

The Beatitudes- Matthew 5:1-12

A study

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"Blessed are Those Who Mourn, for They Shall be Comforted."

From our previous studies, we learned that the Beatitudes characterize how a Christian should think and live. They are ultimately pictures of Jesus Christ our Lord. As we come to know him by grace through faith, we begin to be conformed more and more to his image. Jesus' image and character are revealed in the Beatitudes. The second beatitude, or characteristic of Christ and His people, is being *those who mourn*.

Being a mourner is not being a "cry baby". It should not be perceived as weak or childish, but extremely godly and reflective of Christ. Living in a fallen world as redeemed people we are exposed to God's gracious revelation in His Word of the way things *should be* in God's world. We know the purpose for all people is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever- -and yet we do not see this fully (and sometimes not at all)!

You could say that things are not as they should be, and we realize it. This causes a tension in our lives. We know what is good, right, and holy- -that is, what God expects and how God created all things for his glory- - yet we see sin, suffering, and problems in the world.

As Christians, we see and experience the consequences of sin in other people, as well as in our own hearts! During this time, as we await the return of our Savior, we must be comforted by the reality that our Lord Christ is victoriously seated at God's right hand, and our eyes should remain fixed on the future when God will renew and restore all things to the *way things should be!*

Those who mourn in this present age can be assured that they will be comforted by the Spirit NOW, and fully comforted when Jesus returns for all of those He loves!

Mourners are Repentant and Blessed!

It is actually not sad to be a "mourner", but blessed! The reason is that a mourner is one who is aware of his spiritual condition before the LORD. A mourner knows that he or she is a sinner and needs the mercy and grace of the LORD!

Remember the main message of John the Baptist and Jesus when they preached to the crowds? The message was "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Mourners are those who live repentant for the Living God. Mourners

are those who not only repent when they begin the Christian life, but live a life of constant repentance and dependence upon the Living God. Mourners know they are sinners, yet they know they have a Savior Who they can go to and confess their sins and be cleansed (1 John 1:7ff).

King David gives us a fine example of a mourner, or how we should respond to our sinful condition as the Word of God reveals more and more of the depths of sin in our hearts. Notice his approach to God begins with asking for mercy, not what he deserves. That reminds us as well of two of the characteristics of the Beatitudes: Poor in spirit and the merciful!

Psalm 51: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise...

David's request as a mourner is to have a clean heart before God, a right spirit within (v. 10). Mourners know that only God can create this in us, and give to us a right spirit. Mourners live repentant lives before the Lord, careful not to presume upon His grace, nor to forget their low condition. Yet at the same time, realizing that God is merciful, forgiving, full of steadfast love for sinners, and one who will cleanse us from our condition (vv. 1-2).

In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, we should remember that the people who were listening in to Jesus' message to his disciples, would have known the ways of the Scribes and the Pharisees. These were not mournful people. In fact, they do not respond to John the Baptist's message of repentance. When they come to hear John, he asks them: "Who has warned you to flee the coming wrath?" He then proceeds to call them "vipers" and tells them to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance." His point is that if you are going to enter the Kingdom, you must be made aware of your low position and condition before the Living

God (being poor in spirit). He wanted them to know that the "fruits of repentance" was a mournful spirit that came to God looking for grace, not honor of merit!

Mourning Over Sin

Think about the lack of true and Biblical mourning in our culture today, even among some Christians! In our world, we either excuse the sin we see in others, or we condemn sinners. Some in our culture on the one hand, allow others to "do as they please" with no regard to righteousness. They say "Let the homosexual live freely without conviction of God's Word"; "Let the rebellious and the lawbreaker alone"; "Don't judge those who sin"; or "It doesn't matter what God we worship as long as we worship with faith". All of these sayings (and there are plenty more), are sayings that justify or excuse sin! We should never allow this kind of thinking to blur the righteousness and holiness of God revealed in Scripture.

On the other hand, some of us condemn sinners. We as Christians see the homosexual, the rebellious, the lawbreaker, and those who are misguided in their worship of idols and we condemn them forgetting that we were once among them! Neither of these positions are correct for Christians. We should neither excuse sin, nor condemn sinners! Rather, we should weep and mourn in repentance for what we see around us, calling others to repentance and pointing them to the same grace and mercy that we have found in the Lord Jesus!

