

AM Matthew 5:1-12

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[0 : 00] to Matthew's Gospel, and we're going to read together from chapter 5, this section of the Sermon on the Mount, containing the Beatitudes, these statements of blessing uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ.

So Matthew chapter 5, verses 1 to 12, this is on page 976 of the Church Bible. Psalm 1, verses 1 to 12, this is on page 976 of the Church Bible.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

[1 : 46] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Amen. May God bless this reading of his word to us. Let us turn with me again to this portion of scripture that we read together from Matthew chapter 5.

And this morning I want us to continue our look, our studies in the Sermon on the Mount.

I was here a couple of weeks ago and we began by looking at the first beatitude. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And we've already seen as we have approached the Sermon on the Mount, that in Jesus Christ, God's anointed king, the kingdom of God or the rule or the king dominion of God has come into this world.

[2 : 52] And those who are brought into this kingdom or king dominion are citizens of the kingdom. And these citizens all have similar family characteristics.

Similar family character traits. And though we come from very different backgrounds, from different nations of the world, from different social standings, with different levels of education and so forth, though we differ in many ways, if we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are members of his church, if we are citizens of his kingdom, then we all share in these features or marks of life and character.

What are they like? What are the citizens of this kingdom like before the king of the kingdom?

Before God, we might ask.

Well, the answer is the first three beatitudes. They are poor in spirit before God. Before God, they are also meek.

Before God, they also mourn for their sins. And I want us to think about the Lord's words in verses 4 and 5 this morning.

[4 : 30] Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

So let's take the second beatitude in the list that the Lord gives us at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Now what does it mean to mourn? What is mourning? Mourning is grief and sorrow caused by a profound loss that we've experienced.

And in our minds, we usually associate mourning with death. A mother or a father has died.

A brother or a sister has died. A son or a daughter has died. Or a husband and a wife has died.

[5 : 42] And as a result of such an event, we are plunged into a deep ocean of mourning, of grief and of sorrow.

Because of the searing pain of the loss that we've experienced. But that kind of mourning is but only one form.

Yes, the most painful form of a sense of loss. But it's only part of a widespread experience that's common to men and women and even boys and girls.

What happens when a friendship we treasure fails because perhaps of the treachery or the unfaithfulness or the unkindness of one whom we regarded as a dear, dear friend?

Do we not feel a sense of mourning for the loss of such a friendship? Or how do we feel when we are called into the boss's office?

[6 : 55] Or perhaps even worse, when we receive a letter through the post telling us that we've lost our jobs and have been made redundant? Do we not feel a sense of mourning at such a loss?

Or how do we feel when on the day the exam results come out, we discover that after all our hard work of the previous year, we have missed the grade to get into university or have failed the exam altogether?

We experience this sense of mourning, a sorrow, a grief because of a loss that we've experienced. So when Jesus here in Matthew chapter 5 verse 4 says, Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. The question arises in our minds, is Jesus giving us all a general word of encouragement, telling us that we should hang on in there, keep on going, because that feeling of grief and sorrow will eventually pass?

Is that what he's doing here in this beatitude? Is he in effect saying, keep the chin up? Time is a great healer.

[8 : 26] So don't give up, but keep on going. Well, is that what he's doing here? What do you think? Well, I don't believe that that would be a correct interpretation of our Lord's words here in the Sermon on the Mount.

I think we need to keep in mind that the Lord is teaching us about life in the kingdom of God. You remember, the poverty that he speaks about in the first beatitude is not financial or material poverty. It is spiritual poverty. It is being poor in spirit, not poor in pocket. And likewise, the grief under focus here is mourning over one's own sinfulness.

That's what the Lord has in mind. It is a deep sense of sorrow and regret that we have turned out to be such a disappointment to our heavenly maker.

And the person who has discovered that he is poor in spirit is so badly stung by his poverty of spirit that he learns in the next place to grieve and sorrow and mourn over his poverty of spirit.

[9 : 57] Let's stop for a moment because I want to underscore what the Lord is teaching here in this beatitude.

Let's ask the question, what marks out the life of a citizen of God's kingdom? And with this beatitude before us, we have to say in answer to that question, what marks out the life of a citizen of God's kingdom is he mourns over his sinfulness.

He grieves or sorrows deeply over his sin. Now, that's important just to underscore.

Because a member of Christ's kingdom, a child of God, a Christian, a believer, does not excuse his sin.

A Christian does not downplay his sin. A Christian most certainly does not ignore his sin.

