

The Joy

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0 : 0 0] We'll continue our series tonight in the farewell speech of Christ from that passage in John 16 that Derek read for us. If you've been around the series, we've said this many times, but there's just goodness, there's just so much here.

So for that reason, we're going to look at this text in two sermons. We'll add a little bit more text to it next week. So this week we're going to focus on the first half of the text we read and next week we're going to talk about joy.

And the reason we're doing that is because in the context of the farewell speech of Christ, there are two questions that are continually being answered by Jesus for the disciples.

And we've mentioned this the last few sermons, and the two questions are this. What's the meaning of the cross? What's the theology of the cross? The first question that Jesus is answering for them throughout John 13 to 17 is what's the theology of the cross?

Why is Jesus going to the cross? And the second thing is derivative of that. It's what's the mission of the disciples when he goes? In other words, it's what's the theology of the cross and who are the disciples supposed to become in light of the cross?

[1 : 0 9] And there's a two-fold answer in this passage to that two-fold question. And so this week we're going to look at the theology of the cross in this passage. What's Jesus getting at with this riddle about what we should think, what we should know about God and the cross, and then next week we'll look at who are we supposed to become in light of that?

And the answer is that we are supposed to have joy. So this week theology of the cross and next week looking at lessons about joy. So first, this week, lessons about theology.

What does it mean that Jesus is leaving? What does it mean that Jesus is going to the cross? And there's three lessons that I want to draw out of this text for you tonight. Two sub-lessons and one main one that we'll get to at the end.

And the main one, I'm going to tell you the main one up front. The main one is this, that I'm going to put it simply and then we'll complicate it later. Good things come out of bad things. The main lesson is good things come out of bad things.

All right. The first thing, you'll have noticed when Derek read the passage that the first three verses are a bit of a riddle. The disciples don't understand what's going on.

[2 : 1 8] And this is the constant theme throughout John's Gospel. Nobody ever understands Jesus and John's Gospel and this is the climax of it. Right before he's about to go to Gethsemane, again, he's been talking about the cross the whole time and the last thing I say to him is, what are you saying?

What are you saying with this talk of you're going and you're coming and you're coming again and all this stuff? The disciples are perplexed.

And the first lesson is very simple. The first lesson about theology is very simple. It's this, take comfort. Fear not because the disciples don't get what Jesus is saying either.

You see, they've been traveling with him for three years. They, you know, at the end of the John's Gospel, he tells us that there are millions of things that he could have put in this book that Jesus did.

All the books in the world couldn't contain what Jesus did. They saw it. They saw it all. They were with him the whole time. And it comes to the end of his life, the very last bit of it, and they still have no idea.

- [3 : 22] They still don't understand what he's talking about. What are you saying with this stuff? And it's been a constant theme throughout the whole of John 13 to 17. Now the principle is not just before Jesus' death and resurrection, but it happens in the New Testament after Jesus' death and resurrection.

The principle, this principle of misunderstanding appears in 2 Peter 3:16. Peter, if you remember, is writing about Paul, about him, Peter's reading Paul's letters, and he's writing about Paul's letters.

And what does he say? Paul's letters contain some things that are very hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort. You see, Peter's an apostle.

He was Petros. He was the rock. He was the rock upon which that Jesus said he would build his church. He's saying, look, sometimes I don't get Paul. You see, here's the beautiful news about the gospel.

The gospel does not depend on how well you can unravel every single mystery that Paul unfolds before your eyes in his letters. It doesn't depend on that.

- [4 : 28] It depends on Jesus' work for you. It depends on faith. It depends on repentance. And then here's what the gospel says to you.

Now, go and read this book with fellow Christians until you do understand. You see, the first lesson is some of the stuff in the Bible is difficult. The gospel's not.

Some of the things that Jesus says are hard to understand. Some of the things Paul says are hard to understand, but the gospel's not. And then the gospel commands us to go and work it out.

Now look, here's the thing. That means that in the Christian life, thinking is required. Thinking is required. You can't be a Christian without thinking.

