

“Charge It!”

John 16.23–28

²³“In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. ²⁴Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

²⁵“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. ²⁶In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; ²⁷for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. ²⁸I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.” [NASB]

HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Rev. Chris Robinson

10th January, 2010

I. Hearing

It is hard to see up when you're looking down. Last week Jesus assured His disciples that although everything appears to be heading downward, by faith we may see that the downward arrow turns around and points back up, up, ever up. Today we hear Jesus telling His disciples that soon it is going to get a lot easier for them to look up.

Jesus says, ²³"In that day." "That day" is the day when, after the great sorrow of not seeing Him, in great joy they would see Him again. Very soon, Jesus would go to the cross and die, and be buried in the tomb. They would no longer see Him. Everything had gone so wrong. Maybe you know that feeling. Someone you love has died and suddenly you are overwhelmed with how wrong death is. For a while you can't help hoping—expecting—the person is just going to get up and keep living per normal.

But on the third day Jesus *would* arise from the dead and they *would* again see Him... alive. Everything that had gone so wrong would be made so right. Everything. The agony of apparent defeat is turned into the thrill of eternal victory. The last enemy, death, is vanquished by the Lamb of God. Life restored never again to be lost; full of joy that no one can take away.

It is the day of sight, the day of seeing Jesus. It is not yet the day when we see all things subjected to Him. But it is the day when "we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone."^{Heb2.8-9} It is the day of asking and the day of understanding.

A. Asking in the Day of Sight

It is the day of asking. Asking in the day of sight. They had been asking Jesus questions all along. But this asking would be different. ²³"In that day you will not question Me about anything." You will have no need to ask Me such elementary questions that have stymied you all this time. You will never stop learning, you will never stop asking, but you won't stumble over every little syllable I speak as you have been for the past three years.

B. Understanding in the Day of Sight

It is the day of asking. And it is the day of understanding. Understanding in the day of sight. ²⁵"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father."

It is true that Jesus has spoken often in parables and proverbs. And it is true that the intent of speaking in parables was often to *veil* the meaning to those who were not willing to understand. But Jesus usually explained such parables to the disciples. He did not try to hide the meaning or the truth from His disciples.

It was not, then, so much that Jesus spoke in veiled, mysterious language. Rather, the disciples' understanding was so elementary, so clouded, so limited that everything He said *seemed* to be figurative and mysterious. But in the day of sight, in the day of Jesus' resurrection, and when the Holy Spirit came, that which seemed dark now would become brilliant beyond measure.

The brilliance of such witness would embolden them to believe and receive the Father's love for them. Nothing would then hinder their approaching His throne of grace and mercy. They would understand that their union with Christ was union with the Father and union with the Spirit and union with all the benefits of God's infinite and unchangeable love. Such would be their understanding in the day of sight, in the day of seeing their Risen Redeemer.

C. Doctrine

Our Redeemer's resurrection clearly reveals our liberty and certainty for approaching His throne of mercy in prayer.

II. Examining

I am going to explain that more clearly, but first let me ask a question or three. One, do you really think God will give you whatever you ask for in Jesus' name? Come on, can we be real? On a scale of one to ten, what is the level of your conviction when you pray, that God will give you what you ask? Okay, so even if it is only at level one or two, why aren't you asking a whole lot more? Even if your level of conviction is way less than one, perhaps just the size of a tiny mustard seed, mountains could be moved and tossed into the sea. Do you really think God will give you whatever you ask for in Jesus' name?

Two, do you really think God is fully committed to making your joy full? Again, can we be real? How often are your prayers impeded by the "Don't ask questions you don't want to hear the answer to" syndrome? Doesn't it seem you get a whole lot more "no's" or "forget it's" than "sure!s"? Are you even watching for answers to prayer anymore, or do you generally forget after a day or two that you even lifted up a particular request to God?

And three, what reason, what basis do you have for asking God for anything? Isn't it presumptuous, isn't it selfish, isn't it unreasonable to want—let alone expect—joy for yourself?

