

Sorrow will turn into joy

Written by By Bill Emmerling Pastor-Gallup Christian Church
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“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.” John 16:20 (ESV)

Our congregation has recently been presented with ‘opportunities’ for sorrow, such as the death of a beloved member of the congregation, an accident which left a grandson with severe burns over his body, etc. While the above text was not planned to time with these events (at least not by this pastor), God’s timing brought this text when it was needed.

It is not common for God to allow events to bring pain and suffering in place of things we thought were for our “good.” If we accept what God has in mind for us, He moves in a greater way through our sorrow and pain. Perhaps it is the death of a loved one that we struggle to get past, just as the disciples are about to experience with the death of Jesus, all their hopes and dreams dashed to the ground as he hung upon the cross. Yet the wonderful plan of God was not to be accomplished without this seed being planted in their sorrow.

In verse 21-22, Jesus uses one of the most vivid illustrations available that crosses time and culture, the pain and labor of childbirth. I recall when our first child was coming into this world, ironically on Labor Day.

As a young husband and father, I was deeply troubled by the long labor, especially when near the end I watched my wife’s strength appear to ebb away, ebbing enough to cause me to

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wonder if I was about to lose both my wife and the child within her. Yet in one tremendous final effort, the child came forth.

My fears and concerns suddenly melted away as the midwives confirmed that all was well with both mother and child. My wife's countenance changed as our child was placed upon her breast. This is a scene that men and women have experienced since the beginning. It was one with which the disciples certainly would have been familiar as a father, son, brother.

While the disciples grieved at the extreme measures taken as the solution for our sins, JOY is found in knowing that Jesus LIVES, and our sins are remembered no more than the labor of producing a child. The moment of the labor of forgiving sins is NOT forgotten, but the JOY of freedom from the bondage of sin overwhelms the price that was paid. The forgiveness of our sins gives us access to the Father.

Romans 8:31-39 comes to mind, which includes:

"He [God the Father] who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"

And, *"For I am sure that neither death nor life ... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

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