



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for April 4, 2010  
Released on Wednesday, March 31, 2010**

**"Great Loss and New Life" (Easter)**

**Lesson Text:** John 16:16–24; 20:11–16

**Background Scripture:** John 13:21–30; 16:16–24; 20:11–16

**Devotional Reading:** Psalm 5

**John 16:16–24**

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

**John 20:11–16**

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

### **TODAY'S AIM**

**Facts:** summarize Jesus' predictions regarding grief and joy in relation to His death and resurrection.

**Principle:** to acknowledge that Jesus is alive and has already paid the price for our sin.

**Application:** to show that when we recognize the truth of Jesus' resurrection and accept His death for our sins, we will have new life.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The apostles gathered with Jesus in the upper room in Jerusalem. Together they celebrated the Passover, the ancient feast commemorating how God brought His people out of bondage in Egypt (see Exodus 12). In at least two ways the events of that night emphasized the sense of community these men shared.

First, they gathered as faithful members of a nation that was forged out of the trials of slavery and deliverance through the Red Sea. Their ancestors had gone to Egypt few in number, but came out 400 years later as a great multitude. They would always look back to their deliverance from Egypt as the time when they became a nation.

Second, Jesus and the apostles came to this point in their lives with a strong bond of sharing in a smaller, special community. They had spent three years together, traveling and preaching, healing and casting out demons. They had come to recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, and they had pledged their lives to Him.

It is in this tender setting, however, that Jesus uttered alarming words. He was leaving, and they could not come with Him. He was, in fact, going to die. They would mourn His loss and be overcome with sorrow. Jesus promised that there would yet be cause for rejoicing in the future, but how could this be?

### **INTRODUCTION**

The embryonic community of faith that we have observed in the books of Jonah and Ruth reached its full development only through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The acceptance of Gentiles into the Israelite community foreshadowed the complete incorporation of both equally into a new entity—the church.

The cornerstone of the Christian faith is the teaching on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is absolutely essential to individual salvation and the formation of the church. Yet this truth was the most difficult for the disciples of Jesus to grasp. Whenever He introduced the subject to prepare them, He met either vigorous objection or total lack of understanding.

The lack of comprehension still existed as Jesus approached the cross. He had to explain to the Twelve what lay beyond His death. Even after His resurrection, He had to counter the unbelief of Mary Magdalene and other loyal followers. May our faith be strengthened by the truths He taught them.

### **A LOOK BEYOND DEATH (John 16:16-24)**

#### **1. To what was Jesus referring when He spoke of being absent for a while and then present (John 16:16)?**

Jesus has already warned His disciples that in Jerusalem His enemies will kill Him (see Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33). But no matter how many times He says it, the

disciples do not seem to be able to accept it (see Mark 9:32). Now Jesus tells them again, in words that are somewhat mysterious.

In *a little while*, in less than 24 hours, the disciples *shall not see* Him. While they will later understand how these words point to His death and burial, for the moment they are unable or unwilling to grasp the meaning. And then *a little while* later, they *shall see* Him *again*. Although they do not understand it now, Jesus will conquer the tomb, rise from the dead, and appear to them.

## **2. What did the disciples discuss “among themselves” (vs. 17,18)?**

Afraid or ashamed to let Jesus hear them, the *disciples* have a nervous discussion *among themselves*. *What is this?* they ask one another. What can He mean? Since they are unable or unwilling to accept the literal intent of Jesus’ words, they can only grope for some other meaning. The disciples seem to have special difficulty with one part of what Jesus says, as they single out the words *because I go to the Father* (see also John 16:5).

Since we live on this side of the cross, we can understand at least part of Jesus’ words without difficulty: He will be taken from the disciples in death, and then He will be restored to them via resurrection.

The disciples continue to press the point with one another (v. 18). What does Jesus mean? If this unwelcome separation is going to happen in just *a little while*, will Jesus leave them tonight? tomorrow? When will this unwelcome departure take place?

