

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

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[0:00] Well, if you would open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, we have begun a series in the Sermon on the Mount we're calling Kingdom Citizens. This morning we're going to be camping out on one verse, Matthew 5, 4.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. But I just want to remind you, the Sermon on the Mount is the manifesto of King Jesus. Our King is publicly declaring to His citizens who we are and how we are to live.

And so, becoming a citizen of the Kingdom begins with coming to terms with your spiritual bankruptcy. Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

And so when we come to terms with our spiritual bankruptcy before God, our sinfulness, our debt, spiritual debt before God, we realize that the only way to have this debt paid off is if God Himself is generous and pays our debt for us.

And as we know that God's debt relief program is not a program in which we kind of work our way out of debt. His debt relief program is a person, Jesus, who paid our debt in full.

[1:24] We are a forgiven people. We were poor, but because Jesus, who was rich, became poor, He makes us rich. He makes us rich in Christ.

Our spiritual poverty is the starting point of everything. So if you think about the Beatitudes, all these blessings as progressive, as sequential, what you'll realize is this, it all starts with being poor in spirit.

Recognizing our poverty. And what flows out of that is mourning. When you realize your spiritual bankruptcy, it's not long after that, you begin to mourn it.

To be sorrowful over it. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

My wife and I, we met in college. We fell in love in college. It was almost love at first sight. But when Jenny and I were in college, we were both believers arriving.

[2:35] But there was a young woman there whose name was Diane. And she became a Christian while there. And she was a bit eccentric. She was, after all, an art major.

But what you can't deny is the work that God did in her. It was a radical change in her life. And I remember something.

I'll never forget it. Every year at about the same time, Diane would remember her conversion. And she would wear all black on that day.

And so you'd see her walking around campus dressed in black. And it was her way of mourning her sins against God. And remembering the great forgiveness she had received in Christ.

Her mourning, her sin against God was the starting point. But it always ended with her being comforted in Christ.

[3:42] We're going to take our cues from Diane, but more so from Jesus. If you're a Christian, if you're a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, you're going to mourn your sin regularly.

Because God is still holy. And even though you've been justified by His grace, He's still sin. And so we're going to be dealing with our sin all the way until we die or until Jesus returns.

And part of that, for a Christian, is mourning our sin. Seeing it and responding to it as God would have us.

Our godly sorrow over our sin will lead us to the blessed comfort offered to us in Christ alone. So this morning, make no question, I'm going to call you by God's Word to mourn over your sin.

But, ultimately, the call will be to find your comfort in Christ. The way to find comfort in Christ is to go through mourning your sin.

[4:52] So this morning, I'm going to have two main points. First is, mourn your sin against God. And then second, find your comfort in Christ alone.

The call to mourn your sin is ultimately a call to find your comfort in Christ. So would you now look back at Matthew 5, verse 4.

Blessed are those who mourn. The first thing you need to realize about this, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The call to mourn is a condition to experience the blessing Jesus is talking about.

Now, when you read this, blessed are those who mourn, I don't know about you, but it sounds a bit odd. It sounds a bit paradoxical. It's kind of upside down. You could translate it this way, happy are the unhappy.

[5:57] Seems a little weird. But what you need to understand is, it's the entire verse we need to understand this mourning in.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Mourning is a condition that must be met in order to receive God's comfort.

So what I'm trying to tell you is this. The mourning Jesus is talking about, the grief, that's not the blessing.

But it's necessary in order to experience God's blessing. In order to be comforted by God, we must mourn our sin.

So mourning is a condition to this blessing. The second thing is this. I want you to see under mourn your sin against God. It's the kind of mourning Jesus is talking about.

[6:58] He's talking about a sadness. He's talking about a grief. One commentator talked about it this way. That this mourning is the emotional counterpart to being poor in spirit.

It's something that we feel. When we think about mourning, I'm guessing you think about what I think about, someone dying.

