

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 1 – 9. This is our second week in our seven-week series on the beatitudes, Jesus's sermon on the mount. Today, we will be covering those that mourn.

Mt 5:1-9 5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

NIV

Those who *mourn* are *blessed*! Christ begins his sermon with blessings, for he came into the world to bless us (Ac 3:26) *When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.*" as the great High Priest of our profession; as the blessed Melchizedec; as He in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, Ge 12:3 *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*" He came not only to *purchase blessings* for us, but to *pour out* and *pronounce* blessings on us; and *here* he does it as **one having authority**, as one that can **command the blessing**, even life everlasting, life eternal, and ***that is*** the *blessing* here *again* and *again* promised to the good; his pronouncing them happy makes them so; for those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. As we discovered last week, blessed, Makarios which describes that **joy** which has its secret *within itself*, that joy that is *serene* and *untouchable*, and **self-contained**, that joy that is *completely independent* of all the *chances* and *changes* of life. Our Christian blessedness, that is completely untouchable and unassailable. As Jesus told us in **John 16:22** **"No one, will take your joy from you"** It seems like a contradiction in terms to think that someone who is mourning has joy! This beatitude is somewhat of a shocking theme isn't it? Those who mourn are blessed, for they WILL be comforted.

Now, the world isn't very big on mourning, it's not really a favorite thing of theirs, and certainly, by the world's standards mourning wouldn't be a recommended way to get to happiness, blessedness, or joy. Mourning seems like it's the opposite of being happy, so why would you want to *mourn* to be *happy*? Mourning is **sad**, especially when you are mourning over the bad things you did. Over sinful words, or sinful thoughts or sinful actions. It doesn't seem to be the way to get comfort does it? But as we also discovered, the word blessed in these beatitudes doesn't just mean emotional happiness, it's referring to the *favor* of God *upon us*. The benefits of God's grace, and to have this favor, this grace, **that** is the *blessed life*. **This is** the truly *happy life*. So as with the previous beatitude this one focus's on spiritual things. Jesus spoke with an eye on the eternal, he was not focused on the things of the world. In this beatitude, we discover a basic truth about the gospel that is very important, and *that is*, that you must *go low* before you *go high*. People coming to terms about the bad within themselves, their sin, is essential, to apply the good news. We must mourn over our sins before we can receive the comfort of God's forgiveness for them. For example, in 2 Corinthians 7 Paul is speaking to the Corinthians about the repentance, and the sorrow that had resulted in the rebuke that he had brought them.

2 Co 7:9-10 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a Godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

The word used in this beatitude for mourn, **pentheo** (pen-theh'-o) is the strongest word that the Greek language uses for mourning. It is the word which is used for mourning for the dead, for the passionate lament for one who was loved. In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, it is the word which is used of Jacob's grief when he believed that Joseph, his son, was dead. Ge 37:34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.

It's defined as the kind of grief which takes such a hold on a person that it cannot be hid. It is not only the sorrow which brings an ache to the heart; it is the sorrow which brings the unrestrainable tears to the eyes. Here then, is an amazing kind of bliss:

Blessed is the man who mourns like one mourning for the dead.

This isn't just any sorrow that we are talking about here, we are talking about the mourning, the sorrow over sin, and that is a sorrow that is not to be regretted, because it leads to *repentance*, and *salvation*.

There are three ways in which this beatitude can be taken.

Firstly, it can be taken quite literally:

Blessed is the man who has endured the bitterest sorrow that life can bring.

The Arabs have a proverb; “All sunshine makes a desert.” The land on which the sun always shines will soon become an arid place in which no fruit will grow. There are certain things which only the rains will produce; and certain experiences which only sorrow can bring.

Sorrow can do two things for us. It can show us, as nothing else can, the essential kindness of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ; and it can show us as *nothing else can*, the *comfort* and the *compassion of God*. Many people, in the hour of their sorrow, have discovered their fellow Christians, and God, as they never have before. When *things go well* it's possible to live for years on the surface of things; but when *sorrow comes* people are **driven** to the *deeper things of life*, and, if accepted correctly, a **new strength** and beauty enter into their soul. **I can do ALL THINGS through Christ, who strengthens me.** Philippians 4:13 tells us.

