

Take Heart

John 16:23-33 (v. 33)

Introduction

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. – Declaration of Independence of the United States of America.

It is human nature to want to be happy. When we are sad, our friends tell us, “Cheer up. Don’t worry; be happy,” as if we could turn happiness on and off with a switch. The truth is, even as Christians, the things of this world can get us down, even depressed. Sorrow and sadness are contagious. In these times, Jesus comes to us and says, “Take heart.” But He is not just saying, “Don’t worry; be happy.” Let’s take a closer look at **verse 33** of our Gospel lesson.

[Jesus said,] “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Who Is Speaking? The Word

First, who is speaking? Of course, it is Jesus. John tells us (read **John 1:1-5**). John is calling Jesus the “Word.” **Verses one** and **two** say that He was in the beginning with God, and He was God. The Word *is* God, but He is *with* God. He is the second Person of the Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit. **Verse 3** says that all things were made by Him; He is the Creator. **Verse 4** says He is the Source of life and light. And **verse 5** says that He is stronger than all evil. His light cannot be overcome by darkness and His life cannot be overcome by death. And here, He makes us a promise. It’s one thing to have a family member or close friend promise you something. You know they will keep it *if they can*. But when the Lord of the universe makes a promise, you know He will keep it, and nothing can stop Him from doing so.

His Promise

But what is His promise to us? It’s two-fold—He promises we will have tribulation in the world and that we can find peace in Him. Did you think you could somehow avoid suffering and tribulation in the world? Think again. They say there are two certainties in the world—death and taxes. But, especially for the Christian, there is one other—tribulation. Here’s how it works. We live in a fallen world. Satan is the prince of this world, and he hates everything God loves. So, he hates us and causes us as much trouble as he can. In **Revelation 12**, we read about a woman and a dragon. The woman gave birth to a male Child who would rule the earth. The dragon tried to eat Him, but the Child was taken up into heaven before the dragon could touch Him. Then the dragon made war on the woman and her offspring. The Child is Christ, the dragon is Satan, and the Woman is God’s church, first of the Old Testament, as she is Israel giving birth to Jesus. Then she is the New Testament church and her “offspring” are individual Christians. Satan tried to get to Jesus while He was on earth but couldn’t. After Jesus ascended to heaven, Satan saw he couldn’t hurt Jesus directly, so he turned his attention to the church, who is what the woman now represents. Satan is constantly attacking the church as a whole and individual Christians. Yes, we will have tribulation in this life. It’s guaranteed.

His Peace

But to offset the tribulation of the world, Jesus says we can have peace in Him. The key here is that our peace is *in Him*. This doesn't mean God is going to iron everything out in our life and take away the problems we have with the world. This world remains fallen, in the control of Satan, and opposed to God and His will. If you are at peace with the world, that's a red flag. Check yourself, come to Christ, confess your sin, and receive His absolution. The peace we have in Christ is peace with God. Being in Christ means being covered with His blood, clothed in His righteousness. Because of our sin, we are at war with God. By covering our sin with His blood and clothing us in His righteousness, Christ reconciles us with the Father, giving us peace with God, putting an end to our war with Him. This is the peace the world cannot take away. This is the peace that will last for eternity. And this peace can only be found in Christ.

His Presence

We get this peace in the presence of Christ. We find His presence with us in Word and Sacrament. He washes us clean in the waters of Baptism. He works salvation in His Word. We receive His very own body and blood in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. As He gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, He gives us His peace, so that we can **TAKE HEART** and say, "Alleluia! Christ is Risen!"

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
