

# Those Who Mourn

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 25 February 2024

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[ 0 : 00 ] Psalms chapter 38 and also Matthew 5, 1 through 4.! Please follow with me as I read.! O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.

For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hands have come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh. Because of your indignation, there is no health in my bones because of my sin.

For my iniquities have gone over my head. Like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness.

I am utterly bowed down and prostrate at all the day I go about mourning. For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh.

I am feeble and crushed. I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. O Lord, all my longing is before you. My sighing is not hidden from you.

[ 1 : 09 ] My heart throbs. My strength fails me. And the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague.

And my nearest kin stand off, far off. Those who seek my life, they lay their snares. Those who seek my hurt speak of ruin and meditate treachery all day long.

But I am like a deaf man. I do not hear like a mute man who does not open his mouth. I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no rebukes.

But for you, O Lord, I do wait. It is you, O Lord, my God, who will answer. For I said, only let them not rejoice over me, who boast against me when my foot slips.

For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. I confess my iniquity. I am sorry for my sin. But my foes are vigorous.

[ 2 : 19 ] They are mighty and many, and those who hate me wrongfully. Those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good. Do not forsake me, O Lord.

O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation. A second reading, Matthew 5, 1 through 4.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain. And when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. This is the word of the Lord. Please bow in prayer with me.

Father, thank you for your word this morning. We thank you, Lord, that your word is powerful, and your word is transformative.

[ 3 : 36 ] Father, we ask now that you would speak to us from your word and through your word. Lord, you know where each one of us is, and you know what each one of us needs to hear.

Lord, you know what we need to hear collectively. So would you speak by the power of your spirit. Would you cause us all to be postured to hear and obey.

And Lord, once again, I ask for your grace to be faithful to proclaim your word to your people. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, this morning we are continuing our sermon series in the Sermon on the Mount. And last Sunday we considered Matthew 5, verse 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That's the first beatitude. And at the outset of this sermon, I want to say something again that I said last Sunday, because I think it is of critical importance, and it is this.

[ 4 : 45 ] Not only is Matthew 5, verse 3, which we considered last week, the first beatitude, the introduction to the beatitudes, is also the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount.

And if we misunderstand that, we're going to misunderstand the rest of the beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. I shared last week that Jesus didn't just string together a bunch of words, but he opened his mouth on that day.

This first sermon that is recorded in Scripture that he publicly uttered, and he proclaimed to us a carefully ordered sequence of teaching that we need to hear and build our lives upon.

And so, as we consider the second beatitude this morning, let us remember that it is connected to the first beatitude. As we consider it, what I'd like to do this morning is I want us to recognize that the same way that Jesus didn't speak about poverty in a material or financial sense, that it was a spiritual poverty, it's really the same way that he's addressing this issue of mourning.

And the truth is that only those, only those who are poor in spirit, only those who recognize their spiritual emptiness and their spiritual nothingness before God, that they have nothing of value before the Lord, they're the only ones who will spiritually mourn.

[ 6 : 42 ] They're the only ones who will grieve over sin.

They're the only ones who will receive this comfort. And so this morning, I have two very short and simple points.

And the first point this morning is this, the mourning that Jesus refers to is a unique mourning. It is a unique mourning.

In this room, if you were to just glance around, you would see that we're pretty diverse as a group. We've come from different backgrounds, different nations, different circumstances.

But one of the things that we all share in common is we live in a fallen world. We are fallen people and we live in a world that is fallen. And one of the realities of living in a fallen world is it brings grief.

[ 7 : 50 ] It causes us to grieve and to mourn in different ways. Some of us have known great grief and mourning during the course of our lives.

Some of us have mourned over walking through extended trials and sufferings. Our own and sometimes those who are near and dear to us.

Some of us have mourned as a result of marital breakdown that resulted in divorce and separation and the tearing apart of lives.

Some of us have mourned the death of loved ones. Indeed, some are currently mourning. Some of us have lived lives that are filled with seemingly never-ending disappointments, surprising turns in the road that bewilder us, that drive us to despair, that drive us into periods of profound mourning.

And oftentimes, they don't bring tears to our eyes, but they bring tears in our souls. And I can go on, but I think the point is clear. Living in a fallen world will bring us to mourn.