[11 : 13] Neither does a Christian put his sin in a set of scales like the old-fashioned balances. You remember seeing those maybe when you were younger in fruit and veg shops? Sometimes people are tempted to put their sins on one side of the balances and then put all their imaginary good deeds on the other side in the hope that their good deeds will outweigh their sins and work in their favor.

But that's not what a Christian does. And neither does a Christian put himself in the scales on one side and other disreputable characters in the scale on the other side.

But like the Pharisee in the parable, you remember how he stood up in the temple at the front where all could see him and hear him and prayed, Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men.

Especially like this tax collector. That's not what a Christian does. That's not his attitude towards his poverty of spirit or towards his sin.

No. Against these things and in contrast to all of these things, he takes up the words of the Apostle Paul and he cries out, O wretched man that I am!

[12 : 47] Who shall deliver me from this body of death? And then, as these words are on his lips, he feels the comfort that comes through the answer that the Gospel gives.

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?
Wretched man that I am!

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is through Jesus Christ our Lord, thanks be to God, that we experience deliverance from sin and comfort for our soul.

I think it's important, especially for us who live in Scotland with all the caricatures and stereotypes of the typical Scottish Christians, in this typical Scots Presbyterian, that we are clear in our minds about the nature of this Beatitude, mourning for sin and the counterfeits that exist and that are sometimes confused produced and mixed up with the real, genuine thing itself.

Every grace of the Holy Spirit produced in the life of a believer has a counterfeit, has a false alternative. And sometimes these false alternatives are held up and are supposed to represent the work of the Spirit, but they are not the result of the Spirit's work in the life of a Christian.

[14:53] And I think we need to say something about what it means and what it doesn't mean to mourn for sin. So let me say clearly that mourning for sin is not the same thing as having a heavy and depressive spirit.

Now some people by nature, by the way that they have been hot-wired, as a friend of mine likes to say, may have been born with a spirit that can be described as melancholic.

In other words, they tend easily to become depressed and downcast and sorrowful. Now this isn't the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, it's the way that they are formed.

Some people are naturally happy and buoyant and optimistic. Others are more melancholic. the glass is never half full, it's always half empty.

They go around saying, woe is me, life is bad, it's terrible the way things are.

[16:15] And that often leads to introspection. They become introverted and turned in upon themselves. And that often leads to the development of a low self-esteem, a poor self-image.

I'm sure you can all picture in your mind's eye people who fit that bill. You look at the way they appear and how they speak to others.

You look at the way they walk. Their heads are down, shoulders are hunched. But it is possible to have these characteristics and yet just be a person who is absorbed in himself rather than someone who is truly, in the words of our Lord Jesus, poor in spirit.

Now see the contrast between that and the person who truly mourns for his sin. There's something different about a person who truly mourns for his sin in the way that the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking about it here in this second beatitude.

the man has been drawn out of himself. He's not introverted in that sense.

[17:50] He's been drawn out from himself. And he has seen God through the gospel in both his holiness and his grace.

And though it sounds like a contradiction in terms, yet it is true. And it's a wonderful truth at that. It is this sight of God in both his holiness and his grace that has begun the mourning process in his heart and which leads him to true comfort for his soul.

Because he has grasped in the gospel that the God against whom he has sinned is the same God who in his mercy and grace forgives sinners.

At the end of the service we're going to sing Psalm 130. And I chose that psalm to close the service with because it provides us with a great example of this very truth.

The psalmist in Psalm 130 is overwhelmed by a sense of his sin. Out of the depths he cries to God.

[19:12] He sees himself before the judgment seat of God. And before the judgment seat of God he confesses if you O Lord should mark in his O Lord who could stand?

Now it's not the fear of being discovered that has overwhelmed him. Rather he knows that he has offended the Lord and that discovery fills him with shame and grief and sorrow.

And yet in seeing himself in the presence of God the psalmist has also learned the astonishing truth that with this God the Lord there is forgiveness.

Therefore he says God is to be feared. Psalm 130 verse 4 And so you can see in Psalm 130 how the sinner hates his sin and grieves over his sin.

Why? Because it is an offense to God but at the same time he mourns over that sin all the more because the same God forgives sin.

[20:38] My dear friends I have a very important thing to say at this stage in the sermon and I wonder if it applies to you in particular. There are some Christians who never seem to get to grips with the reality the glorious reality of the grace of God and I wonder is that true of you have you

really got to grips with the grace of God God.

