



Blessed Are Those Who Mourn Because They Will Be Comforted

Matthew 5:4

I've stated the last couple weeks in this new series that the Beatitudes are not to be applied to the unbelieving world. The reason why I want to emphasize this is because the Beatitudes promote characteristics that are completely opposite from the world's mindset. Only by pure grace could any human being begin to want to live out any of the realities of the Beatitudes. Jesus speaks to his disciples, with a crowd listening in, he begins with the first statement: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . ." We who trust Jesus are spiritually bankrupt. In other words, we know we cannot do anything good in and of themselves yet we are blessed by God! God has given us the Kingdom – not because of our works but because of his grace! How opposite is the world's thinking! Every other religion speaks to what we do to get God's favor. Christ's teaching is distinct. Grace means there's nothing we can do, and that God does everything!

Now we come to the second Beatitude: Blessed are those who mourn. . . . Remember, that I think a preferred translation would be this: **Those who mourn are blessed because they will be comforted.** This is the main idea that we're highlighting in the sermon today. And notice how opposite this statement is to our culture and society. Not only is this opposite from our day, but in days gone by. In reading a sermon from the 1950's, the preacher, Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes this: The philosophy of the world is, Forget your troubles, turn your back upon them, do everything you can not to face them. Things are bad enough as they are without your going to look for troubles, says the world; therefore be as happy as you can (Lloyd-Jones, *Sermons on the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 43). Can we relate to these statements? Maybe you think similarly.

Maybe in your life, you essentially rewrite this beatitude. You live this "Blessed are those who are happy." You don't want to think about needing to be comforted. You just want to ignore problems. Or, maybe you know you can't ignore the problems, but instead of turning to mourning, you turn to anger or anxiety. So, your beatitude is "Blessed are the angry, for they shall be comforted" or "Blessed are the anxious for they shall be comforted." But you'll notice that none of those words are used. Jesus targets *mourning*. Those who mourn are blessed. Why those who mourn?

What we'll do today is focus on what it means to mourn. Then we'll focus on the blessedness of being comforted. At the end of the sermon, we'll look at practical ways this plays out in our lives. So, let's now look at what it means to mourn.

1. What does it mean to mourn?

Does this mean, "Blessed are people who cry a lot?" Is Jesus saying that those who are always sad and have no joy are blessed? What type of mourning is Jesus speaking of here? Is this mourning over not getting that house you really wanted or that item on eBay you really were hoping to get? From the beginning of these beatitudes, I believe we know that Jesus is emphasizing spiritual realities. The very first Beatitudes serves as the gatekeeper for the rest. To mourn from the perspective of these

beatitudes, the entire Sermon on the Mount, and even the broader perspective of the whole of Scripture, refers to a lamenting over sin and brokenness in this world that has come because of humanity's fall into sin. So, again to mourn is to **sorrow over personal sin and creation's brokenness**. This definition emphasizes personal mourning and also corporate mourning. In Scripture, we find that those who are godly mourn not only about themselves, but they mourn over creation's fall.

Let's look at various passages that reveal this. Later in this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states in Matthew 7:1 that before we make judgmental assessments of others, we had better realize that we have a lot in our own eyes. Our tendency is to genuinely believe we are fairly good and we quickly judge others. But Jesus states that we are essentially only seeing with one working spiritual eye. We have half our sight lost, and we must always keep in mind that we have our own weaknesses and sins. This idea is emphasized in other portions of Scripture. Paul in Romans 7, says of himself, "²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"¹ Then we get to James' letter. Many people, myself included, believe that much of James' letter is an exposition on parts of the Sermon on the Mount. You get to chapter 4, and James confronts the churches' divisiveness. He summons them to take the Lord's words seriously, and he writes this: Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.² James wants the readers to really get the point. He calls them to mourn by emphasizing it with three words: be wretched, mourn, weep!