You can't be a Christian without coming back to the Scriptures and wrestling and asking questions of the text. It's required for the Christian life. And so what we must always be doing is two things.

- [5 : 23] Reading the Bible and reading other books. Reading the Bible and reading other books. What are those other books? There's millions. Come and talk to us. We'll help you find them.

You gotta be reading the Bible and you gotta be reading other books. So that's the first lesson. Take comfort. They didn't get it. The second thing is this.

We're still left. Even though they don't get it, we're still left with the problem. But what is this riddle? What is Jesus talking about? What is Jesus talking about? Now, the interesting thing about it is that when Derek read it, if you're paying close attention, probably you understood Jesus.

You even understood without reading what came before what the disciples are confused about. You probably understood it, right? Let's just briefly review the three claims that there are perplexed about.

It's this, you will see me no more, he's told them. Now what is that? You know what that is. He's going to the cross. He's going to death. He's leaving them.

- [6 : 25] He's going to die. You will see me no more. He said it numerous times throughout the farewell speech. The second claim is this, and then you will see me again, right?

Now, you know what happened. Resurrection happened. That's what he's referring to. You'll see me no more across. You'll see me again, resurrection. And then they're confused about this third phrase.

And you've also said, but I am going to the Father. Now that is a quote from chapter 16 verse 10 where Jesus explained exactly what he was talking about.

And then he preached to us from last week, he says, I'm going to the Father and I'm going to send you a helper, a counselor. Immediately, all of us know exactly where that comes from.

Acts chapter one, it's the ascension. So what Jesus, what the disciples are perplexed about, we can get. Why? Because of hindsight. We know what happened. We know what happened.

[7 : 18] He's talking about the three-step process of the accomplishment of the work of redemption. He's talking about death, resurrection and ascension.

And they can't see it. They're confused. Now, the question that we're probably asking them is why can't they see it? Why are they confused? Well, we've said they didn't have the hindsight for it and that's understandable.

But that's not the main reason, I don't think. The main reason is that in their conception of Messiah, Messiah's don't leave.

Messiah's don't leave once Messiah's come. The way that they understood what a Messiah was supposed to do, Messiah was supposed to come and march straight to Rome and take back the political religious order of the day and establish the kingdom of heaven right then and there.

Messiah doesn't leave. Listen to what one commentator says. The disciples still have no category at this point to allow them to understand or make sense of a Messiah who would die much less rise from the dead and much less abandon his people in favor of another counselor.

[8 : 33] You see the problem is that they don't see redemption in leaving. They see abandonment. They see abandonment. They don't yet understand what the Messiah has come to do.

In other words, what Jesus is telling them is the opposite of their plan for the Messiah. They've got it in the Jewish tradition. They have it mapped out of exactly what they want Messiah to do and this is not what Jesus is doing.

And I love that we have this wonderful background music to help. And that brings us to the second lesson. The second lesson. There's a lesson here, a subtle lesson here about how the Christian perceives time.

How the Christian perceives time. The Christian has a different and alternate, a slower, a more hopeful view of time than anyone else on earth has.

What do we mean by that? What's the centerpiece of their confusion? Did you catch it in verse 18? What's the centerpiece of their confusion? Verse 18, so they were saying, what does he mean by a little while?

[9 : 51] The centerpiece of their confusion is a little phrase about time. What does he mean by a little while, a little bit of time? Now that's three to five words depending on the translation in English.

In Greek it's one word. It's the word mikros. Mikros doesn't even necessarily refer to time. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. It just means a little bit or a portion or a bite if it refers to food or some small segment.

In other places they translate it to something like season. You could say like this, I'm leaving you for a season.

I'm coming back to you for a season and then I'm going to the father for a season. Their confusion is this, what do you mean by a season?

What do you mean by a little bit of time? What is this little bit of time? They've been asking him throughout his entire ministry to tell them about time. When is the hour?