My friend grace is the thing that makes us mourn for our sinfulness and our sins that our sinfulness produces.

Yes the law of God convicts us of our sin just as it did the apostle Paul as he recounts in Romans chapter 7 verses 7 to 12 but it is not the law of God it is the grace of God that melts our hearts and causes this right attitude to get that sin in sorrow shame and what our Lord Jesus Christ calls here in Matthew 5 verse 4 mourning mourning now perhaps there's somebody here in the service this morning and you've been listening to what I've been saying and you say to yourself maybe not out loud but maybe inwardly something like my oh my what a miserable and gloomy picture the preacher is painting of what it means to be a

Christian because all I'm hearing is to be a Christian to be a member of Christ's kingdom is to be full of sorrow and shame and mourning over one's sinfulness and sin now bear with me for a moment there are many places you could go to on a Sunday morning maybe not so many on a Sunday evening but many places you could go to on a Sunday morning many churches you could enter and you will never ever hear about sin or about righteousness or about judgment to come you will never be called on to repent sorrow for sin the very notion of sinfulness is nowhere to be found in such church services so what is the truth about the

Christian what is the truth about the member of God's kingdom is he like some churches present to always be on this emotional high always joyful and always happy or is he always living in a state of mourning and crying out oh wretched man that I am well those two positions are actually extremes and the truth is not found in either extreme and to help us in our thinking let me mention briefly three things that will guide us through this important aspect of Christian experience the first thing to remember is this when conscious of his own sin the

[24 : 38] Christian will always be grieved by it in fact not to grieve over sin is to grieve the Holy Spirit and we're told not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God but having said that what is important to remember is that the conscious and psychological depth of that grief will vary greatly from Christian believer to Christian believer some will experience great intensity of grief and sorrow but others will not experience it to the same degree or extent and so being sensitive to sin and mourning over it does not necessarily mean that we as Christians are to live in a constant state of despair that is not necessary the second thing to remember is that no single beatitude should be seen in isolation from all the others the Lord

Jesus Christ is describing the whole of the Christian life in this Sermon on the Mount and we must therefore hold all his teaching together as one united whole and not isolate one aspect of his teaching and forget about the rest or play off one aspect of his teaching as if it's an opposition to another the whole stands together and the third thing to remember is that true spiritual experience will expand and not contract or shrink our emotional response to the gospel and this is so very important to grasp and to understand because the gospel brings to the believer in Jesus Christ both higher joys and also deeper sorrows it's true we experience more sensitive mourning because of our sin it becomes a bigger issue in our eyes because of the love that we have for our savior and our desire not to grieve him and so when we sin it becomes a greater grief to us after we have become a Christian than it was ever before we're more sensitive to these things but when we experience the Lord's forgiveness afresh then the joy and the comfort that comes to us is even greater and more wonderful

I think this is something we can see clearly in the example of the apostle Paul before he was converted to Christ we get the impression from the New Testament scriptures that he was a young man who in the words of C.H.

Spurgeon was desiccated of the milk of human kindness he was emotionally repressed he was a shriveled up young man who experienced only a very narrow range of human emotions but after his conversion to Christ what a change took place in this man's life and in his emotional and psychological development after his conversion we see a man whose emotions were stretched to the limit in both their heights and their depths and to a certain extent that is true of us as well being spiritually stretched involves pain the pain of discovering the effects of sin the shame and the grief of coming to terms with how twisted we have been but that is the first step in coming to know the amazing comfort of the good news in Jesus

Christ and we can't leave this beatitude without calling to mind the Old Testament prophecy which Jesus Christ himself pointed his hearers to at the beginning of his public ministry you remember

how in the synagogue in Nazareth he opened the scriptures and read from Isaiah 61 verses 1 to 3 this describes him and the whole goal of his ministry the spirit of the Lord God is upon me he read he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted to comfort all who mourn to grant to all who mourn in Zion a beautiful headdress instead of ashes the oil of gladness instead of mourning the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit it's

[30 : 14] Jesus who brings comfort to those who mourn for their sin it's not a wonderful truth Jesus he is the one who pronounces the blessing on those who mourn he is the one who personally comes to such people applying his comfort only the comfort that he can give to those who mourn for their sin my friends the time is gone I'm going to stop at this point we're going to have to look at the next beatitude which is linked to poverty and spirit to mourning for sin meekness on the next occasion I come to preach to you let us bow together in prayer to wake up but men so can

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