

Do you remember a SNL skit with someone named Debbie Downer?

Or have you ever said to someone

I have good news and bad news...

which do you want first?

Debbie Downer Jesus in John 16, and his Future Voice

wants to start with the bad news

in talking to his disciples one last time before the resurrection...

1 “I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away

Meaning brought to a downfall, or “cause to sin.”

Have you ever tried to diet and your spouse,

family, or significant other

is eating your favorite dessert.

For me, that would be key lime pie or lemon something.

It is likely going to cause you to sin right?

by breaking your diet and eating the dessert.

Jesus wants his disciples to know what they will

have to face in the very near future

that would cause them to fall away.

2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.

The disciples will no longer be permitted to worship God

or study the scripture in their church.

That is a big deal for the disciples who still consider themselves Jews.

They will be killed, and the ones who are doing

the persecution think that they are serving God.

All foreshadowing one of their own who will persecute them

Does that bring anyone to mind? Sure Paul.

Paul’s own persecution of Jewish believers will happen.

Certainly, he worked to silence those who claimed

that Jesus had been the Messiah,

that he had been raised from the dead.

In John 16’s first verses

Jesus lovingly gives His disciples – both then and now –

a heavenly heads up to keep us from falling

into the trap that, as Christians, we will be free from all suffering.

It is definitely a dangerous thing for a believer
to have the false expectation of a trial-free life.

Jesus never held back the subject of the cross
nor concealed the difficulties of the way from His followers.

This is the bad news.

The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike.

That tribulations would be a given –
a part of the territory.

He told them of the worst that they
may consider the cost of following Him.

We should likewise not be surprised, as we are
just as apt to stumble at the cross as
our Lord's first disciples,
rather than to heed His many warnings.

Do you want more bad news?

6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts.

Despite his reassurances, they are afraid.

Jesus knows that grief will be their natural response.

His words are not meant to shame them for those feelings,
but to encourage them to maintain faith.

What is about to happen is part of God's plan to transform the entire world
It's important for us, as today's believers, to remember
that the disciples did not have our advantage of hindsight.

We can read about these events knowing exactly what will happen.

But they will struggle to put these ideas together
until after Jesus is resurrected.

But then He gives good news...maybe...

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate the Companion the Helper will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you.

Can you imagine what the disciples think about this?

For Jesus to suggest that leaving is somehow
good news was probably absurd, in their minds.

But Jesus knew it was essential he leave
to complete his journey to the cross and
the "advantage" of Jesus' leaving is also tied

to the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate.

As long as Jesus is there, in person,
the object of the disciples' faith would
always be a tangible, external person.

That's not necessarily bad.

However, it means they would constantly
depend on Him to direct them or to answer their questions.

Their own thoughts and conscience would
perpetually be pushed aside
in favor of asking Jesus for His judgment.

And when He was not physically present,
they would feel incomplete.

The bad news is that Jesus' physical presence in some sense
limited the depth of their reliance on God.

It also limited the number of people Jesus could influence at once.

God came in the form of Jesus
for a particular time and purpose.

But now, are you ready to hear the good news?

The good news is that the Holy Spirit,
on the other hand, can do so much more.

13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

The Holy Spirit, the Helper, the Advocate,
the Spirit of Truth provides the ability for each of us as Christians
to have constant, personal, immediate, indwelling contact with God.

Instead of relying on someone "outside" of ourselves,
believers in Christ can focus on the voice of God

"inside" our hearts, as the Spirit dwells within you and me.

That doesn't make Christians infallible or all-knowing
but it does mean that we have the advantage of the Spirit's influence,
so far as we're willing to submit.

That is the good news.

Want to hear the bad news?

The bad news is that Jesus does not say that the Spirit
will immediately place the minds of believers
into a state of spiritual perfection or instant wisdom.

Nor does he say the Spirit will totally replace a person's thoughts or opinions. Rather, the Spirit "will speak," "guides," and "declares." That influence can be resisted or even ignored. But the guidance of the Holy Spirit, if we listen, will always lead a person towards or "into" truth. How do we receive the Holy Spirit? We ask. We invite.

