



Hard Times

Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. John 16:20-22

Getting on the Same Page

Jesus leads his disciples from the upper room and takes the long walk east past the temple, toward the Mount of Olives. Eventually they would cross the Kidron valley and spend their last moments at the Garden of Gethsemane. As they walk and talk together Jesus repeatedly tells them that hard times are coming. He warns them that they will experience much sorrow, but then that sorrow will be turned into joy. He tells them to expect significant opposition, and that much of that opposition will come from people that believe they are doing what is right before God. He offers reassurance, seeks to instill confidence, and prays for them. After this conversation Jesus will spend time praying with great angst asking the Father if there is another way. He is then betrayed and taken into custody.

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

- When you hear about “hard times” what comes into your mind?
- Why do you think is the biggest difference between people that handle hard times well and those who don’t?
- What is the best advice you have been given about how to handle hard times in life?

Study Read John 16:16-33

- What kind of thoughts and emotions do you think the disciples are experiencing as Jesus is concluding this conversation about the hard times that are ahead what he wants for them? How does Jesus use this as a teachable moment?
 - For those who have experienced child birth - please share your journey of the emotions before and after the child was born. What made the biggest difference in the change of emotion?) Drill home the point that when the resurrection occurs, Jesus' disciples will see that he's overcome the world and they will have fullness of joy.
 - What is joy - how would you define it?
 - What truths of the gospel do we need to know AND believe to prevent our joy from being robbed? How can we practically apply gospel truth to situations in order to see your feelings change over time?
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- Jesus told his disciples to take heart in spite of what was coming because h has overcome the world. Where right now are you experiencing hard time in your life? Read these two passages together as a group: 2 Corinthians 4:5-18 and Romans 8:31-39. How does the truth of Christ conquering on our behalf encourage you to take heart, have peace, rejoice in the face of difficulties of life?

Apply

- Read John 16:33. In what ways can you view your current difficulties “in reverse” with the knowledge of the promised victory that God will one day work through them?
- How does/should knowing that Jesus has overcome affect the way you view the trouble and suffering that come your way in life?
- In what areas of your life are you more oriented toward self-reliance over dependence? What steps do you need to take this week to move toward desperate dependence?
- How much do you settle for “factual truth” vs. seeking to embrace redemptive truth? (internally / relationally)
- Do you embrace the “irrational settled stability” that Jesus offers me in the midst of difficult seasons of life? What do you need to do better experience that?