For whatever reason, I think we too often want to move quickly past mourning. We think to ourselves, "Jesus died for my sin; so, why would I mourn?" But think about this more. When you first came to Christ, you experienced some sort of grief over your sin. There's a godly sorrow. Well, if godly sorrow led to repentance, then that principle continues throughout our lives! In addition, if God has saved us, he has saved us so that we would even share his mindset about sin. Don't you want to share God's mindset about sin? Doesn't the Scriptures reveal that God weeps over and is angry over sin? Absolutely! So, he works in us by the Spirit to give us emotions that mirror God's view of sin. Those who mourn over personal sin are blessed! You've truly trusted Jesus and are reconciled with God.

But, as I said earlier, we do not only mourn over personal sin. We also mourn over creation's brokenness. As human beings, we are connected with all humanity, in various ways. So, for example, in the Old Testament, prophets would confess the sins of the people – and include themselves in the confession. Isaiah states he dwelled in the midst of people with unclean lips, and he confessed his own sin, too (see Isaiah 6). In the New Testament, Peter talks about God purifying the church that still sins. So, we should also want God to confront our sins here at Ventura, so that we can have godly sorrow and repent!

We should also lament the brokenness in our society and world. I think of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. He states that he often would have gathered the people together like a hen with her chicks (see Luke 13). What a loving and tender picture, but they refused. This caused Jesus to not simply feel sad, but he wept. Think also of Jesus coming to the tomb of Lazarus (see Jn. 11). Have you ever wondered why Jesus weeps at Lazarus' tomb? I mean, we're told in the story, even before he gets to the tomb, that Lazarus has died so that God's glory would be revealed. So, why does Jesus weep when he arrives at the tomb. He knows he'll raise him from the dead. Jesus' weeping reveals the glory of God in that he's weeping over the results of sin's affects on this world. It's not a sin to die, but death came into this world because

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 7:24.

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jas 4:9–10.

of sin! Death is final, and without God's intervention, death is the gateway to being eternally separated from God in a place called Hell. Death is a horrible result of sin, and even though Jesus brought resurrection, death was still a cause to weep. So, we go to Romans 8, and Paul states that we groan inwardly, along with a creation that groans under the weight of decay.

As we think about these few passages about mourning and then are reminded that Jesus is referred to as a man of sorrows (Is. 53:3), and that Jeremiah is dubbed as the weeping prophet, we must ask ourselves, "Do we have a right view of mourning?" Or, are we more like those who say, "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die" (see Eccl. 8)! Ask yourself this: **Am I perhaps missing the spiritual characteristic of mourning in my life and thus not experiencing the blessedness that has been given me in Christ. Do you mourn over personal sin? Do you mourn over the brokenness of the world?**

Keep in mind, the Beatitudes are not only statements expressing something that is to take place in our pasts, but they state what is to be ongoing in the lives of Christians. To mourning should continue in our Christian experience. Even as I say this, some of you might be thinking, "Why?" And that gets us to the second part of this beatitude: the statement of why those who mourn are blessed.

2. What does it mean to be comforted?

Only those who mourn over sin and brokenness are those who are comforted. As I said earlier, sometimes people want to change this beatitude to something like, "Blessed are the happy." I mean, think about the confusion of this statement again. The word "Blessed" here can be translated "Happy." It's not merely a fleeting feeling of happiness, but it's a statement of ultimate blessedness. Yet, you could hear this as "Happy are those who mourn." Wait. What?! We might want to say, "No, Jesus. You meant to say, 'Happy are those who are happy.'" No. He didn't mean to say that. We live in a broken and fallen world where we contribute our own sinfulness, and if we are Christ's our hearts should feel the weight of this broken world. But God doesn't simply want us to feel its weight. He also wants us to experience his comforting grace. **God's comfort is present and future encouragement to sustain and empower you to live for his glory.** This word for "comfort" is also a word used of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to us to give us the "en-COURAGEment" to live for God's glory. God gives us his own comfort now and in the future to strengthen us to live for his glory in this world. But we experiencing this encouragement while mourning in this life.