So as Jesus prepares for the bad news of His impending arrest and execution, He reassures the disciples of good news by predicting the coming of the Holy Spirit and how the Spirit will help them. Only after His resurrection, and with the empowerment of the Spirit, will they be able to fully grasp all that is happening

"A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me."

Jesus continues the bad news, good news... As part of that reassurance, Jesus made a comment about being unseen, then seen, which particularly confused the disciples and now this bad news of grief and good news of joy.

20 Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.

There is no sense in which Jesus tells believers, "it's not that bad," or "you should be happy about this." Instead, he teaches us to look beyond our suffering, We may experience difficulties and we may make bad decisions in life but as long as we have faith in God, we will rejoice in the end.

22 So you have pain now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Despite the fears and doubts of the disciples, Jesus has predicted that their sorrow will eventually lead to joy.

Their lives will be changed when they see Jesus alive
and resurrected several days from now.

That is good news.

But Debbie is not done.

Want the bad news?

32 The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me

Earlier in this same conversation,
Peter arrogantly declared he would
follow Christ anywhere, even to his own death.

Jesus responded by predicting Peter
wouldn't even remain loyal until sunrise.

It's not that Peter will never be brave and loyal;
he just hasn't become that rock, yet.

After Christ's resurrection,
empowered by the Holy Spirit that would be sent,
After Peter will be radically fearless in declaring Christ.
And one day, that faith will indeed lead to his death.

And the good news is that despite
being abandoned by His earthly friends,
Jesus will not be entirely, infinitely alone.
His relationship with God the Father will be
the cornerstone of Jesus' faith during the upcoming hardship.

John 16 combines the bad news and
the good news of teaching, remembrance, warning, and encouragement.

The bad news is that becoming a Christian
does not guarantee an easy life.

In fact, Jesus has made it clear that
following Him can lead to persecution.

But the good news is that we have a greater
power than the world through the Holy Spirit.
And that our joy as believers comes from knowing
that Christ has already obtained the ultimate victory,
and nothing in this world can undo that.
And now just the good news finally!

33 I have said this to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution, but take courage: I have conquered the world!"

These last words of encouragement;
rather than reacting in fear or confusion,
embolden us as Christians to be aware that
those distress experiences can be used in God's greater plan.
Time and time again, Scripture shows that trust,
was well-placed, even if fulfillment of God's promises
didn't come until after those believers had passed into eternity.

These are things I have been thinking about more lately
With everything with my mom's dementia and Mandy's brain cancer...
We have to remember the "peace" Jesus speaks of is not worldly
comfort, or even happiness.

This is the confident "rest" believers experience
when they set aside anxiety and fear,
and trust God to work out God's will.
There's hope in times of suffering.
There's always hope because
Jesus Christ has won the victory for us.
And that hope, that home, that's worth remembering.

And it is that home that the Holy Spirit finds His place and rest.
Everything that Jesus has been talking to them about
around the table at the Last Supper is finally here.
Today is usually Pentecost Sunday. 50 days after Easter.
But since it is Memorial Day weekend, and many folks are missing
I didn't want to lose one of the most important holy days of the year.
We will celebrate the more familiar Pentecost
from Acts next week with all the doves, fire, and finery.

But today in John, we have the first Pentecost.
Here, Pentecost is different and happens on Easter evening
when Jesus appears to the disciples.

21 Jesus said to them again, " Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you."
22 Then he breathed on them and said, " Receive the Holy Spirit.

At our Monday Morning Study and Wed Night Bible Study
we have been learning more about the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, the word is Ruach
and means wind or breath.

In the New Testament, it is pneuma.
And what words do you think come from that?
Pneumonia, pneumatic.

Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into the disciples.

I know the Holy Spirit can be hard to understand.
But the Holy Spirit is what brings us our new birth
And regenerates our hearts.

The Spirit is a counselor, helper, advocate
and a companion who comes alongside us.

The Spirit is among us and lives in us.

And the Spirit reminds us what Jesus taught.

And how we should live in Christ.

The Spirit is intended to remake us
into the people God intended us to be.

Have you asked the Holy Spirit to breathe in you?
To be remaking you?