

Happiness Through Mourning

Matthew 5:4

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Let's read Matthew 5:1-4.

Luke tells us, "And seeing the multitudes, He..."—that is, "Jesus"—"...went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

For they shall be comforted."

Together we're looking at Christ's teaching known as the Beatitudes. They are the gateway to the Sermon on the Mount, which is the Christian's counter-culture. They picture what it looks like to live in the kingdom of heaven. But before we can live in the kingdom, we have to enter into the kingdom, and that entrance to the kingdom starts with poverty of spirit, in verse 3.

I'm encouraging you to meditate on these Beatitudes and commit them to memory. It's pretty easy. So if you did that, you should know verse 3 by memory: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Today we come to verse 4, the second Beatitude: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Last time, we saw that the Beatitudes, these attitudes of those who live in the kingdom, are contrary to the world. It's not like the world's ways. If we're going to live out the Sermon on the Mount, we're going to be different than the world. We see that so obviously. The world doesn't say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit"; the world says, "Blessed are the proud," "Blessed are the self-assertive," "Blessed are the self-confident," "Blessed are those who believe in themselves," "Blessed are those who love themselves," "Blessed are those who have a lot to believe about themselves."

But Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," those who see themselves as spiritually bankrupt before a holy and righteous God. Poverty of spirit means that I am bankrupt before God, and I have nothing to commend myself to God.

The second step in the progression is that now that I see myself as poor in spirit, I mourn over my sin. That condition certainly runs counter to the world. "Blessed..."—or "happy"—"...are

those who mourn.” You could translate that as “Happy are the unhappy.” “Happy are those who are sad” or “mourn” or “weep.” In the context, I believe they mourn over their sin and the sin of others.

This is what we call a “paradox.” G.K. Chesterton said that “A paradox is truth standing on its head calling for attention.” I love that. So Jesus takes this truth and stands it on its head, and it’s calling for attention. The idea that “happy are the unhappy” is counter to the world. We seek to laugh and we seek to have fun. We put a lot of value on humor and amusement. We have amusement parks all over the land.

By the way, the word “amuse” means “not to think.” A negative prefix before the word “muse,” or “amuse” means “not to think.” You go to Disneyland, and you don’t think about how much it costs to get into Disneyland, because if you think about it, it won’t be “the happiest place on earth.” Or else when you go to Disneyland, you’d be bummed out the whole time about how much it costs to get in. It doesn’t work.

We want to be amused, we want to laugh, we want to be happy and we don’t want to be sad. Unfortunately, even in the church today, we don’t hear a lot of sermons about mourning, about grieving over sin, about weeping over our lost condition. We hear a lot of positive preaching about being somebody and being built up and the good things. We want positive preaching; we don’t want the negative. But as we’re going to see, the way to be full is to first be emptied. The way to be happy is to first be sad. So this is a paradoxical statement.

If anyone knows how to be happy, it’s Jesus Christ. Jesus knows the secret to happiness. We’ve discovered that the word “blessed,” which appears eight times in these Beatitudes, actually means “O, how happy.” But it also has the idea of the approval of God. The reason we’re happy is because God approves of us. Someone called it “the applause of heaven.” God is clapping for us. We bring joy to God. We bring pleasure to God. So to be blessed is the idea that God’s favor or blessing or approval is upon us. The whole idea is that we want to live for God’s approval.

Let’s first start with the question, “What does this paradoxical pronouncement mean?” What does “Blessed are those who mourn” mean? First, let me tell you what it does not mean. It is not the sorrow of those who have bereaved over a lost loved one. It’s not the sorrow we feel when someone we love, a close family member or friend, dies. God is close to those who have a broken heart, but this is not the same kind of broken heart or mourning.

When Paul wrote to the believers of Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, he said “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep...”—or “died”—“...lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” The Bible says that when a Christian dies, he just “falls asleep.” Not his soul; it goes to be with the Lord. He’s vitally awake in the presence of the Lord. But he’s talking about their physical body. When the Bible says a believer falls asleep, then, and only then, it means the body and not the spirit. The Bible doesn’t teach soul sleep. The Bible says, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” So our

bodies are put in the grave, which means “resting place,” waiting for the resurrection, when they will be transformed and reunited with their soul and spirit, and they will have a glorified body in heaven.

Paul says that he doesn't want us to be ignorant about those who have fallen asleep. He doesn't want us to sorrow, “as others who have no hope.” Why? Because if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even “those who have fallen asleep” in Jesus, God is going to bring them with Him when He comes again. They are with the Lord, and they are going to come back with the Lord and we'll be reunited once again.

I made this whole point to show that we do sorrow. We sorrow but not “as others who have no hope.” There's nothing wrong with tears for someone who dies. We're sad because we're going to miss them. We're not praying for them; we're praying for the fact that we won't be with them until we're reunited. So that's not the sorrow Jesus speaks of here.