[10 : 51] When is the last day going to come that we've read about in the Old Testament? Tell us about the days. Tell us about the time. That's the whole bit from Matthew 13 forward. Tell us about the time. They're confused about the time.

What do you mean by these seasons? Again, this isn't the only place. It also occurs after the resurrection. This is the very same thing that Jesus was addressing in Acts chapter 1 at his ascension.

You'll remember in Acts chapter 1 verse 7, right before Jesus is about to ascend to the father, he said to them, it's not for you to know the times or the seasons that the father has planned.

Now, again, that word there for seasons is more like proportions. It literally says something like this. It's not for you to know the times or the proportions of those times, like the links of those times that the father has planned.

You see what he's saying? It's not for you to count the clock on the plan of redemption. It's not for you to think of time that way.

[11 : 52] It's not for you to look at your life and measure out the way God is working according to a clock like that. That's not how it works. We late moderns, we live and we die by minutes, by seconds, by hours, by milliseconds.

Watch the Olympics. We live and die by a clock. Just like that. That clock was invented very late in history. The ancients lived by seasons.

They lived by seed time, and they lived by harvest. They lived by festival days. But the Bible lives by something even bigger than both of those things. The Bible lives according to millennia.

The Bible's logic about time is millennia. It doesn't count the clock in the same way we count the clock. Let me explain.

In the book of 1 Peter, the people that Peter's writing to are suffering. It says that they've been under the fiery trials, which was literal. They have been burned alive during the neuronc persecution.

[12 : 59] They're asking the question, how long go, Lord? The question of the Psalms, how long go, Lord? When? It's the question of time. It's the same question the disciples struggle with forever.

When? When will this cease? What's Peter's answer? The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises as some people would count slowness.

The Lord isn't slow, as some people might measure slowness. What does he say? But do not overlook this one fact, beloved brothers and sisters. Don't overlook this one fact that would the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is one day.

You see what he's saying? Time is measured in Christianity, not primarily in minutes, seconds, hours, or even days or years, but in ages, in epochs.

It's defined according to the great works of redemption, creation, resurrection, and second resurrection.

[14 : 04] We live in a time, and I say this all the time when I preach, we live in a time that's totally different from the time of Paul, a time and a place, a culture. We all know we live in a time that's in a place that's totally different from Constantine, from Genghis Khan, from Martin Luther, from George IV, and from George Washington.

We all know that, instinctively, right? But at the very same time, the Christian's view of time is, no, we don't.

No we don't. The time we live in is the age of resurrection. It's the time between the times, as Paul calls it. It's the time between the first and the second coming.

We live in an epoch, an age, that's all wrapped up in nothing other than the definition of time according to resurrections. You see, the Christian, of course you read time in minutes and seconds.

You have to do that to go to work. You have to do that to catch the train. But the Christian also has a bigger view of time that sees the whole of space, time, the whole of existence as centered in the resurrection and ending in a resurrection.

[15 : 13] The church of all ages, together, even now, even now as one. We all live together between resurrection and resurrection. Let me illustrate this in another way of how the Bible looks at time and why the disciples are so confused.

How long was Jesus' ministry on earth? Now, if I went around and asked all of you, most of you that have thought, looked into this at all, are probably going to say three years, and you'd be totally right. We think something like three years?

No, nobody knows for sure, it's not clear at all. But most New Testament scholars would say something like three years. But New Testament scholars also, when they read the book of John, are quick to say that the way that John counts Jesus' ministry is not necessarily in years, but in seven days.

Now you say, how is that possible? One week? No. How can that be? But look, this is how it works. If you've read John 1, the immediate thing John does when you open up the book of John is he connects you to Genesis chapter 1.

In the beginning, God created heavens and the earth, and in the beginning, there was the word. The connection between Genesis 1 and John 1 is very clear throughout the whole gospel.

[16 : 27] Present in the gospel of John are numerous sets of sevens. So look for this when you read the gospel. Numerous sets of sevens. All the time, things are set into sevens.