III. Investigating

I know, I know, such questions can be pretty depressing. You probably didn't come here eagerly anticipating discouragement. Well the good news is, Jesus gives us solid ground for confident expectation when we pray. There are three keys in this passage that open the door for prayer. It is one of those locks that requires all three keys at once.

A. In His Name

First key, and I'll spend most of our time on this one. The first key is "In My Name." ²³If you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. ²⁴Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive."

What do you mean when you pray "in Jesus' name"? Remember the tribes of Israel? In the wilderness, ^{Dt10.8}the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to serve Him and *to bless in His name* until this day. ⁹Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance." You see, the Levites had no account to draw from with which to bless the other Israelites. The Levites had to draw from God's account, which was full of blessings.

Listen to what God told Moses: ^{Num6.23}"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: ²⁴The LORD bless you, and keep you; ²⁵The LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; ²⁶The LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.' ²⁷*So they shall invoke My name* on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them." Do you see it? The benediction is nothing less than charging a blessing to God's account!

When David met Goliath he said, ^{1Sa17.45}"You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you *in the name of the LORD of hosts*, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted." Goliath came drawing from his own account of weapons and strength. David came drawing from the Lord's account. Whose account was bigger, Goliath's or God's? David sings, ^{Ps20.7}"Some boast in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast *in the name of the LORD*, our God." Lots of holdings to boast of in that account.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem the multitudes sang Psalm 118, shouting ^{Mt21.9}“Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes *in the name of the Lord*; Hosanna in the highest!” He who comes drawing upon the Lord’s account comes with a full and rich source of blessings for the people. So full and so rich, that as we heard on Christmas Eve these blessings overflow to all the nations. ^{Mt12.18NIV}“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations... ²¹*In his name* the nations will put their hope.” You see? The nations will charge all their confident expectation to His account.

Jesus commands the Church, ^{Mt28.19}“Going, make disciples, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...*” The sacraments declare and guarantee that you are included in the Covenant of Grace on account of the Father who elected you, the Son who redeemed you, and the Spirit who dwells in you. A very large and full account. John tells us that ^{Jn1.12}“as many as received Jesus, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” That is, to those who charge their adoption to Christ’s account. To the contrary, ^{3.18}“he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” That is, if you don’t charge your eternal life to Christ’s account, you are judged already.

Jesus says in a passage similar to today’s, ^{Jn14.13}“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Whatever you ask and charge to My account, I’ll do.

After Jesus ascended to heaven and poured out the Holy Spirit, the Apostles understood clearly. When those who had crucified Jesus ^{Act2.37}“were pierced to the heart, they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ ³⁸Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ* for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” That is, “Charge the forgiveness of your sins to Christ’s account. He’s paid up, in full. And charge the gift of the Holy Spirit to Christ’s account. He’s paid up, in full.”

Later when Peter met a lame beggar who wanted money, Peter said, ^{Act3.6}“I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: *In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!*” Peter could not charge this miracle to his bank account, but he *could* charge it to Jesus’ account. Boy did this infuriate the money-holders! The rulers, elders, scribes and priests commanded Peter and John to stop using their credit card, to stop speaking *in Jesus’ name*. Peter and John respectfully replied, “God gave us this account and told us to use it; and use it we shall.”^{Act 4.17}

Paul tells the Corinthians, ^{1Co6.11}“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*” We are declared righteous and we are made pure, and these are charged to the Lord Jesus Christ’s account. No wonder Paul tells the Ephesians that being filled with the Spirit means in part, ^{Eph5.20}“always giving thanks for all things *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.*” We give thanks to God for all that has been charged to Christ’s account.

That includes, yes, suffering. ^{1Pe4.16}“If anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.” Charge your suffering to Christ’s account. Why have I recited all these verses, all these things? What John wrote applies to all the Scriptures. ^{1Jn5.13}“These things I have written to you who believe *in the name of the Son of God*, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” What has He written? What do the Scriptures tell us? That Jesus has a very, very good credit rating, and He wants us to use it every time we pray.

