

Week of May 6-12

CHEER UP!

Scripture Reading: Read John chapter 16

As I write this devotional, the latest unemployment figures were released for April yesterday and they show a slight drop in the unemployment rate. Unfortunately, this was due to the fact that more and more people have given up looking for a job because the economy is so bad. In fact, the labor force is the smallest it's been in over 30 years. The European Union is in worse shape than we are. Additionally, gas prices have been hovering around \$4.00 a gallon for some time now. Food prices have climbed as well. Families are breaking apart. Marriage is under attack. Persecution of Christians is on the rise in many parts of our world. North Korea and Iran have been pushing the nuclear issue. The war on terror continues. Times are, indeed, tough.

Cheer up! Cheer up? You've got to be kidding. No, really, Jesus told us to cheer up (John 16:33 KJV – Be of good cheer). Why? Because he had overcome the world! Jesus makes this statement at the end of today's chapter reading that, itself, is at the end of a lengthy discussion with his disciples prior to his betrayal in Gethsemane. Jesus has been preparing them for his departure. He wants them to love each other. He wants them to stay connected to him. He wants them to bear fruit. He wants them to know that the Holy Spirit is coming as another Counselor, the Spirit of truth; the one who would remind them of everything he had taught them and the one who would teach them all things. This Holy Spirit would also convict the world with regard to sin, righteousness and judgment. It wouldn't be the disciples' job to do that but the Spirit's. Jesus wanted them to get all this.

He also wanted them to know that things were going to get tough. It wasn't always going to be easy to be a Christian. They would pay the price but it would be worth it in the long haul. He was preparing a place for them in heaven and would return to bring them back to be with him forever. He had overcome the world so they would too if they stayed linked with him. He promised them peace, his peace, to sustain them along the journey. He promised them joy, his joy, to gladden their hearts. It didn't ultimately matter what happened to them on earth for their Savior would bring them through. They were just to be faithful and fruitful and stay connected to him. He would do the rest.

And you know what? The disciples did just that. They knew Christ's joy and peace and trusted that he would bring them through no matter whether they died for their faith or not. They remained faithful and turned a world upside down for Christ.

Now it's our turn. We can worry ourselves sick over what the future holds or we can trust the one who holds the future in his hands. We can become discouraged and depressed over the state of the world or we can believe in the One who has overcome the world. We can be paralyzed with fear or we can walk in faith. We can give up or we can cheer up. The choice is ours.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: How have you responded to the negative events around you? Do you feel like giving up? Memorize John 16:33 and ask the Lord to empower you to believe and live that verse today.

Take-away: *We can be of good cheer or live in fear. It depends on whom we trust.*