Secondly, some people have taken this beatitude to mean;

*Blessed are those who are desperately sorry, mourning, for the **sorrow** and the **suffering** of this world.*

When we were thinking of the first beatitude we saw that it is always right to be detached from *things*, but it is never right to be detached from *people*. This world would have been a very much poorer place, if there had not been those who cared intensely about the *sorrows* and the *sufferings* of **others**.

Each day as I am preparing to leave for work, I take a moment to pray that God will bring those who are suffering across my path, and that he will give me HIS eyes to see them, and a softened *mourning* heart, and that he will lead me in whatever way possible so that I am able to assist them, to bring them *comfort*. So one day, on the first very cold 19 degree, blistering, windy day of winter; as I was on my way to my first appointment of the day running late, in a hurry, blinders on. Can't be late! Have get there on time! I looked across a four-lane highway, and noticed someone on a bike! With a parka coat on, white knuckled hands sticking out in the cold, with a cardboard sign on his bike that simply read, "Veteran, Homeless." A sorrow came over me, and the spirit prodded me GO BRING COMFORT! Of course, I argued; I'M LATE! I don't have time! As I continued to drive past him my sorrow turned to a mourning that I simply could not refuse. So, I turned my car around, drove past him a bit, pulled over, and waited for him to reach my car. As I talked to Chuck, I discovered that he had barely eaten anything for several days, and that he was living under a bridge. I asked him if it was

ok if we prayed together, and if I could offer him a gift. As we prayed I reached into my pocket where I had only one bill, I put it between our hands, and held it there as we prayed. All I noticed, was how incredibly cold his hands were. Of course, he was very grateful with the offering I gave him to get some food. Then we shook hands, very cold hands, and I departed. As I continued on the way to my first appointment, even later now, thinking my duty of bringing comfort was over, that I had done all I could do to help him, I couldn't stop thinking of his cold hands. Suddenly, I recalled a pair of thick furry gloves given to me as a Christmas gift nearly a year earlier from my company, that I shoved under my seat thinking I would never need, or wear. Once again there was the prodding of the spirit saying GO BRING COMFORT! Once again, I argued; I'M LATE! I don't have time! But of course I couldn't refuse, because of the heavy mourning on my heart for Chucks cold hands. So, I whipped my car around, drove back nearly three miles, once again I pulled in front of him and waited. While driving back to his location I was praying that I would be able to find him. I was driving with my knees so I could hold the thick furry gloves up to the heater vent on my dash to get them as hot as possible. When Chuck rode up I simply held them out, and helped him put them on. As tears ran down his face, he said, "you have no idea how much my hands were hurting from the cold." I said "yeah, I had a little idea." After I departed, a second time, and finally got to the final turns

of my journey to my first appointment, in Bellevue, “train city”; I noticed a train, barely moving blocking my path. I said, really God? I’m so late now, and this is the thanks I get for bringing comfort to Chuck? As I got closer, it was revealed from trees blocking the full scene, that it was the last car of a very long train. If I would have ignored my mourning heart to assist Chuck, I would have been sitting there the whole time anyway, arriving no sooner in time to my destination.

Christianity is caring. This beatitude does mean; Blessed is the person who cares intensely for the sufferings, and for the sorrows, and for the needs of others.

Now there’s no doubt that both of those first two thoughts are in this beatitude, but its main thought is:

Blessed is the man who is desperately sorry for his own sin and his own unworthiness.

As we have seen, the very first word of the message of Jesus was, “Repent!” No one can repent unless they are truly sorry for their sins. The thing which really changes people, is when they suddenly come up against something which opens their eyes to what sin is and to what sin does. Children may go on their way, and may never think of the effects and consequences; and then someday something happens and they see

the stricken look in a father's or mother's grief stricken eyes; and suddenly sin is seen for what it is.

That is what the cross does for us. As we look at the Cross, we are bound to say, "That is what sin can do. Sin can take the loveliest life in all the world and smash it on a Cross." One of the great functions of the Cross is to open our eyes to the horror of sin. And when we see sin in all its horror we can't do anything else but experience intense sorrow, mourning, for our sin.

Christianity begins with a sense of sin. Blessed is the person who is intensely sorry for their sin, the person who is heart-broken for what their sin has done to God and to Jesus Christ, the person who sees the Cross and who is appalled by the havoc wrought by sin.