His credit rating is as good as His blood which He poured out for us. That is good enough credit to cover all of our sins and all of our wickedness. It is good enough credit to pay for the massive cleanup job our polluted souls require before we can enter heaven. It is good enough credit to purchase our adoption out of slavery into sonship. It is good enough credit to secure everything that will fill us up to overflowing with unspeakable joy. Will you not use this credit? That is the first key. *In His name.*

B. Make Your joy full

And that brings us to the second key: Making your joy full. I won't spend much time on this because there is really nothing figurative here. Jesus went to the cross knowing that His account was full enough to overcome the payment of wrath that God's righteous Law would have poured into our account for all eternity. Jesus went to the cross knowing that His account of righteous, perfect obedience to the Father was full enough to purchase your joy and mine forever. And so, approaching the cross His words were, ^{Ps16.10}"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. ¹¹You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

Jesus gave His life so that He might make your life full of joy. Now do you really think He would give you anything less? According to the Covenant of Grace, ^{Ps89.16}"In Your name they rejoice all the day, and by Your righteousness they are exalted." That is to say, our rejoicing and our righteousness is charged to Christ's account.

The promise of joy does not mean there will not be sorrow in this life. To the contrary, ^{Ps126.5}"Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting." When you charge to Christ's account, you cannot charge to your own account. If Christ pays the bill, we can't pay the bill. Well, we think we like to pay the bill. It makes us feel important. To receive life our fleshly desire to pay the bill must be mortified. Humbled. Made dead. That is a tearful process. But the tears that fall in mortification will reap joyful shouting. There's that funny arrow again that points downward and then turns around and points up, up, up.

The things Jesus gives us are the things He knows will make our joy full. He will not give us things that will not make our joy full. Are you willing to admit that Jesus can make it so that a forecast completely devoid of snow in January will ultimately bring more joy than three feet of snow? Is there a person you know, or a group of persons, and you think that having a relationship with them will make your joy full? You need them to be your friend in order to be happy? Are you willing to admit that Jesus may see such a relationship as one that would sap and steal your joy?

You may be sure, Jesus will not let one single friendship slip through your fingers that you need for your joy to be full. On the other hand, would you forsake a relationship with someone, a relationship that Christ has given to you so that your joy might be full?

C. I came from Father and go to Father

We must close even more briefly with the third key to prayer: ²⁸"I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father." Jesus is God. Jesus became man. Jesus returned to the Father fully God and fully Man. You know, then, that Jesus knows everything there is to know about being human like you. And you know that Jesus knows everything there is to know about being God.

When you pray in His name, you charge it to the infinite account of God who gives fullness of joy to the perfect Human. Have we tested his limits? I think not. Does he want us to? I think so. ^{Mal3.10}"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... and test Me now in this," says the LORD of

hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." Charge it to His account.

IV. Receiving

Three keys. In His name. Making your joy full. Jesus returned to the Father fully God and fully Man. When you say, "in Jesus' name," you are really saying, "Father God, Jesus told me to ask this in His name. Put this on His account. He said He'd pay for it. I can't pay for it, but Jesus says He's got plenty of investments to cover the cost. Oh, and by the way, if this won't fill me with joy then don't bother. Jesus said He'd only pay for things that fill me with joy. That's fine with me; if it won't fill me with joy then I don't really want it, and I wouldn't want Him to look bad by giving me things that aren't up to His standard of goodness."

Think of these keys when you pray and put them into the lock. Otherwise when you say "in Jesus' name," you may be like the many who will say to Him on that day, ^{Mt7.22}"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" ²³And then Jesus will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." They did miracles, but they did so by putting it their own account rather than on Jesus' account.

There's no future in our own account. Put it on Christ's account. Put your life on Christ's account. According to Acts 2.21, "Whoever charges his life to Christ's account shall be saved." Charge your prayers to Jesus' account. God never cared much for magical mantras. So if you need to stop saying "in Jesus' name" because its only so many words, then stop saying "in Jesus' name." Say something like, "Father, I'm charging this request to Your Son's account." Your Father will know what you mean. And your Father in heaven will be very pleased to answer in such a way that makes your joy very, very full. That is why Jesus came, suffered, arose, ascended, and it is why He is coming back for you who charge your salvation to His account.