There's the seven great I Am statements. But the way that we structure Jesus' ministry in the theology of the gospel of John is according to seven signs that occur at different moments.

The first one of those occurred at the wedding at Cana when Jesus purified the water into wine, remember, in the purification jars. And right after that, in John 2, chapter 11, John makes a pronouncement.

A pronouncement that mimics the style of exactly the pronouncements of Genesis, the pronouncement of the days of creation. What does he say? This was the first great sign that manifests the glory of the Lord.

And how many times does he say that in the book of John? Five more. Six times. It starts at the wedding at Cana, and then the sixth one is at the resurrection of Lazarus.

[17 : 29] And there's not a seventh. There's not a seventh. But you know why there's not a seventh. Where's the seventh day in the book of John?

Where's the seventh sign? It's Jesus walking out of the resurrection tomb. It's the morning of the first day of the week.

It's the seventh day. It's the seventh sign. You see, John's theology is a theology that Jesus' whole ministry occurs in one week just parallel to the days of creation. Some great signs from death, from changing what, from controlling the elements of the earth to controlling disease to controlling even death and life.

You see, the Bible tells us Christians that we've got to measure our time in this world in a different way than the world measures its time in the world.

For the world, death is the end. And for the Christian, what we're about to see in the ultimate lesson that we're coming to right now is that you can never look at death that way.

[18 : 35] You can never measure the time of your life that way. All right, so that brings us to the third thing, the third and final lesson before we close. And that's this. Let me say this first.

One of the applications. Thinking about our lives and for the disciples. What are we going to say to the disciples right now, to shake them? Say, why did you not get it? Why did you not see it?

Thinking about our lives within God's plan of redemption, within God's timekeeping, the plan of redemption that Jesus was about to undergo was not the disciples' plan of redemption for Jesus.

The plan of time that they wanted for redemption was not God's plan according to his time. So, and your timely plan for God's work of redemption in your life, your timely plan, it's probably not God's timely plan for you in your life.

God's patterns of work are not according to economic efficiencies of the modern clock, but the efficiency of simply what is right and good according to his good purposes.

[19 : 48] All right, now, what do I do with that? In some ways, that doesn't give me hope. That makes it sound like I'm still left to say, how long, oh Lord, what do I do with that?

And the answer to it is embedded right in the third lesson of this passage. And that's this. Good things come out of bad things. That's the ultimate point that he's trying to share.

Good things come out of bad things. Now, you already know this because you live in the world. You live in this world. You live in this natural world. And if you live in the natural world, you go into the natural world and you know that the principle that good things come from bad things is already present in your life, right?

What comes after a winter? Spring. Day follows night, right? It's actually built into the very fabric of creation, that good things come out of bad things.

Here's the amazing thing that Jesus comes to us to teach this principle and he uses an example of a natural occurrence that happens all the time in life.

[20 : 51] And that's birth, right? Come with me to verse 19 and following. Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him. So he said to them, is this what you are asking yourselves? What I meant by saying, a little while and you will not see me?

And again, a little while and you will see me? 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. And here it is, when a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because the hour has come.

But when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Now I've had the joy without the sorrow of being at two childbirths and only two, no more than that for my two kids.

And you know the thing about what happens at childbirth? At childbirth there is a lot of pain unless you are in America and you get out a little bit out of a jelly easy card in America, a little bit more with some extra drugs.

But after birth, there is so much joy. Everybody is so happy that if the baby is healthy, there is the baby, right?

[22 : 06] But I don't, you know, who am I to say this? The pain doesn't stop, right? I know this because I'm married. You go home and the pain is not over by the end of the day that day.

There is a process, a long process of recovery. There is sorrow and there is a lot of joy and there is still a whole lot of pain to be had afterwards. You see what he is saying, that sorrow and joy exist in simultaneity after the cross, after the resurrection.

They exist in simultaneity. They are not opposites. They are not opposites. But I'm not going to say any more about that right now because we are going to flesh that out next week.