Ultimately they concede that none of them knows what the words mean. This is not the first time they have failed to understand what Jesus intends nor will it be the last.

## **3. In what cases, if any, should we take our questions and concerns only to Jesus in prayer and Bible study as opposed to trying to work out a solution with the help of other people?**

If the answer to our problem can be taken straight from the pages of the Bible, then there may be no reason to involve anyone else. But many times we can benefit from drawing on the life experiences, specialized education, Bible knowledge, and fresh perspectives of others. Sometimes God chooses to speak to us through our fellow Christians.

However, we should be careful not to fall into the mistake the disciples made. Rather than turning to the one with the answers, they simply were pooling their ignorance (which should not be confused with group Bible study). Helpful as it may be, the counsel of other people should never be a substitute for time with Jesus in prayer and personal Bible study.

## **4. How did the sorrow of Jesus' death turn into joy for His own (vs. 19,20)?**

Jesus is aware of the uneasy, private argument that is going on among the disciples. He knows they are *desirous to ask him*, so He brings their reluctance out into the open.

So He repeated, with slight variation, the issue they could not solve—how He would go away for a short time and then reappear. Ironically, He did not answer their question directly. He did not tell them again that He was going to die and then rise again. This was not the need of the moment.

Jesus knew His disciples had a deeper problem that He had to address. In their uncertainty about the future, they had sunk into deep sadness and gloom (cf. Mark 14:19; John 16:6). So He sought to reassure them that future events would turn sorrow into joy. With His formula, “*verily, verily*” (John 16:20), which He used when

introducing something especially important, He gave His word that their gloom would pass.

Jesus did not minimize the grief that lay ahead, telling them that they would experience weeping and lamenting: These words stress both the deep grief that mourners felt and the outward expression of it. The disciples would experience this to the full at the crucifixion and in the hours of hopelessness that would follow.

While they would be plunged into sorrow, the world would rejoice (John 16:20). Here the word "world" speaks of people who, under Satan's dominion, are hostile to Christ (cf. 7: 7; 15:18; 16:11). Jesus' crucifixion would be the most joyous moment for Jesus' enemies. They would think that they were at last rid of their chief rival. Now they could celebrate!

### **5. How did Jesus illustrate the change from sorrow to joy in His disciples' experience (vs. 21,22)?**

To illustrate His point, Jesus compares the coming crisis with *a woman* giving birth (see also Isaiah 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Micah 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:3). When *she is in travail*, in the final hours of labor that lead to the moment of delivery, she has pain and *sorrow*. But finally the baby comes, and the tears of *anguish* turn into tears of *joy*. The mother's birth pains are swept away by the delight of welcoming her child *into the world*.

In the next few hours, the disciples will experience a flood of emotions: confusion, fear, panic, and utter despair. Within moments, Judas will leave to betray Jesus. The others will forsake Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. In a courtyard near Jesus' trial, Peter will deny Him and then rush out to weep bitterly. The next day they will watch as Jesus is crucified; He will be dead by late afternoon. Can there possibly be joy after all this?

But Jesus promised that He would see them again (v. 22), and their hearts would rejoice. He would be victorious over the tomb, and when they saw Him their joy would overwhelm their previous grief. This joy would be permanent; nobody would be able to take it from them. Never again would they find their fondest expectations dashed. Jesus would never die again (Rom. 6:9,10; Heb. 7:24,25). Persecutions would come, but even they would not dampen their joy (Acts 5:41,42).

### **6. What new form did prayer take after Jesus' resurrection (vs. 23,24)?**

Looking beyond His death and resurrection, Jesus told His disciples, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing." "Day" should be taken as the indefinite time following His resurrection, ascension. *In that day* probably refers to the time after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Therefore, they will not be able to ask Him anything in person. But in the *name* of Jesus they will have the right to *ask the Father* directly. At their request *He will give* them the power to work miracles (compare Acts 3:1-10) and even raise the dead (see Acts 9:36-41).