Mourning the death of a loved one. And I'll never forget the day my grandfather died. Never forget it. It was back in 2000. And what I'll never forget about it is how my grandmother responded.

My grandparents had been married over 50 years. And the moment my grandfather died, they moved him to a gurney.

He was in his home. And what I'll never forget is watching my grandmother bathe my grandfather's body. And what was amazing and striking was how she was touching his body.

[8:07] I was down the hall watching. And as she was touching his body, a body she had known for 50 years, she was mumbling, I love you.

And what I remember most is a teardrop at the end of her nose as she tenderly touched her dead husband's body.

Her mourning, my grandmother's mourning, was an all-consuming mourning. It took over. The reason why I tell you that story is this.

The mourning that Jesus is talking about, that word translated mourn is the strongest Greek word for grief.

The strongest. It's a grief that takes over. It's a grief that says all things stop. This has got to be dealt with.

[9:13] Jesus chose this word for a reason. When we mourn a loved one, it's serious.

When we sin against God, it is serious. So this mourning that Jesus is talking about, he's not talking about bereavement of someone's loss.

What he's talking about is an intense grief over sinning against God. John Stott said it this way, this is not the sorrow of bereavement, but the sorrow of repentance.

Last week I shared with you the opening words of the ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus when they went public with their ministries. Do you remember what it was? Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The mourning of Matthew 5.4 is an intense grief over our sin against God. Feeling deep sadness for sinning against our holy God.

[10:34] Now, think about it directionally. This is a God word sorrow. This is a God word sorrow. The Apostle Paul talks about this as a godly sorrow.

A godly grief. In 2 Corinthians 7, in this godly sorrow, this godly grief leads to repentance. He talks about a different kind of grief in that passage as well.

a worldly sorrow. And it doesn't lead to repentance. It leads to death. What's the difference? Godly sorrow is God word.

It's concern about what God thinks. Worldly sorrow doesn't care. It's more concern about getting caught. When we mourn the loss of a loved one, we are acutely aware of the one we've lost. It leaves a hole, doesn't it? There's a great emptiness. It can become surreal. When we mourn our sins, we are acutely aware of how offensive our sin is to our holy God.

[11:47] At the heart of godly mourning is an awareness of God's holiness.

Do you remember Isaiah chapter 6? God gives Isaiah a vision of himself high and lifted up in the temple. There are seraphim flying around.

God, they are the six winged angels. Two, they cover their eyes. Two, they cover their feet. Two, they fly. And they are calling out to one another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is filled with His glory. Holy, holy, holy. There's no other word in your Bible that describes God three times in a row.

Holy, holy, holy. God isn't described as loving, loving, loving. He's not described as just, just, just. He's described as holy, holy, holy.

[12:52] Utterly set apart in who He is. Perfect in all things. The foundation shakes. Smoke fills the temple.

This is a theophany. God revealing Himself to Isaiah. And what does Isaiah do? Oh, yes! Happy day! Happy day! Happy day! Woe is me.

Woe is me. For I am a man of unclean lips. He's utterly aware of his sinfulness. He comes into the presence of a holy God and he becomes very aware of his uncleanness.

He's acutely aware of his sinfulness and he's grieved by it. It doesn't say it, but what Isaiah is experiencing is a godly sorrow.

Thank God that he sent an angel with a hot coal to cleanse him. What a picture of grace and mercy. Do you recall David's adultery with Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 12?

[14:02] Starts with adultery, leads to cover up, followed by abuse of power, followed by murder. David had Uriah killed. And David didn't see it.

So you know what God did? He sent Nathan the prophet. Nathan goes to David, shares with him a little parable. There's this poor guy who raised the sheep. This rich guy, someone come over, the rich guy steals the sheep.

David's like, how can that be? And Nathan says, you're the man. You're the rich man who stole the sheep, buddy. Cut David to the quick.

And what does David say? 2 Samuel 12, 13, I have sinned against the Lord. I have sinned against the Lord.