Secondly, it's not the sorrow of selfish disappointment, the sadness caused by some unfulfilled hopes or expectations. “I didn't get the new job I wanted,” or “I didn't get the car I wanted” or “We wanted to have more kids, and we haven't been able to have more kids.” It's not about the disappointments of life that we all face. Maybe we cry about those things.

Or maybe there are sinful desires that we have that are not honoring to God. I think of the story in the Old Testament book of 1 Kings 21, where the wicked King Ahab wanted to buy a vineyard from a man by the name of Naboth. Naboth wouldn't sell the vineyard, so King Ahab freaked out. He went home, lay on his bed and cried and wept like a little baby, until his wife came in and straightened him out. You women have to straighten us men out when we're being wimps. You know, “Get up and be a man!” So sometimes we cry over things that are selfish, self-centered or even sinful.

Thirdly, it's not the sorrow or regret of remorse. Judas was sorry that he betrayed the Son of God, but he wasn't really repentant before God, so he went out and hanged himself. I visit a lot of men and women in jail and in prisons, and a lot of times they're sorry they got caught and sorry they did it, but next time they'll be more careful so they won't get busted. They're mad at the police and mad at people and mad at everyone else. They don't have a contrition toward God or a heart of repentance toward God.

So what does Jesus mean when He says, “Blessed are those who mourn”? I believe, simply stated, that it is a Godly, God-directed, God-centered sorrow. It is not selfish or man-centered, but it is mourning over sin and the consequences of sin. It is the consequence of seeing myself as “poor in spirit,” verse 3.

Mourning is the next step after poor in spirit; there is progression here. I first see that I'm spiritually bankrupt. What do I do? I don't try to cover it or try to excuse it. I don't try to explain it away. I don't try to shift responsibility. I see myself as a sinner before God, and then I weep and I cry and I mourn. So it is a weeping or a mourning over my personal sin.

And it's not just confessing sin; it's contrition over my sin. I believe it's a work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, "He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment." Sin is something that the Spirit convicts you of—that you're separated from God, that you missed God's mark, that you missed the standard. We're all separated sinners in the sight of God. There is a righteous standard that God will accept that I fall short of. Regarding the judgment of God, the Spirit of God convinces us that I am under God's judgment and I will be punished for my sin. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. You can turn from that sin and confess it if it's genuine and authentic repentance.

I wonder today whatever happened to sin. There was a book written years ago titled *Whatever Happened to Sin?* Everything is someone else's fault, someone else's problem, some other issue—psychological, social or ethical or all these other problems in the world. What happened to sin? The Bible teaches that "All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible teaches, "There is no one righteous; no, not one."

But today we don't go to church to hear that. Some of you are looking at me like, "Woe!" That's what the Bible teaches: every human being is a sinner and separated from God. It is because of Adam and Eve in the Garden that we inherited their sin-nature, and thus we commit sin. So we are born sinners, and then we sin because of it. We're not sinners because we sin; we sin because we're sinners. That's what the Bible teaches. It's called the "Adamic" or the "fallen nature." It's sad today that we hear so little preaching about this important subject. So a godly sorrow leads to repentance over sin.

In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul uses that expression. He says, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation...but the sorrow of the world produces death." So Judas was sorry, but he went out and committed suicide. Peter had a godly sorrow when he denied the Lord, but he turned and Jesus forgave Peter of his sins.

In Psalm 51, Nathan had exposed David's sin, and David, with a contrite and broken heart, cries out, starting in verse 1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." I want you to note the word he uses for his sin: "transgressions." This is a willful, deliberate, disobedience. This is sinning with your eyes wide open. It's stepping over God's line. Then he cries in verse 2, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity..."—this is inherent sin—"...and cleanse me from my sin." This "sin" is missing the mark. So these are three different terms for our sin. "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned..."—notice that he recognized that his sin was against the holy God—"...and done this evil in Your sight..."—so he refers to it as "evil"—"...that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge."

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." I believe David has alluded there to that inherent sin we have at birth from Adam. "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom." So where does God want truth? He wants it in the hidden parts, in the inward parts. God looks at the heart. As you

go through these Beatitudes, you understand that God is looking at the heart. I'm poor in spirit. I need to mourn and weep for my own sin.

In Matthew 5:4, when Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn," He is talking about this kind of confession and turning from sin and genuine heart-felt repentance before God. It's the idea that I've sinned against God, and I want to get right before God.

This is also seen in Luke 15 in the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.'" Then he took his inheritance and went to a far country and wasted it on riotous living. That's where we get the word "prodigal" from: reckless living. When he began to be in want, he went to work for a man feeding pigs. He was in the pigpen. The Bible says, "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!'" That's his mourning for his sin. He said, "I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" Of course the father wouldn't have that but smothered him with kisses, put a new robe on him, put shoes on his feet and a ring on his finger, killed the fatted calf and they celebrated.