[ 9 : 19 ] And so in light of this reality that we all face, that mourning is a common experience of life, I think we have to ask a clarifying question about this second beatitude.

is the blessedness and the promise of comfort in this second beatitude a universal promise that Jesus offers to any and everyone who mourns for any and every reason?

I think you'd agree with me that a whole lot of mourning takes place in hospitals by those who are sick and by those who are dying and by those who love them.

A whole lot of mourning takes place in courtrooms by persons charged with crimes and convicted of crimes and by relatives who are present to observe it all.

A whole lot of mourning takes place in prisons, especially places like Fox Hill Prison where I was last week, where the conditions are harsh and where many inmates regret the poor choices, bad decisions that they have made and in some cases they regret the injustices that they've experienced that brought them there.

[ 11 : 00 ] And so the question is, is the blessedness and the promise of comfort of this second beatitude a universal comfort, a universal promise that Jesus offers to any and every person who mourns in hospitals, who mourns in courtrooms, who mourns in prisons, and who mourn everywhere for any reason?

The obvious and correct answer is no. Matthew 5.4 is not a promise to any and everyone who mourns for any and every reason.

And the only way we would conclude that Matthew 5.4 is a universal promise to everyone is to detach it from its context, to take the words of Jesus out of their context and to cause Jesus to say something that he is not intending to say.

Indeed, it is to disconnect them from the very words that Jesus just spoke right before them when he said, blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It is to cause Jesus to be disjointed in his speech and to ramble from one thing to another without saying that Jesus is speaking in a very ordered and a very sequential way.

[12:33] The point, brothers and sisters, is that this mourning that Jesus refers to is a unique mourning. It is a spiritual mourning.

In the same way that the poverty is not financial poverty but material, but spiritual poverty, not material poverty, this mourning that he is referring to is a spiritual mourning.

It is primarily a mourning of the soul, although not exclusively. It is the kind of mourning that causes us to shed tears that others don't see.

It is an inward grief. Sometimes it does spill out and others do see it, but most of the times it is this inward spiritual sorrow.

sorrow. It is important to see that Jesus is addressing the same group of people. The same group of people who he refers to as the poor in spirit are the same group of people he is referring to who mourn.

[13:42] the poor in spirit are those whom God has acted upon in mercy and he has awakened them from spiritual death and he has brought them to spiritual life.

And one of the results of bringing a person to spiritual life is it brings them to mourn over their sin. And the biblical word is repentance.

Commenting on this verse Matthew 5, 4 here is how deceased pastor and theologian John Stott explains it. He writes, it is plain from the context that those here promise comfort are not primarily those who mourn the loss of a loved one but those who mourn the loss of their innocence, their righteousness, their self-respect.

It is not the sorrow of bereavement to which Christ refers but the sorrow of repentance. The mourning that Jesus is referring to is to experience sorrow towards God regarding our sin.

It is to have our hearts gripped with the weightiness and the seriousness and the consequences of sin. There is a sober awareness that sin is no light matter and it is ultimately against a holy God and it brings nothing good to our lives.

[15:18] It brings nothing good in our world. when we mourn over sin we recognize that sin is really not a lollipop on a stick but really it's more a lollipop on a dagger and it is no longer desirable it is nothing that we would seek to cozy ourselves up to.

that's what mourning over sin is about. Now I know that all those who have come to Christ this morning just like me you can testify about the experience that you had when you came to Christ when he saved you.

You can testify of the sorrow but it was a sweet sorrow. sorrow. It was sorrowful because your eyes were opened to see your sins against God sins that you were formerly blind to sins you were formerly indifferent to but it's sweet because you know that God has set you free from those sins. He's forgiven you of those sins and you're not able to live your life to serve him and to please him. But the mourning over sin that Jesus has in view here in Matthew 5-4 is not just confined to when we come to Christ.

It's not just confined to when we for the first time in our lives saw sin in a sorrowful way. Even after we come to Christ we still sin and so we continue to mourn over sin in an ongoing way as our response to sin.

[17:17] But when God moves upon our hearts and saves us not only do we grieve about our own sin personally we grieve about sin generally.