As you hear all of this, you might be saying, "I can't emotionally handle mourning." There are so many problems in this world, I'd be miserable. I would agree with you if Jesus was just saying we're crying all the time, but I'm reminded of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 6:10: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.³ How can you possibly be sorrowful and always rejoice? This is the great mystery. I don't know how to describe it except to say that I experience it myself every day. Some of the most precious moments in my life have been in the midst of deepest pain. And, even though I felt like I was walking through the valley, he gave me comfort. Today I stand here because I've continued to learn the beauty of lament. If you haven't learned the beauty of lament, I pray you would as well. Honestly, every day I feel sorrow at the brokenness of the world and sorrow for my sin and sorrow as I think of the sin in our lives and the lives of people in this world. Yet, somehow I can have a smile on my face even while I may have tears in my eyes. Do you know why? Because I know the Savior who has promised to *someday* wipe every tear from our eyes. He took humanity's curse on himself and will someday reverse it all. If you have trusted

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 6:10.

Christ, you have this hope, too. And until that day, you weep with the Savior, while laying the burdens down at his feet – trusting his sovereign goodness.

As you listen to all of this, I hope you see that there's a present and future reality to God's comfort. God will comfort us through his word. God will comfort us in prayer. God also comforts us through other believers, like we read in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: Blessed be the . . . God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."⁴ There's a future reality to comfort, like we discover in Romans 8 and Paul says our groaning will cease. We will be finally home with God!

Oh, Ventura, I hope you know that the comfort of God is greater than anything you can experience, and I'm sad that many Christians may be forfeiting God's comfort because they're taking the problems of this world and their own heart, and they're trying to solve them in their own ways. Are you choosing your own methods to self-soothe. God promises to give you *his* comfort! Don't reject Divine comfort. There's nothing greater than having God himself reach to you and give you comfort.

Those who mourn are blessed because they will be comforted. As promised earlier, I said we would end this sermon with a few application points for us to consider today. I'm going to state them in question form.

Do I sweep sins under the rug and simply try to “be happy?” I don't know the Western culture can have such a rise in depression and even deaths by suicide over the last twenty years, and yet when you ask people how they are, they say they're fine. We're inundated with positive messages that just tell people to “choose happiness.” We think that means pasting the smile on. But we need to come to terms with our sin and all that's shattered in this world around us. You keep sweeping under the rug and you're going to find that you just have a pile of dirt that can't be hidden. Putting a smile on your face isn't going to fix it, and you're not going to experience the comfort of God.

Or, maybe you're afraid of your sin coming to the light. You don't know what's going to happen if you admit your sin and you pretend happiness. At least you feel a little “control” with it hidden or with it not being acknowledged. But you're worried that if you admit, people will shun you or things will shatter more. Honestly, I can't tell you what will happen in the specifics, but I can say that if you truly are given a spirit of mourning, God will comfort you. That should overcome any hesitations. Accept his consolation.

Do you take your sadness to the Lord? I want to be very specific here because there are people, myself included, who can take sadness too far. We think mourning is just being sad and crying. But biblical mourning always goes to the Lord's throne – talking to him, wrestling with him, crying to him, submitting to him, expressing your confusion and weakness. I don't want you to walk away from this sermon thinking that being sad is something you do in order to get your way with God. You could read this beatitude like, “Blessed are those who mourn because then God will give you what you want.” No! Blessedness is found in being in Christ and knowing our need for him! Biblical lament looks to the Lord.

Right here, some may say, “I've been taking my sadness to him for a long time and I still don't feel comforted!” I urge you to not give up. Like Jacob who said, “I won't let go until you bless me,” I think that should be our prayer, too. God will bring your heart out and will refine through the sorrow. Also

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 1:3–4.

remember, even this beatitude states we *will* be comforted. It's not necessarily immediate, but it will happen.