Decades later, the apostle John will confirm that Christians have the right to go directly to the throne of God in prayer. In 1 John 5:14,15 he assures us of two wonderful truths: (1) God hears us, and (2) He will grant the requests that are according to His will.

The disciples have *asked nothing* in Jesus' *name* up to this point (John 16:24). But henceforth they and all other Christians are given the right to approach God using the authority of God's own Son. *Ask, and ye shall receive* is the blessed promise that attends every prayer (see Matthew 7:7-11). This is the promise that brings *joy* to God's people.

### **AN IRREFUTABLE PROOF OF RESURRECTION (John 20:11-16)**

## **7. Who was Mary Magdalene, and why was she devoted to Jesus (John 20:11)?**

Early on Sunday morning, the third day after Jesus' death and burial, *Mary Magdalene* is at the tomb.

This account of Jesus' resurrection focuses on the experience of *Mary Magdalene*, one of several women who had been at the cross and now had come to Jesus' tomb (cf. Mark 15:40,41, 47; 16:1,2). She was deeply devoted to Him because He had delivered her from satanic bondage (Luke 8:2).

When the women found the stone removed from the tomb entrance, *Mary* assumed someone had stolen Jesus' body and ran to inform Peter and John (John 20:1,2). These two ran to the grave, saw the evidence of Jesus' resurrection, and returned home (vs. 3-10). But *Mary* came back to the tomb and stood outside, weeping (v. 11). She also looked inside, perhaps to be sure His body was not there.

## **8. What did Mary assume when she saw the empty tomb (vs. 12,13)?**

As she peered into the tomb, *Mary* saw "two angels in white," the same ones described in Luke as "two men ... in shining garments" (24:4).

But *Mary Magdalene* was not impressed with their presence in Jesus' tomb or with their white garments. When they asked, "Woman, why weepst thou?" (John 20:13), she did not ask who they were or why they were there. She was preoccupied with one thing: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

We can sympathize with *Mary* in her grief. Part of it was due to the Jewish abhorrence of any act that would desecrate a corpse. She had wanted to participate in honoring Jesus' body one final time, and grave robbers had deprived her of this privilege! Furthermore, He was her Lord.

## **9. Why was it incongruous for Mary to be mourning at Jesus' empty tomb (vs. 14, 15)?**

*Mary* now turned away from the tomb and saw another figure standing there. It was Jesus, but she did not recognize Him. It is possible that this was because of her tears or because she simply did not expect Jesus to be there. But more likely there was something about His resurrection appearance that sometimes kept Him from being recognized or that supernaturally hindered people from knowing Him.

This seems to have been the case when Jesus joined the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke 24:16, 31). It may also have occurred when He appeared to those who went fishing (John 21:4), when He came to the upper room (Luke 24:37), and when the disciples saw Him in Galilee (Matt. 28:17).

Jesus asked *Mary* the same question the angels had asked: "Why weepst thou?" (John 20:15). Then He added, "Whom seekest thou?" The use of "whom," not "what," should have made her think. She had been looking for a corpse, not a live person. She should have sought *Him*, not *it*.

Not recognizing Jesus, she assumed He was the gardener. Still attached to her theory that His body had been removed, she asked for information. If the gardener had taken it, where could she find it?

## **10. What are some of the things that may cloud our vision so that we are not fully aware of Christ in our lives? How do we overcome these?**

For a variety of possible reasons, *Mary* did not recognize the risen Jesus at first. Like *Mary*, we often find that grief and stress can greatly cloud our perception and make God seem distant even when He is near. Sometimes we have been so affected

by a secular worldview that we don't really expect that God has the power to work in dramatic and unusual ways to transform a bad situation rapidly.

We can also see ourselves in Mary's effort to "fix" the situation—she felt that it was up to her to find Jesus' body and bury Him properly, and she thought that it had to be done right away. Our frantic efforts to control a situation may cause us to overlook the fact that God has a solution well in hand, and our job is to watch to see what He will do.