We view sin differently. we aren't able to find it jovial or something to laugh about.

We become more sensitized to sin in general. We not only mourn over our own sins we mourn over the sins of others. We mourn over the sins committed against others.

We watch the news or read the newspapers and we grieve when we come face to face with real people whose lives have been devastated by sin.

We grieve over injustice. We grieve over the exploitation of the weak and the vulnerable. people.

We grieve over corrupt politicians and powerful lobby groups who take advantage of the poor, the ignorant and only take care of themselves and their friends.

[18:43] We grieve over atrocities like abortion on demand that results in the murder of millions of innocent babies year after year.

We grieve over the unimaginable horrors of war. We're currently seeing in places like Gaza and Israel and Russia and Ukraine.

We grieve over our brothers and sisters who live in hostile countries, who have their properties confiscated, families ripped apart and divided, and it's considered normal.

We grieve about those who are in these hostile situations, or, brothers and sisters, we should. we should.

But the extent to which we retain an awareness of our own brokenness and the world's brokenness, we will mourn over sin personally, and we will mourn over sin generally.

[ 20 : 06 ] Our world is broken. sin. The effects of sin are all around us. The effect of Adam's fall is pervasive in the culture.

And yet, I think this morning, if we're all honest, we would all acknowledge that none of us mourns over sin, our own sin and sin in general, as we should.

John Stott made this point in a very candid and striking way, some 40 years when he wrote his commentary on the Sermon on the Mountain. Here's what he writes, I fear that we evangelical Christians, by making much of grace, sometimes thereby make light of sin.

There's not enough sorrow for sin among us. we can become acclimated to sin, where we don't sorrow over sin as we should.

And clearly, there are many reasons why that is the case, but I can certainly identify with John Stott's observation that one of the biggest reasons that we don't mourn enough over our sin is that we make much of grace and sometimes thereby make light of sin.

[ 21 : 39 ] I know in my own life, I can quickly run to grace before I have taken time to mourn over my sin. Before taking the time to allow the weight of it, the seriousness of it, to register in my soul to cause me to truly mourn, and just ask for a matter-of-fact forgiveness as opposed to one that pours from my heart.

And it's not that it's the Spirit who brings conviction to our hearts, it's the Holy Spirit alone who convicts of sin. We cannot convict ourselves of sin.

sin. But again, I'm aware of how much more I need to sit under the convicting power of the Spirit to truly mourn over my sin.

Because the promise of comfort is to those who mourn. the promise of comfort is not to those who mentally acknowledge their sin, but to those who mourn over their sin.

Now, you might already be thinking about this, but I want to ask you anyway, to what extent are you mourning over your sin?

[ 23 : 18 ] personally. To what extent are you mourning over sin in general, the sins of others that they commit and the sins that are committed against others when you come face to face with them?

Are you mourning over sin personally? Are you mourning over sin generally? And these questions are not designed to condemn any of us. The truth is that to whatever degree we mourn over sin, even to the smallest degree, that's evidence that God has awakened our souls and God has saved us.

Because without God acting upon us, we won't mourn over sin at all. Now, we may cry because we got caught doing something. We may cry because the consequences of our sin bear down upon us. I'm not talking about that kind of sorrow. That's worldly sorrow that the Bible talks about. But godly sorrow, if we have godly sorrow about our sin to any degree, that is a sign that God has acted upon us in grace.

That is a sign that we have been translated from darkness to light and from death to life.

[ 24 : 46 ] And so the questions this morning are not designed to condemn us, but they are designed to cause us to consider am I taking sin, my own sin, and sin in general, seriously?

One of the things I often share with people is that in a lot of ways I have a front row seat, not just to my own sin, but to the sins of others.

And I get to see firsthand in a lot of cases the very serious and severe impact of sin in the lives of so many people.

And that's been my lot for some 36 years as a pastor. Sin is sobering.

when we contemplate it, when we realize it is nothing to cozy up to, and the only proper response to sin is to mourn, is to grieve.

[ 25 : 56 ] One of the helpful ways to grow in mourning over sin, especially recurring sin, besetting sin, sin that clings closely to us, and sin that marks our years of experience, is to take time to come before the Lord and to part our hearts in prayer concerning those sins.