We're going to see in just a moment, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." So this mourning leads to forgiveness. David, in Psalm 51:12, said, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation." Verse 8, "That the bones You have broken may rejoice." So this mourning over sin leads us to God for forgiveness, for deliverance and for comfort. God forgives us, God delivers us and God comforts us.

The word "mourn," by the way, in verse 4, in the Greek is the strongest word used in the Greek language. It was used in the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the Old Testament translated into Greek. The Old Testament was in Hebrew, and the New Testament was in Greek. But they had an Old Testament translation into the Greek, as well, which was known as the Septuagint.

In Genesis 37:34, when Jacob got word that his beloved son, Joseph, was dead, he began to mourn—same Greek word. He tore his clothes, put sackcloth and ashes on and began to weep and cry and to mourn. So it's a picture of the kind of poverty of spirit that we're to have when we sin in our life.

No one gets into the kingdom of heaven without being poor in spirit. No one gets into the kingdom of heaven without mourning over their sin. First, you're convicted, when you're convinced intellectually that "I'm a sinner"; secondly, you're convinced emotionally—"I'm sorry for my sin"; then your volition is involved—your will turns and you trust Jesus Christ as your Savior. All of those are involved in a genuine, authentic conversion. So Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn over their sin."

I believe that as Christians, we should mourn continually over our sin, even though Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." You may say,

"I'm a Christian; I don't need to mourn over my sin." Yes, you do, because sin grieves God. Sin quenches the Holy Spirit. You may not lose your salvation, but what you will lose is your fellowship. You're not going to be thrown out of God's family because you committed some sin, but you will lose fellowship or "koinonia" or communion with God. That's why Jude said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." How do I keep myself in the love of God? By having a heart that is sensitive to sin.

One of the greatly deficient doctrines in the church today is the doctrine of sin. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said, "I can't believe that in your congregation it's reported that there is sexual immorality among you." He's talking to Christians and said, "It's so bad in your church in Corinth that even the Gentiles don't do this: that a man would have his father's wife and have a sexual relationship with her." Paul said, "You should be mourning, but rather you're puffed up. You think it's wonderful that God's grace forgives us and that you can be so accepting of this brother, when in reality, you should put him out of the church and discipline him." So they were puffed up rather than mourning over this sin in their church.

Now this mourning is not only our own individual, personal, private sin in the church, but it is also a mourning over sin in the lives of others and the effect that it has in the world around us. As a Christian, when I look at the world around me, I should weep, because God is weeping.

What makes you cry? What makes you laugh? Are you laughing at things you should cry about, or are you crying at things that you should perhaps laugh about? Jeremiah was called "the weeping prophet." In Lamentations 3:48, he said, "My eyes overflow with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people." No wonder they thought Jesus was Jeremiah risen from the dead, because Jesus is called "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

This past week, as believers, we should be weeping over the new abortion law in the state of New York. When they pass a new law that a woman can abort her unborn child at any time for any reason, up to the last moment before that child is born, our hearts should be broken. We should be crying and weeping before God. "God, turn us back to You!" It shows you how far we go when we reject God and His holy, righteous Word.

The Bible doesn't tell us anywhere that Jesus laughed, and I guess that He probably did. But nowhere in the Bible do you read a verse that Jesus laughed. But in John 11:35, it says, "Jesus wept." It's the shortest verse in the Bible. You want to memorize a verse? Start with that one; it's a good one. Why did He weep? Because He knew so much. Because He hated sin. Because He saw what sin did in the lives of people. When He was at the grave of Lazarus, "Jesus wept." The word there doesn't mean sob or convulsively wept; it just meant that his eyes welled up with water, and a tear trickled down His cheek. The Son of God in tears? What an amazing thought!

If Jesus wept, so should we weep. What does it do to you when you see the sin in the lives of people? The drugs? The divorce? Abortion? Crime? Murder that ravishes our nation? We should be weeping over the heart of God.

Jesus wept, in Luke 13, over Jerusalem. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" He saw their rebellion and their commitment to go their sinful ways.

May God grant to us the gift of tears. Yes, the gift of tears. Our tears, or godly sorrow over sin, will bring the blessing of God's grace, comfort and forgiveness. It's kind of like the rain that we're experiencing. Yesterday I looked out the window. It's actually going to be green in Menifee for a while. There is a God in heaven! But it takes the storms to bring the flowers. It takes the rain to bring the fruit. So it takes the tears to bring the flower of God's comfort into our lives.

