic world can destroy your delight in Jesus
- D. **Romans 8:35–39** (NASB95) — 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - 1. “No one will take your joy away from you”
- E. You may be perplexed, you may be confused
 - 1. You may have a hard time seeing Christ right now
 - 2. But that’s only temporary
 - 3. You will see Him
 - 4. Your grief will be turned to joy
 - 5. And no one will take your joy away from you