Psalms 51 is a psalm that David wrote in response to this confrontation. It's a beautiful psalm. It's a psalm of contrition. It's a psalm of godly sorrow, of recognizing not only sin, but need for the forgiveness of that sin.

[15:12] And what's striking about Psalm 51 is verse 4, against you and you alone have I sinned. I mean, he sinned against at least three or four other people.

But what he's saying is there is first and foremost, I have sinned against the holy God. In 2 Samuel 12, 14, God again is merciful.

The Lord also has put away your sin. You will not die, Nathan says to David. Some people think that Psalm 32 is written in response to this episode as well.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is not held against them. These are just examples of godly sorrow coming into being confronted by sin, being aware of God's holiness and responding in mourning.

Jesus is talking about an acute awareness of your sin and a corresponding sadness over it because you know you have sinned against a holy God.

[16:31] The most glorious and wonderful person in the universe. At the heart of this mourning that Jesus is talking about is a heart, is an awareness of the holiness of God.

Mourn your sin, brother and sister. Sin is against a holy God. But you may be thinking, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, I'm justified.

I'm in right standing with God. I don't have to fear. You don't have to fear. There is therefore now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. But you know what?

God is still holy and you still sin. Martin Luther put it this way. This is Latin. This is like the only four Latin words I know.

Simul eustus et peccator. Simultaneously just and sinful. That's what he describes those of us who are righteous in God's sight.

[17:38] Those of us who've been justified. We are in right standing with God legally and yet we still sin. And so even though that we've been forgiven of our sin, God is still aware of our sin when we sin.

He doesn't hold us against us. But he's aware of it. There are warnings all over the New Testament about people who persist in their sin who are not aware of their sin.

Brother and sister in Christ, do you grieve over your sin? Do you mourn over it? And do you mourn over it because you know you're sinning against God?

I have three questions to help you mourn your sin. First one is this. Are you willing to go there?

Are you willing to open yourself up to the holiness of God? Are you willing to go there? When I was a youth pastor years back, I would take groups of students up north and we would go camping.

[18:49] For many of them, it was the first time that they were living out of doors. No longer with shingles, two by sixes, and plywood over their head. The only thing separating them from thunderstorms, 50 mile an hour gusts of wind, potential bears and whatnot, was this really thin nylon tent.

And man, they would feel exposed. They would feel real small real quick. They were hearing things and experiencing things that they just didn't realize was out there.

When we come into the holy presence of God, it's like living without your roof. You're exposed. You feel small. You'll be aware of your sin. Just like Isaiah. The thing is, we have a tendency of trying to insulate ourselves from God's holiness.

Do you make a joke out of your sin? Do you minimize your sin? Do you hide your sin? Do you avoid your sin? Do you blame others for your sin? Do you know why we don't take sin seriously enough?

[20:09] It's because we don't take God's holiness serious enough. Are you willing to go there? Are you willing to take the roof off to God's holiness?

Would you ask God, God, would you reveal yourself to me in your holiness? God, would you lovingly expose me in your holiness?

Are you willing to go there? Second question. Are you seeing your sin as God sees it? You've heard of beer goggling.

What we're talking about is Bible goggling. Seeing your sin as God sees your sin. And you see yourself accurately when you see yourself through his revealed word, his holy word.

What does God think of pornography? What does God think of outbursts of anger? What does God think about sleepless nights lying in your bed, turmoil in anxiety, in worry?

[21:23] What does God think about that? What does God think about your questionable financial dealings? What does God think about that? How does God see that?

When we go to his word. And when we go to his word humbly and we're confronted with his word, we're going to see things through his perspective that maybe we don't want to see.

Are you seeing your life as God sees it? Third question. Are you feeling about your sin the way that God feels about your sin?

Do you feel what God feels towards it? What does God feel towards the exploitation of women in the sex trade? What do you think God feels about that?

