

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Matthew 5:4

INTRODUCTION

Our study this morning brings us to the second Beatitude or beautiful attitude. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” While this statement can seem a bit paradoxical, it is a statement that warrants our attention and study because a person who doesn’t mourn or who isn’t broken to some degree over his or her sin has no assurance that he has truly a converted heart. One of the signs of true conversion is that a person’s disposition towards sin is radically changed. What they once gloried in is now seen in the light of God’s holiness. What they once took pleasure in is now seen in the light of Christ’s sacrifice.

If there is no change in the way a person views sin, there is no evidence that a person has been reborn. Mourning over sin, as we will see in our study, doesn’t only happen at conversion, but it’s an ongoing mark of a true believer. As a matter of fact, the more a person walks with God and feeds on His Word, the more the light is turned up on His sin – this is God’s grace in the life of the believer. The more the light is turned up on sin the more brokenness and mourning you will see. But the promise of the second Beatitude is “comfort” for those who sense their sin and are broken over it.

MOURNING ISN’T POULAR

There are two primary reasons that we see a lack of mourning today:

1. We have a defective view of sin.
2. We have a defective view of the true nature of Christian joy.

Why is it that the doctrine of sin is so neglected today? Church attenders don’t like to hear it, and unfortunately some pastors are either unconvinced of its reality or afraid of its repercussions. The second Beatitude shows us the necessity of facing our sin. There is an intimate connection between the first Beatitude “Blessed are the poor in spirit” and the second Beatitude “Blessed are they that mourn”. The first Beatitude is primarily intellectual while the second is primary emotional. When we see ourselves for who we really are, spiritually bankrupt with nothing intrinsically within us to commend us to God, the result, in the life of a believer is that of mourning or brokenness over our sin. But Jesus promises here in our text that those who mourn and are broken over their sin will be comforted!

The world has sought every way under the sun to avoid sorrow. Moderns have structured their lives in such a way as to maximize entertainment and amusement to try and drown out any feelings of sorrow, guilt, despair, brokenness, shame, regret, and grief. Their philosophy is “forget your troubles and seek to be as happy as you can.” Their motto is “eat, drink, and be merry.” But the pursuit of pleasure is only a temporary bandage and it cannot stop the bleeding of a heart ravaged by sin. There is one thing worse than sin and that is the denial of sin, which makes forgiveness impossible. The saddest thing in life is not a sorrowing heart, but a heart that is incapable of grief over sin.

If we are honest with ourselves, we often laugh at the things that we should weep over and weep over the things that we should laugh at. Jesus offers a sobering warning in Luke 6:25 when he says, “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.”

WHAT DOES BIBLICAL MOURNING LOOK LIKE

The man who mourns is a sorrowful, but not morose. He is broken, but not miserable. He is serious, but not solemn. He is sober-minded, but not sullen. He is grave, but never cold.

The example of Paul in Romans 7:

Verse 15 - For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Verse 18 - For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

Verse 24 - Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Verse 25 - Paul exclaims, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

In Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 5 Paul talks about the believers groaning for redemption:

*For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
Romans 8:22-23*

*For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
2 Corinthians 5:1-5*

The believer mourns over two things:

1. His own sin before God.
2. The sin of the world he lives in.

The one who truly mourns over his own sin will also sorrow over the power and effects of sin in the world. David in Psalm 119:136 said. "My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law." Jeremiah, the weeping Prophet also mourned over the sins of his people:

Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Jeremiah 9:1

But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock has been taken captive. Jeremiah 13:17

As believers we ought to be broken over the infectious nature of sin in the world. When we read the newspaper or watch the news and see the moral muddle, the perpetual unhappiness, and suffering of mankind, it should remind us of the heinous nature of sin and leave us sorrowful and broken.

The gospels tell us that Jesus wept twice.

1. At the tomb of Lazarus (John 11).

As Jesus met Martha at Lazarus' tomb, He wasn't broken over the fact that Lazarus had passed away – He knew that He was about to bring him back to life. He was broken over the sin of those who surrounded the tomb and the death that that sin brings.

2. Over the sin and hardness of heart of Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! Matthew 23:37

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." Luke 19:41–44

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE UNDERSTAND WHAT JESUS ISN'T SAYING

1. It is important to note that Jesus isn't saying, "Blessed are the grim, cheerless Christians."

We need to be clear about the fact that Jesus is not sanctioning joylessness even laughterless Christianity. Solomon reminds us that a merry heart is good medicine (Proverbs 17:22). Charles Spurgeon once said that some preachers he had known appeared to have their neckties twisted around their souls.

2. Neither is Jesus saying, "Blessed are those who are mourning over the difficulties of life."

THE COMFORT OF THOSE WHO MOURN

What exactly is the comfort that Jesus extends to those who mourn? When Jesus entered the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath day that he began his formal ministry, He read from the scroll of Isaiah. Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). What is the liberty or freedom that Jesus is speaking about in this passage? It is a freedom from the tyranny of sin.

1. It is the comfort of forgiveness of sin.

Believers are the only people in the world who are free from the guilt and condemnation of their sin. The psalmists in Psalm 130:3-4 reminds us, "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared." The word "they" in Matthew 5:3 is emphatic just like verses 3. It carries with it the reality that they and they only will be comforted.

2. It is the comfort of knowing that we have been reconciled to God.

3. It is the comfort of our "blessed hope."

Paul reminds us in Romans 8, "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" Romans 8:22-25.

As a believer becomes increasingly aware of his own sin and sees the burden of sin in the world around him, he is broken and mourns. But this mourning is short lived as the Spirit brings the comfort of future glory into view. As believers we know that there is a future glory coming. We know that a day will dawn when Christ will return and every particle of sin will be banished from the earth. This will mean the end of pride, selfishness, envy, anger, suffering sickness, and death. In that day there will be no more sin to confess, for we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). We will be once and for all freed from sin's bondage and decay (Romans 8:21). What a hope we look forward to! Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!

MOURNING OVER SIN, JUST LIKE POVERTY OF SPIRIT, MUST BE PERPETUAL

The verb used for mourning in Matthew 5:4 is the most intensive of the nine verbs employed in the New Testament and it is continuous. Not only does mourning over sin precede entrance into the kingdom of heaven, but it must continue to take place in the life of a true believer. When we find ourselves in sin we are hopefully humbly broken. That brokenness is meant to drive us back to Christ. The moment that we turn to Christ in repentance, peace and fellowship are restored and comfort is bestowed. If a person claims to be in Christ, but does not experience a sorrowfulness and brokenness over his sin, then it is very possible that he has never come to true saving faith. One of the marks of a true believer is that he begins, by God's grace, to see his sin, but he also begins, in a growing manner, to understand something of the sinfulness of sin.

EXAMINATION

Martyn Lloyd Jones says that it is a good thing for every man to pause at the end of the day and meditate upon himself, to run quickly over his life and ask, "What have I done, what have I said, what have I thought, and how have I behaved with respect to others?" If we examine ourselves like this we will all find that we have done things which we should not have done, said things which we should not have said, thought things which we should not have thought, and related poorly to those around us. This reality of sin should bring a sense of sorrow and mourning.

It is only the man who cries out, "Wretched man am I! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" that can go on to say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." If we truly mourn, we will rejoice and be comforted. It is when a man sees himself in his unutterable helplessness that the Holy Spirit reveals to him the Lord Jesus Christ as his satisfaction. Through the Spirit he is able to see that Christ has died for his sins and stands as his advocate in the presence of God. It is that provision in the person and work of Christ that brings comfort to the heart of a broken believer. Sorrow leads to joyous comfort!

Next Week: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (v. 5).