What is he explaining with this metaphor that good things come out of bad things? What is he explaining? Two things. One is that he is comparing the disciples to the woman. You see, he is saying to them, you know, you are like the woman who is giving birth.

When I go to the cross, you are going to have lamentation, just like the woman that is going through labor pains. That is what is going to happen to you when I go to the cross. You are going to have to go hide in a hole.

[23 : 20] And then when I come out of the tomb, there will be frolicking and laughter. You see, you are like the woman who is giving birth. You are experiencing the pain and then all of a sudden the baby comes.

When I step out of the tomb, I will bring new life, like a new baby out of the womb. And that is what he is saying. But there is a second, there is a double entendre. There is a second way he is using the metaphor.

How do we know that? Because he uses the word for labor here, the word hour. When the hour comes, and it is a very specific use of the word hour, it is the same exact word that John uses every single time in the Gospel to describe one event, the hour of the cross.

He has used it six times already, just in John 13 to 17. The hour, the hour of labor, it is a double entendre. Look, Jesus is also using the metaphor to talk about himself.

He is saying, like when a woman goes into labor, so I go to the cross. And like a woman produces a beautiful baby with tons of joy, so I come out of the grave.

[24 : 30] You see what he is saying? He is saying, good things come out of bad things. Now look, let me help you to see why this is so amazing. Why this principle, even in nature, that springtime comes after winter.

That resurrection comes after death. It is written into the very fabric of the natural order. You see, resurrection has been the point of existence the whole time.

You see that? It has been the point the whole time. The whole natural order has been preaching about it, Psalm 119. This has been about the whole time. Let me show you how we know that.

When Jesus, right before Jesus goes into the Garden of Gethsemane to be arrested, he chooses one metaphor to describe what is about to happen to him. Where does labor pain come from?

Where does labor pain come from? It comes from Genesis 3. It comes from the curse. You see, Adam and Eve were told, if you eat at the tree, you will die.

[25 : 35] Well, I've said this many times, the Hebrew there is a double word. You shall die, die. And we translate it, you shall surely die, the great emphatic of death, of ultimate judgment.

And then when it comes time to curse the woman who ate of the fruit first, what does she get? What's the curse? You will have labor pain for this. You will have labor pain for this.

Labor pain is bad, you see. It's evil. It's part of the curse. It's a judgment. It's a, it's condemnation. It's wrath. Labor pain. It's wrath.

And what does Jesus do with it here? What does Jesus do with it here? He says, look, you've been thinking the whole time that labor pain was nothing but a curse.

And I'm here to tell you that the whole time the curse was always about the gospel. The curse was always about the joy that would be produced from it. You see, God's judgment of Adam and Eve in the garden was always a mercy.

[26 : 36] It was always a mercy. Out of labor comes the joy of new life. Out of death comes resurrection. Out of winter comes springtime. You and I, Adam and Eve, we were supposed to get surely died.

We were supposed to get died, but instead in the very midst of the curse, what we get is a curse that's all about bringing forth our redemption. You see, this is the mercy of God.

Theologians throughout history have always acknowledged this point. And we'll close briefly with this. Herman Bobink, one of the great Dutch theologians says it this way.

The death of Christ, the end of his humiliation, was simultaneously the road to his exaltation. In all religions, in all philosophical systems, in all of history, one encounters this idea, expressed more or less consciously that death is the road to life.

People saw this phenomenon in nature where day follows night and an awakening into the spring occurs after a winter of hibernation. And this idea is everywhere presented in Israel.

[27 : 47] Abraham has to lose everything he wants new in order to enter the land of promise. That self-denial is the road to happiness and freedom. That the basic law of the kingdom is that one must abandon everything, every treasure, for Jesus' sake, to have every treasure.

Two things to close. No, I'm going to save one for next week. One thing to close. One thing to close. I'll tell you what it is, though.

That Romans, the greatest chapter in the whole Bible, is exactly about this. The creation groans in what pains of childbirth as it longs for the redemption of the body.