What do you think? How does God feel about pornographers trying to hook young boys at an early age to milk them for what they're worth?

[22:29] What do you think God feels about that? How do you think God feels about your talking about others behind their backs?

Do you feel what God feels? Do you see it as God sees it? Are you willing to go there? Do you know where all this leads?

It all leads to godly sorrow for our sake. It all leads to seeing ourselves as God sees us. And it leads us to repentance.

Turning from sin and turning to God for comfort that's found in Christ alone. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot minimize our sin by ignoring God's holiness.

Rather, we mourn our sin by exposing ourselves to God's holiness. And then he will lead us to comfort. God is holy.

[23:34] And we remain sinful. We're going to keep mourning our sin, but we're going to keep being comforted by the comfort God gives us in Christ. So brothers and sisters, mourn your sin.

But let's turn the corner now. Let's find our comfort in Christ alone. Let's say that God in his holy character, in his holy kindness, has begun to expose an area of sinful speech in your life.

You've been praying, oh God, would you reveal yourself to me in your holiness? Oh God, would you help me to see my sin as you see it? God, would you help me to feel about my sin the way that you feel about it?

And so God begins to do a work. You've been noticing how your harsh words have been hurting your spouse, been hurting your children.

Or maybe you're not a spouse, or you don't have children. Maybe you're hurting your brothers and sisters. Or maybe your harsh words are hurting your friends. Or maybe your harsh words are hurting fellow employees. Has anybody spoken a harsh word in the room?

[24:57] God's making you aware of it. And the first thing that you wanted to do when God began to reveal his holiness here, the first thing you want to do is just kind of write it off.

I wanted to write off your harsh words. You know, I was just tired and I just spoke out of my tiredness. Well, maybe you were tired, but there was already something in you in which that tiredness let loose.

another way that we write off our harsh words is, you know what, they had it coming. They had that baby coming.

They pushed and pushed and pushed, and you know what, they had it coming. It's their fault. You realize you've been writing it off, but as you prayed about it and as you asked God to bring it to light, you start to see your speech through the lens of God's Holy Word.

Let's say you go to a small group with other Christians and a brother in the group is saying, you know what, God has been convicting me of my speech.

[26:09] I came across Ephesians 4, 29, and man, He is showing me how corrupting my speech is. And you're provoked by it.

It stirs you unto love and good deeds by exposing your sin. Ephesians 4, 29 says, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such is good for the building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

The moment you hear it in your small group, you're like, bam, bam! Oh, no! Oh, no! I think there's something going on with my speech. God's Word exposes the sinfulness of your speech.

He uses other brothers and sisters to help get it done. And so as you become more and more aware of this, you start asking the question, when I speak harshly, is that corrupt talk or is that edifying, building up talk?

Does it fit the occasion? Does it give grace to those who hear? And then you humbly, honestly say to yourself, it doesn't. I run my speech along Scriptures and I'm not doing that.

[27:26] It's hurting other people. And then, you realize Ephesians 4.30, which says, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who sealed you for the day of redemption.

And you start realizing, not only am I hurting people with my corrupting talk, but I'm grieving the Holy Spirit of God because He is trying to unite His people, not divide people. And my talk is actually dividing the very people He's trying to unite.

I'm grieving God with my speech. You know what happens then? You feel bad.

You start to mourn. You start to grieve your grieving of the Spirit of God. You're saddened by this thing you see in yourself.

How's God going to comfort you then? How is God going to comfort you? Blessed are those who mourn for they will, they shall be comforted.

[28:34] How's God going to comfort you? He promises He's going to comfort you. How's He going to comfort you? You come face to face with sin, what are you going to do? Well, God's going to comfort you through His promises.

God's going to remind you of what He's done for you. And so, to wrap up our time together, I want to point you to some promises of God that are aimed to comfort those who are mourning their sin.

And you know what they all have in common? They're all ours in Christ Jesus. This comfort that I'm about to tell you is Jesus' comfort. Comfort that's ours because He shed His blood for us.