My second, and last, main point is, what is the blessing promised to those who mourn? What is the blessing promised to those who mourn over their own personal sin and sin in the lives of others and of our nation? The answer is in verse 4. "For they shall be comforted." The word "for" indicates that this is the reason or the rationale, that those who are blessed are blessed for the reason that "they shall be comforted." Jesus is talking about those who are happy or those who experience God's comfort.

The word "they" in the Greek here is emphatic. It means "they and they only." So only the "poor in spirit" have the "kingdom of heaven," and only those who are mourning over their sin are going to have the comfort of God.

"For they shall be comforted." In Psalm 126:5, the psalmist says, "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." In Psalm 30:5, it says, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." The word "comfort" in the Greek in the conjugate of the noun, the word is "parakletos." It is used for Jesus and the Holy Spirit and God the Father. Jesus said that "When the Spirit has come, He will comfort you." He's called the "parakletos" or "the comforter." He comes alongside to comfort us, to strengthen us and to help us. So the Spirit of God brings comfort to the individual who mourns over their sin.

In 1 John, Jesus is called our "advocate" with the Father. He comes alongside us to plead for us. He's the parakletos, the comforter. In 2 Corinthians 1:3, God is called "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." I love that. So if you want comfort, where do you go? You go to God. If you want comfort, you turn to Jesus Christ. If you want comfort, you turn to the Holy Spirit. You don't need drugs. You don't need alcohol. You don't need materialism. You don't need sensual pleasure. What you need is the Spirit of God. You need to drink from that fountain.

Some of you are thirsty today, and you need to turn away from the world and from your sin and trust Jesus as the Savior. Jesus came to heal the broken-hearted. What a blessing when God grants you repentance and tears.

What is this comfort? Let me give you three things it is. Number one, it is the comfort of sins

forgiven. Psalm 51:7-8 says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice." There is no greater joy or happiness than knowing your sins are forgiven. God gives us "beauty for ashes."

I will never forget August of 1971, when I took a long walk on a deserted beach as a young boy just fresh out of high school. I sat on that beach and wept and wept and wept. Not because I broke my surfboard, and not because I wanted to go to Hawaii and I was stuck in California. It was because I was a sinner. It was because of my sin. Because I had walked away from God. Because I had offended God. Because I had grieved God. Because of the blackness of my soul. And because I was so far away from God, I wept and I cried out to God. And God forgave me, God washed me and God cleansed me. I'll never forget the joy that I felt. I felt that a weight had just lifted off my shoulders, and I actually felt clean inside. What a joy it is to come to God and experience sins forgiven.

Remember the day that you came to know Jesus as your Savior? And how you came with a humble and broken heart? And how you confessed your sin, and God forgave your sin? But He gave you beauty for ashes and "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

This comfort is also the comfort of the joy of the Holy Spirit. When you confess your sins, the Spirit of God comes to live inside you. And the Spirit of God comes to bring His love and His joy and His peace. It's known as "the fruit of the Spirit." You want love, joy and peace? It comes from the Holy Spirit. And when you become a Christian, your body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit, and you have His love, His peace and His joy.

But thirdly and lastly, it's the comfort of Christ's coming. Do you notice in the Beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall..."—future tense—"...be comforted"? I believe that in the context, He is talking about our sin. We feel our sin, we mourn over our sin and we have the comfort of sins forgiven and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. But when we look around this world, we still groan earnestly. As we look around this world, which is not our home and which is very dark, we groan for heaven.

Remember in Romans 8, there are three groanings: creation groans for glory, the Christian groans for glory and the Holy Spirit groans inside the Christian. All creation is groaning and travailing "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." What is that? That's the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. I think hidden in this Beatitude is the promise that Jesus Christ is coming again. And when He comes again, He is going to wipe away every tear from your eyes. And there will be no more sorrow, no more sadness, no more crying, no more Satan, no more sickness and no more sin, for all the former things are passed away.

For the unbeliever, it's going to be "Woe!" Luke said, "Woe unto you who laugh now. You shall mourn and weep." But he said, "Those of you who mourn now, shall be rejoicing." So in God's economy, when Christ comes, creation will be restored and no more groaning.

Then the Christian groans. Why do we groan? Because we want to go to heaven. I want to go to heaven. Do you want to go to heaven? When I look at this troubled world of ours and knowing this world is not my home, I want to go home. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also." Heaven is a real place. Heaven is your home. The world's not your home. How we groan for glory! We desire and we weep for it, but one day our tears will be turned to joy. And the Spirit groans for us according to the will of God when we pray.

And when Jesus comes back, what a glorious day! What joy will fill our hearts! The saddest thing in all the world is a heart that sorrows not over sin. It's a heart that doesn't see its sin. For only the heart that mourns over sin will experience the comfort and joy of sins forgiven. Jesus said, "Happy are those who mourn."

Let's pray.