Or our favorite coffee cup verse, Romans 8.28, for all things work together for the good for those who love and are called according to his purpose. This is exactly what Romans, the greatest chapter in the Bible, is all about.

But the last thing I'll say is this. Look, resurrection, resurrection, you see, is the narrative of all of history. It's the narrative arc of all of history. It's the centerpiece of history.

[28 : 54] It's the conclusion of history. And it was promised in the ages beforehand in the very curse itself. It's the narrative arc of history. It's built into the fabric of reality.

This is why all good stories, all good stories, either are about or point to resurrection. As you go out, one of the things that you have to do today as a late modern is you have to interact with media, with film, with art, with television in a way that nobody else has had to, obviously, before the 20th century, but even in the 20th century.

And you need to be equipped for that. And one of the ways to equip yourself is to understand that resurrection is the narrative arc of all of history. That all good stories have to encapsulate something having to do with the resurrection.

This is what theology is. Walking out into the world and thinking like God thinks. Theology is learning to reason, to think like God thinks, as he's presented to us in scripture.

And thinking about everything in your life that's walking in wisdom. The way you perceive story, the way you perceive art and media, the way you perceive the fringe, it's looking for these glimpses of the narrative framework of all of history.

[30 : 04] And it's one of the best ways to talk to people about the gospel. Exactly what Baclew is doing this week. Everybody knew how Harry Potter had to end.

Everybody knew. If it was going to be a great epic story, everybody knew how it had to end. It had to end just like the Chronicles of Narnia began. And look, if you don't know how that ended or they began, I'm sorry, it's too late.

I had to say it. You should have already known. All great stories have to follow this script. Great tragedy looms, but sudden victory comes out of what looks like a total catastrophe and then a rush of joy emerges in.

You know why? Because resurrection is the point of history. It's the kind of turn that brings tears. Now, look, I close with a quote.

Tolkien, I've said this a couple of times in the past couple of years, one of my favorite things that Tolkien ever wrote was an essay called *On Fairy Stories*. And he repeats something about that in a letter, letter 89 that he wrote later in his life, where he coined a term, actually a literary term that had never been coined before, to describe this phenomenon of what he saw as resurrection as being the whole point of existence.

[31 : 17] And he called it a eukotastrophe. You can hear in that word, you hear the English word catastrophe, right? Absolute terribleness, terror, everything terrible, imagine, in a catastrophe.

But the eukotastrophe is an EU at the beginning, which is from the Greek, *uremnia*, which means happiness or absolute joy for Aristotle.

This was the ultimate goal of all of life and it's used all across Christian theologians throughout history. He called it eukotastrophe. This is what he says about it. He says with this quote, I coined the word eukotastrophe, the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears, which I argued is the highest function of any story to produce.

And I was there led to the view that it produces a peculiar effect because it's a sudden glimpse of the truth. Your whole nature is chained in a material existence of cause and effect, excuse me, chain of death, and then it feels a sudden relief as if a major limb has out of joint been suddenly snapped back in.

It perceives that although a story, this is indeed how things really do work in the great world for which our nature is made. And I concluded by saying that the resurrection was the greatest eukotastrophe possible in the greatest true story possible.

[32 : 42] And it produces an essential Christian emotion, joy, which always produces tears because it's so like sorrow because it comes from the places where joy and sorrow are finally at one reconciled as selfishness and selflessness are lost into love.

Well, next week we explore three lessons about this Christian joy, the joy that only comes from the great eukotastrophe of the resurrection. It's a joy that can only be had by Christians.

And that's what we'll focus on the second half of this passage next week. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the resurrection. We thank you that the meaning of the cross is very much wrapped up in the reality of resurrection.

And so we look now to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as our hope, the resurrection and redemption of ourselves, of our hearts and our bodies, of both our spiritual and material natures. And we ask that you would send us forth into this world looking for, as the old theologians called it, vestiges of the resurrection in our very daily life that we would see the gospel on display and that we could preach it using those themes to others.

And we ask for this help in Jesus' name. Amen.