Promise number one. Be comforted by this. Jesus paid it all. Christ has paid the penalty for your sin in full.

I find it's really helpful to get real specific about sin. The more concrete, the better. The more specific, the better.

[29:46] Getting into the nitty-gritty of what's going on. As one man said, sanctification is in the details. So the next time you speak harsh words, you grab them and maybe they're already gone out of your mouth.

And you speak this promise to them. Christ paid for those words. Those harsh words which came out of me and I grieve it, they've been paid in full by Jesus.

Jesus was your substitute. He died on the cross for your sins. He died on the cross for those sins. Jesus paid it all. You know, when Jesus paid it all, when he paid for all your sins, you know, we can think, okay, just kind of like this general payment for all of our sins. Great. But really, here's what you need to think about.

It was an itemized list of your sin. He paid it all. He paid it all. Jesus was your sin bearer.

[31:00] Jesus was your wrath taker. You know, one harsh word would have condemned you for eternity. It would have condemned me. And what Jesus does is he took our place on the cross.

He died the death that we were supposed to die. and he bore the wrath that was intended for those harsh words. Jesus paid it all.

1 John 1.9. It's a great verse in your Bible. You want to flip to it real quick? John is so, I love my Bible because it's so realistic.

We will continue to sin. We are justified sinners. 1 John 1.9 says this, If we confess our sins, if we confess our harsh words, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He can because he paid it. We go to him. That word confess, it's from a fancy Greek word which means to agree with, calling it the same thing.

[32:09] When I'm grieving my sin, I'm seeing the sin as God sees it and I go to God and confess it and I experience forgiveness. I like 1 John 1.9 but you know what my favorite verse in 1 John is?

1 John 2. Verse 1. And a little bit of 2. My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin but if anyone does sin, anybody raise your hand.

But if anyone does sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He's alive.

He's risen. He's the righteous one at God's right hand right now. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sin.

That fancy word means sin bearer. He bore the wrath for it. And so now when I speak harshly to someone, theoretically of course, when I speak harshly and I'm aware of it and I confess it, do you know what Jesus is doing at the right hand of God the Father who is interceding for us right now, Romans 8?

[33:26] He's saying, yeah, that one too. Those harsh words covered. I paid for that. I was the propitiation for those. I bore your wrath, Father, for His sin there.

His death on the cross paid for all of your sins, every sin. And so when we see our sin and we mourn it, we're comforted by the fact that Jesus paid for it.

Does that do good to your soul? That doesn't grow old for me. Do you know why it doesn't grow old for me? Because I sin all the time. That's why it doesn't grow old.

I need it as much today as I did three days ago. That's the first promise. Let that turn your mourning into gladness.

Let that comfort you. The second promise is this. Oh, let me just preface it by saying this. Have you ever felt like there's a particular sin that has like you in a headlock?

[34:37] You're like, I can't stop doing this! Every time you sin, you're like, what's going on here? This shouldn't be this way. It can be very discouraging.

Feel like this thing's got your number. Is this always going to be this way? Am I ever going to grow here? I'm ashamed by this. I want this done. Enters the second promise.

Christ Jesus has broken the power of sin in you. He's broken it. He's broken it. Remember, just because you've been justified doesn't mean you're no longer going to struggle with sin.

It's actually quite the contrary. The moment you believed in Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God came and indwelt you. And according to Galatians 5, you are now kind of this like mobile war zone of desires. The desires of the flesh set themselves against the desires of the Spirit. The desires of the Spirit set themselves against the desires of the flesh. You've got conflict in you. You're a mobile conflict zone of desires.

[35:49] Does anybody agree with that? Yeah. What does Paul tell us? Walk by the Spirit so that you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Greater is He that is in you, brother, sister, than your sin. The Holy Spirit resides in you. But that's just part of it. I want to point you to something even more sweet.

