**Removed From Our Sight**

Based on [John 16:16-22](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn16.16-22)

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The Fourth Sunday of Easter ~

Jubilate

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Faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction in things not seen. // Jesus never leaves his flock, his disciples, or his church…he only removes himself from their sight.

When dead in the tomb ***he was still with them, only removed from their sight.*** When raised, he appeared to them on the road, then disappeared in the breaking of the bread. ***He was still with them, only he removed himself from their sight.*** Forty days after his resurrection, he ascended into the clouds and ***thus removed himself from their sight.*** In the water, in the ministry, in the bread and in the wine, he is not gone. He is present, ***only withholds himself from our sight.*** Blessed are those who have not seen, and have yet believed.

In the upper room, on the night he was betrayed, he had a lot to say to his disciples. This his last words to his disciples cover several chapters of the Gospel of John. And the next several weeks, we are given to consider his words. This week…these words: ***A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.***

His disciples are concerned with the words, “*A little while*”. , Christians throughout the ages have wondered why Jesus said, “***I am coming soon***”. We desire to know the timetable of God, but He says “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons that the Father has established by his own authority.” C.S. Lewis once wrote that *for God all times are soon*. It doesn’t matter though beyond knowing that the day of the Lord’s coming will be unexpected, it will come like a thief in the night, and the faithful will be ready. Our sinful natures want to probe into God’s mysteries rather than simply confess and adore them. This is one, and so the apostles ask, “***What does he mean by a little while***.”

It turns out, he means *three days*…the length of time he will suffer, be crucified, dead and buried before he rises again and appears to them. But he calls that three days “A little while”, and tells them that during that little while…”You will not see me”.

This is an amazing statement. “*You will not see me*.” Presupposed in these words is “***I will be with you***.” “***I will be with you, but you will not see me.***” // If Jesus planned to leave them entirely, he would have said, “In a little while, I will leave you”…and granted he says as much elsewhere. He said once, “**How can the guests mourn when the bridegroom is with them. There will come a time when he is not with them. Then they will mourn**.” He says after he is raised, “**I am not gone yet, but am going to be with my father and your father**.” And if these passages were all we had, then we might thing that when Jesus dies, or when he ascends to the right hand of the Father…that he—Jesus Christ, actually and truly leaves us…alone. “***After all***”, it is supposed, “***if he is with the Father who is in heaven, he must not be with us who are left on earth***.”

But these words Jesus shares with his disciples in the upper room before he is betrayed, are as a last will and testament. “You will not see me”. These are secret words, private words where he explains himself more clearly. It may sound like he’s being indirect, or circumlocuting…talking around the point rather than on it. But he’s not. He is informing them, preparing them, clarifying what he means when he says he is leaving to go to the Father. He’s not really truly gone; not *absent* in the true sense of the word. By going to the Father He is not *leaving* their presence. He is not leaving them as orphans. He is only leaving their sight.

When he leaves *their sight,* He promises to send the Holy Spirit, the comforter, and wherever the Spirit is, there is Jesus also. He had already promised, “***Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.***” So as they are gathered in the upper room--little knowing that he will soon die in their presence--he is among them. And when he arose on the third day, they were gathered together in a place and the doors were locked, and there he came among them…visibly, and they saw him…his pierced hands and side and said…”Peace be with you.”

The message, the teaching for faith, is that Jesus never truly leaves, never truly departs, never truly forsakes. He only humbles himself. He only hides his presence. He only restrains his show of power. These things may, to us, have the appearance and effect of absence, but that’s only to our senses, our flesh. But, he is here among us, now, only we do not see him. We apprehend him not by sense, but by faith.

And this is how it should be from the beginning to the end of this age. Jesus does not want us to know him by sight, only by faith. Why? Well, maybe his resurrected glory is too great for us. Maybe our sin would only abuse his visible presence. Maybe he only presents himself to our ears in preaching lest we become conceited. His ways are not our ways, and so we can never know or understand why until all is revealed. In any case, ***it has please God to reveal his son to his church, not visibly, but to faith***, and it is enough for his sheep. And this plan of salvation through faith is good and right, otherwise He would not have done it.

Jesus reveals to his disciples what it means when they do not see him. It only means *they do not see him*. He is still with them, among them, in their midst, doing what he promised, guiding them with his rod and his staff to comfort them…ensuring all things will work for the good of those who love him and call upon his name. Blessing with his true presence those who have not seen and have believed.

And we are taught to believe that his body is hidden under bread and his blood under wine in the sacrament which he instituted for us to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins. We don’t see his body, only bread…and though we do not see him, he is still present as he wills and as he promises.

Oh what foolishness to think that Jesus in ascending to the right hand of his Father, has left us. If Jesus is in heaven, and heaven is far away, then Jesus is far away from us and he is not among us. But Jesus does not say “in a little while, I will not be with you”. He says “you will not see me”.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed that Jesus Christ, body, soul and spirit is among those who gather in his name.