Do you silence people who are mourning? Do you know that we have a literal command in the Bible to “weep with those who weep.” Yet, I think so many people look at those who weep and they try to find quick fixes. I've experienced it through many of my valleys. It's like people want me to feel happy immediately. Why? God has purposes that are deeper and greater. I fear that many of us may take the route of Job's friends. You may sit there for a week and then you start spouting off all the reasons why you shouldn't be sad. Read Job's encounters with his friends. Clearly those friends needed to be silent longer and simply be sad with Job, praying with and for him. We don't know God's timetables, but as long as someone is lamenting and taking those laments to the Lord, we continue to come alongside of them and pray with and for them.

Another way we can silence people who are mourning is by getting victims of abuse to quickly forgive and reconcile. I've done a lot of study on abuse this past year, and I'm so saddened and sickened by how the church in America has responded to abuse. A spouse abuses, and the victim is told to “forgive” and get back together quickly. Hold on! What about the sin of the abuse? And, if you've hurt someone, you of all people cannot force that person through spiritual manipulation to “forgive.” If you live that way, you probably don't even know what forgiveness and reconciliation means. You're acting as a god. You ought to be mourning, and the one hurt must have the freedom to mourn. And the church ought to be a safe place for people who are hurt to mourn and be open to heal. If God comforts those who mourn, the church should mirror God's comfort by comforting them.

Do you choose anger or anxiety, instead of mourning, when looking at the world's sins? I want to give a couple examples with this. This past year, many laws and rules have come down from the government that many have not welcomed. I fear that anger has festered like gangrene in many Christian's hearts. You think that your anger is going to give you what you want. I know your longing for the reversal of the curse. You want to feel the comfort of God. This world is changing, and you don't like it, right? But the Spirit says to us through the apostle James, “the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”⁵ But you say, “Pastor Timothy, I can be angry and not sin.” Yes. But the mind of Christ includes mourning. Jesus, who was firm with the religious establishment, mourned over Jerusalem. God, who will judge everyone also says in Ezekiel that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (see Ezek. 33.11). You might think you're doing the Lord's work, but remember, “Blessed are those who *mourn*.” Apart from Christ, every person (whether you agree with them or not) is going to be separated from God for all eternity. Shouldn't that cause us to be somber and to mourn for their souls?

Let me give another example. This month of called Pride Month. This month is to celebrate the LGBT community. When you hear that, what do you think? I imagine some are confused, angry, disgusted, and even anxious. What will be legally demanded in the future? But how many of you mourn? Do you know the statistics of childhood abuse among many who self-identify in the LGBTQ community? But even if that's not the case, we know that the “god of this world” has blinded them. This is the reality of the entire world. And, we too are spiritually bankrupt and without hope if it were not for Christ loving and saving us!

What if instead of expressing anger or anxiety or instead of saying, “That's disgusting,” we actually befriended people? “You've got to be kidding me, Pastor Timothy?!” If you have that response, I fear

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jas 1:20.

you're like the Pharisees who were mad that Jesus went to the homes of sinners. Jesus, the man of sorrows, literally loved and bled for sinners so that they would be forgiven and free. He wasn't concerned about his own needs and freedoms. He was concerned about their eternal freedom. Isaiah prophecies Jesus as being the man of sorrows when talking about him taking the sins of people upon himself! This includes the sins of all sorts and types of sinners. He came alongside the weak and spiritually bankrupt. He mourned for me. He mourned for you. He mourned for *them!* I pray that we would mourn and weep and be concerned about the people around us. I pray we'd be more concerned about other's eternal freedom than our temporal freedoms – and as a result, I pray we'd lovingly proclaim the gospel and see God change hearts to truly love him. Then we too could state the words of Paul to the Corinthians, “and such were some of you!” May he give us mourning hearts that are comforted by him.

Oh how I pray we would learn to mourn more and more so that we would experience the amazing comfort of God that gives us encouragement and hope now and for all eternity. Ventura, **Those who mourn are blessed because we will be comforted by God himself! You experienced this when you first trusted Christ. Experience it now as you grow to be more like him. Do you know your sin? Do you know the world's sin and brokenness? Do you also know the God of all comfort who gives eternal hope and assurance? Then mourn and find God's comfort and joy.**