It is the person who has *that experience* who will indeed be comforted; for *that experience* is what we call *penitence*, and the broken and the contrite heart God will never despise. Ps 51:17 **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.** The way to the joy of forgiveness is through the desperate sorrow of the broken heart.

The real meaning of the second beatitude is:

O THE BLISS OF THE PERSON WHOSE HEART IS BROKEN FOR THE WORLDS SUFFERING AND FOR THEIR OWN SIN, FOR OUT OF THEIR SORROW, OUT OF THEIR MOURNING, THEY WILL FIND THE JOY OF GOD! THEY WILL BE COMFORTED.

So what are the hindrances that keep us from mourning, from engaging in the mourning that we should have over our sin? The world does not encourage mourning in general, it encourages getting rid of guilt in all the wrong ways. The world would much rather drown sorrow in a glass of wine, in entertainment, or in pleasure. The world is just good at distractions, right? They never deal with the real fundamental issue, the core problem, they just cover it up. The guilt of sin is painful, everybody feels it; so, they try to get rid of it in so many different ways, the wrong ways. They try to cover it, they try to ignore it, they try to suppress it. But this never really works' does it? But it must NOT be so with US. We MUST deal with the core issues. We want to confront the reality of who we are, and what we need. We don't want the fake joy of the world that doesn't last. Where that guilt comes back over, and over, and over again. The true joy only comes if we first mourn over sin. So the first hindrance of mourning is making light of sin.

One of the reasons we don't mourn over sin *as we should*, is because we don't take it very seriously. We don't see certain sins like God sees them. We make the mistake of valuing the seriousness of particular sins in terms of how others think about them. Right? We feel really bad about the bad sins, the ones that are particularly difficult because of how it affects other around us. We should mourn for those as well, but we shouldn't be tempted to think about sin in light of how others think about it. The world's people are not the standard, God is the standard. God's law is the standard. So therefore we must not make light of any sin. But when you consider that sin, consider what it cost Christ on the cross. Then you understand how bad it really is. As the hymn tells us, "he who think of sin but lightly, looking at the cross here may be its nature, rightly." So all sin is grievous in the sight of God, and it should be grievous to us. If we begin to see all of our sins in this light, we will be able to mourn over them.

The second hindrance, *being distracted by the cares of the world*. To put it simply, we are far too busy to mourn. We have other things to do, there's not room on the calendar for mourning. We don't have time to consider sin. People keep busy intentionally to avoid the problem right? We keep our schedules so busy that we don't have time to consider these things, to have the time of self-examination, to have a time of confession. So be on guard against the distractions of the world

that keep you from engaging in this mourning. On this particular day, in service here, the Lords day of worship, is an opportunity for you to confess your sins. This time of service is a time of opportunity for you to consider, and to confess.

What I love about the beatitudes is that every single one comes with a blessing attached. The *comfort* coming to **mourners** is that they *shall be comforted*. Mourners shall be comforted. Mourning over sin brings comfort and consolation because of the comfort of God. God promises to forgive. So sorrow over sin, mourning over sin is that gateway to comfort, that gateway to joy. There is no gateway into joy without first mourning for sin. Joy comes in forgiveness. Jesus was described in scriptures as the consolation of Israel. True consolation of Gods people comes in the forgiveness that he has bought upon the Cross. So the comfort comes to us in hearing those words, you are forgiven. You are my child, I love you, I have forgiven you, the debt is paid. You are righteous in my eyes because of my Son Jesus Christ. That, brothers and sisters is the true comfort. So together, let us mourn over sin. Let us sorrow over these things that we may enjoy the comfort and consolation that Christ has purchased for us on the Cross.

Closing prayer

Oh God in heaven, we thank you that you have opened our eyes to see our need for our Lord, Jesus Christ.

And how we have nothing in of ourselves that is worthy before you that is holy.

We thank you for the comfort that you give us, and these promises of forgiveness and mercy. We pray that you would help us not to avoid mourning, and avoid the guilt that comes from sin, and avoid confession. That we would embrace these promises of the gospel, that we would openly confess to you that we are sinners and are in need of your mercy. We ask that you would grant us the comfort that comes from your words when you say, you are forgiven. Not from the other things of the world that do not last.