Romans chapter 6. Have you read Romans chapter 6 lately? If you're struggling with sin, you've got to read Romans 6. It is like gospel fireworks for those struggling with sin.

And here's what the point is. Paul is saying, hey, Christian, you've been united with Christ in His death and resurrection. So you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Sin is no longer your master. Grace is. Jesus is. Jesus is. Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[36:53] And so you might have to say to your harsh words, you're not my master anymore. No, no, no. I'm united to Christ in His death and resurrection. That's what's true. You fight with this promise, this truth.

Sin isn't more powerful than your being united to Jesus in His death and resurrection. Sin isn't more powerful than the Holy Spirit in you. And so what we do to comfort our struggle with sin is remind ourselves of our union with Christ.

Sin is no longer my master. I've been raised up with Christ and now I can speak words that build others up.

Let that comfort you, brother and sister in Christ. Let that turn your mourning into gladness. And I'm going to be honest with you.

If you're struggling with sin, it is always good to have a couple brothers and sisters near to you to tell you and remind you you've been united with Christ. I know it does me.

[38:13] Let that comfort you. The last promise of comfort. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. This is the one that I've just been just delighting in all week long.

Last promise. Do you know that there's coming a day when Jesus Christ returns and he's going to hand out new resurrected bodies to those he saved.

And you've got to understand this resurrected body has something missing to it. It doesn't have a sinful nature. You're going to experience life in the new Jerusalem without a sinful nature.

We'll be free. Free of the flesh. No more conflict. So here's what that means. There are no more sleepless nights in the new Jerusalem.

No more sinful anxiety. There are no harsh words in the new Jerusalem. There's no lust in the new Jerusalem. There's no pornography in the new Jerusalem. There's no greed in the new Jerusalem.

[39:27] There's no pride. There's no exploitation. There's no abuse. Not physical abuse. Not sexual abuse. Not mental abuse. Not verbal abuse. Because there's no sinful nature in the people who populate the new Jerusalem.

There are no presidential races in the new Jerusalem. No mud slinging. But there's praise slinging. Oh yeah. There's no terrorism in the new Jerusalem.

There's no anger in the new Jerusalem. There's no walking on eggshells with people who have really anger issues in the new Jerusalem because they don't have a sinful nature anymore. There's no strained relationships in the new Jerusalem.

Do you know who's in the new Jerusalem? Jesus is in the new Jerusalem. You're going to see him face to face. You're going to hear him. You're going to smell his breath. You're going to feel his embrace. Yes. It's way better than what it is now.

No sinful nature. He's going to give us a glorified body without a sinful nature. He eradicates sin. Revelation chapter 21. Jesus comes back.

[40:36] New heavens and a new earth. And you know what he does? He wipes away tears. No more mourning. No more pain. No more suffering.

No more sin. The ultimate comfort is in the new Jerusalem. Ultimate comfort. No one has a sinful nature in the new Jerusalem.

Can you imagine that? Would you be comforted by that? The days of mourning your sin are numbered.

We will not mourn forever. All these promises point to one thing. God is for you, Christian. Even in your mourning of sin. He wants to comfort you in Jesus. We must mourn our sin, but when we do, we are comforted by these great promises that are found in Jesus alone.

[41:39] He paid it all. Penalty of sin paid. He broke the power. The power of sin broke and we're united with Him. And eventually, the present sin will be completely eradicated when Jesus finalizes complete victory.

Our mourning, our sin is real. Sin is real. God's holiness is real, but so is His comfort that are found in Christ. blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Let's pray. God in heaven, would you show us your holiness?

God, we are willing to live with our roof off. God, would you show us our ongoing need for holiness? We are sinful people yet. God, we also know that You will comfort us. You've already sealed these promises through the blood of Jesus.

[42:51] They're ours. And so, God, as we see our sin, would You also help us to see our Savior and find comfort that comes from You alone.

In Jesus' name, amen. God bless you.

For more love for him, you will be for you.