### **11. How did Mary finally come to recognize Jesus (v. 16)?**

A single word jolts *Mary* to reality. When Jesus addresses her by name, she suddenly recognizes the familiar sound of that voice. Now she turns around completely to face Jesus. Then she too uttered a single Aramaic word, "Rabboni," which John translated "Master" (or "Teacher"). Mary now shows both that she recognizes who Jesus is and that she honors Him as her teacher. (When we see the word *Master* in the *King James Version*, we often should think in terms of a "schoolmaster.")

Mary's joyful discovery is the discovery of all Christians. She meets the risen Jesus in person; we meet the risen Jesus in our spirits, and we recognize Him for who He really is. We worship Him as the Savior who has conquered sin and death. We acknowledge Him as our Lord. All the pain and defeat of this life are swallowed up by the joy of His resurrection.

### **12. In addition to hope for an eternal future in Heaven, what power does Jesus' resurrection give us today for our work on earth?**

Jesus' resurrection shows us that His words are true and backed up by the mighty power of the life-giving God. All the power of evil was impotent to keep the Son of God in the grave. Whatever our challenges, sorrows, or temptations may be, we can know that the power of God is immensely greater than anything Satan can throw at us, that all God's promises to us will surely come true. We know that our eternal relationship with God is not something only for the future, but something that we experience today.

## **PRACTICAL POINTS**

- 1.** Jesus' words may at times be confusing, but they are always true (John 16:16-18).
- 2.** The all-knowing Jesus invites our questions and is ready to reveal what we need to know (John 16:19; cf. Deut. 29:29).
- 3.** Trust God, for He will turn today's brief sorrows into tomorrow's lasting joys (John 16:20-22; cf. Rom. 8:18).
- 4.** Asking in Jesus' name presumes we know that Jesus would approve of our request (John 16:23,24).
- 5.** Trust in God does not preclude tears and sorrow (20:11-13).
- 6.** Jesus' self-revelation always brings clarity (vs. 14-16).

## **CONCLUSION**

### **A. We're in This Together!**

The saddest moments of Jesus' final day of life involved episodes of solitude and isolation. Judas went off alone from the upper room to betray Him. Jesus prayed alone in the garden while His disciples slept. The disciples forsook Jesus, leaving Him to face the trials alone. But "aloneness" can be emotional and spiritual as well as physical. Peter was surrounded by people outside a trial of Jesus, but Peter's denials isolated him. Jesus' followers shared a common grief at His death, but grief may be intensely isolating as each experiences loss in a personal way.

Mary did not remain in this state. Just as Jesus promised, sorrow turned to joy! Once Mary knew the good news, she could not allow others to remain isolated in their personal grief. So she rushed back to the other believers so they could rejoice together.

### **B. The Victory of the Empty Tomb**

The disciples in the upper room could not imagine how anything good could come from the absence of Jesus. During and after the crucifixion, they could not imagine how any sorrow that deep could ever turn to joy. They could not imagine anything but defeat. Their joy came when Jesus won a great victory by rising from the dead. He proved that death is not the end. He proved that sin is not a fatal blot, but a stain that is washed away by His blood. He proved that the promises He made would be kept.

In the light of the great victory of the empty tomb, God's people can learn to face pain together. We can learn to put confidence in the promises God gives to us, expectantly ready to share joy together. The hope of resurrection—both Christ's and ours—is the promise of shared life in eternity.

### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, we praise You for raising Jesus from the dead. We ask You for greater confidence in the victory that belongs to Your people. Please help turn all our pains and sorrows into eternal joy. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

Experience the joy of the empty tomb again for the first time.

### **ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON**

In our lesson next week we will explore what to do with the new life that we have received. We will explore together how we can live daily in love in the light of the new life that we learned about this week. Study 1 John 2:9-11; 15-17  
"Living in the Light of Love."

### **LESSON SUMMARIZED BY**

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