Our message is one of repentance, and anyone reading this who does not live a repentant life must repent and believe upon the Lord Jesus, but we should never forget from where we came. Our lives now are all because of His grace! We should mourn over the lost condition of others, not judge them as if we are any better. *Self-righteous people are never mourners!* The Apostle Paul reminds us of this:

2 Corinthians 6:9-11: ⁹ **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,** ¹⁰ **nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.** ¹¹ **And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

This passage to the Corinthians reminds us that we were all sinners. That should make us continually repentant, but also grateful! The joy of the LORD is our strength, and that joy is a reality in the midst of our mourning. This too is the "already, not yet"! We mourn now, knowing that things are not as they should be in our world (including our own hearts!), yet we rejoice and are comforted because we know that Jesus has overcome the world and made a way to come

for cleansing and a righteous robe before the Most High and Holy LORD of Heaven and Earth!

Have you ever noticed how mad and angry we get with others when they sin against us? Yet we often are not moved to tears and a mournful attitude when we see people sin against a Holy God? It is strange how we so easily are offended by others, but we don't think about the offense of our own sins before God! As mourners, we should reflect upon these things. We should remember, it was our sins that placed Jesus on the cross! It was our sins that caused him to die, caused him to be afflicted and cursed by God, taking God's anger and wrath in our place! Our sins were placed on Jesus so that he was called "sin".

Paul says: "**He who had no sin became sin in order that we in Him we might become the righteousness of God!" (2 Cor. 5:21).**

This statement alone should cause us all to be mourners! Yet at the same time, Jesus was declared "sin" so that we could be declared "righteous"! Furthermore, Jesus' resurrection and ascension to God's right hand should cause us to be comforted!

Jesus the Mourner

In Jesus' life here "under the sun", he visited a world full of sin and misery, so as to redeem those who would come to him by faith! Yet, when he came to extend his hand of grace and mercy, he was brutally apprehended by sinful men, abused by those undeserving, and put to death by those unworthy of His presence! Jesus was a mourner!

Jesus mourned over Jerusalem when he saw how many people who called Abraham "Father" rejected him and had not the "faith of Abraham" revealing themselves to be "sons of the devil" (John 8:31-58). He cried out: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I have longed to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks and you would not let me!"

Jesus mourned over Lazarus when he saw the results of the wages of sin in bringing death to his friend. Jesus mourned over those who were unrepentant and unbelieving who stood around him mocking him, laughing at him, and grieving His spirit within him! Jesus mourned over sinners constantly throughout his life!

Yet in Jesus' resurrection, He was comforted! Jesus was raised again to new life! Jesus ascended to God's right hand upon completion of His heavenly work for sinners and sent a portion of His joyful and triumphant Spirit to dwell with His people until He returns! He told his disciples "In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world!"

What great news for all Christians! Take comfort, Christians. Although we know that *things aren't as they should be*, that there is rampant sin and iniquity around us, as well as in our own hearts! We can be comforted by the fact that we know Jesus will return and restore all things! He is preparing a place for us know, full of joy and salvation and worship, empty of sin and misery! We know that the problem of sin has been taken care of in the death and mourning of Jesus Christ! We know that he who began a good work deep within our sinful hearts, will complete it on the Day of Jesus (Phil. 1:6).

"...They Shall be Comforted!"

Our comfort today as Christians is not in this present age, this evil world full of sin and misery, hating the Creator and Living God who we so long to be like! Our comfort is found in resting in the power of his Spirit, our knowledge of the God of all comfort, and knowing that he will wipe every tear from our eyes when he restores heaven and earth to the way *it was supposed to be*, yet in a way that will be beyond what we ever have asked or imagined! As we close this study, may we be comforted and meditate upon the words of God in Revelation 21:1-!

Revelation 21:1-6: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

May we as Christians, continue to mourn over our sins and the sins of others as we seek comfort in God's Spirit, and await the New Heavens and the New Earth where there will only be rejoicing because only righteousness will reign with Jesus Christ, our Glorious Savior, seated on the Throne of Blessed Grace! Are you longing for the day when you shall see him face to face? When we shall see him, we shall be like him! (1 Cor. 13:9-13; 1 John 3:2).

Reflect upon the words of Anne Cousin, who wrote the following hymn based on the dying words of the great theologian and suffering preacher Samuel Rutherford:

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,

The fair, sweet morn awakes.

Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand;
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land.

The King there in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen:
It were a well spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between:

The Lamb, with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love;
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above.

There to an ocean fullness
His mercy doth expand.
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

Soli Deo Gloria!