If we treat them on the fly, kind of like a God forgive me kind of prayer on the fly, brothers and sisters, there's not enough time to contemplate and to mourn over sin. It doesn't correlate to fighting recurring sin, to simply pray a prayer of forgiveness on the fly. The way we say a quick grace or something, no, it's taking the time, coming before the Lord and crying out to him, mourning over our sin, and even when we may not be mourning over our sin. I think we all know how that is. Sometimes we are aware of our sin, but we're also aware that we're not mourning over it. We're also aware that it's not gripping our hearts the way it should grip our hearts, and it's perfectly legitimate to say to God, God, cause me to see my sin, that I ought to see my sin, that I may be convicted of my sin, that I may grieve over my sin, that I may turn from my sin. [ 27 : 38 ] I think you'd agree with me that we make a greater effort to avoid any and every sin that we consider serious. The more serious we consider a sin, the greater effort we will make to avoid that sin.

sin. And so to the extent that we're able to see our sins as serious, it gives us, by the grace of God, a renewed commitment to say no to ungodliness in that area, and to say yes to righteousness instead.

sin. But when we don't take the time to bring our sins before the Lord, we short circuit the godly sorrow that that coming before the Lord can produce.

In Psalm 38, the Psalmist David gives us yet again a compelling example of what it looks like to mourn over sin. He begins in verse 1 by saying, O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.

Does it come to our minds when we sin that it stirs up the anger of God? The Psalmist goes on in verses 4 to 6, my iniquities have gone over my head like a heavy burden.

[ 29 : 09 ] They are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness. I am utterly bowed down and prostrate all the day.

I go about mourning. He says in verse 18, I confess my iniquity. I am sorry for my sin. In verse 22, he says, make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

God is quite remarkable that this mourning of David in this psalm is memorialized.

And this is not the only one. Psalm 51 is another one. There are others where David has poured out his mourning over sin in a recorded psalm.

And it's a reminder that in David's life, David was more concerned with where he stood before God than how he appeared to people.

[ 30 : 12 ] He was more concerned with where he stood before God, that he was right before God than how he appeared before people.

Because, brothers and sisters, reality is where we stand, not how we appear. I pray that we will be stirred by the Spirit this morning, brothers and sisters, to mourn over our sin, to grow in mourning over our sin, and we can all grow in mourning over our sin, because none of us, until the day we die, will mourn over sin to the extent that we need to.

we will never see sin to its full extent as we need to. And so there's always room to grow, and we need to be crying out to the Lord day by day that we will grow in seeing sin for what it is, our sin and also the sins of others.

That's the first point. The morning that Jesus refers to is a unique morning. And now the second and final point is this, the comfort that Jesus offers is a divine comfort.

The blessing that is promised to those who mourn is that they will be comforted. but we shouldn't overlook the blessing that is involved in mourning itself.

[ 32 : 00 ] When we mourn over our sin, that is a blessing, brothers and sisters. The fact that we are mourning over our sin is a blessing. To whatever degree we mourn,!

that is a blessing. Because imagine the other option. The other option is not mourning over your sin. The other option is to be in love with sin.

The other option is to wallow in sin. The other option is to be indifferent to sin. Your own sin. The sin of others and sins against others.

it is a position that any sober-minded person does not want to be in. And so when we mourn over our sin and mourn over sin generally, that is a blessing.

Because again, it is an indication that God has awakened our souls. God has given us new birth in Christ. And we are no longer who we used to be. I think all of us could remember when we enjoyed sin, those of us who belong to Christ now, we could remember when sin did not trouble us.

[ 33 : 16 ] I can still remember vividly when I came to Christ as a 13-year-old boy. I could remember before and after.

I could remember my attitude towards sin before I came to Christ. And I could remember my attitude towards sin after I came to Christ. After I came to Christ, some of the thoughts of sins I had committed grieved my soul, even though I didn't commit them.

It's God awoken my soul. So it is a blessing to mourn over sin. But the larger way that those who mourn over sin are blessed is through the promise they should be comforted.

forgiveness. And the promise that is held out to those who mourn over their sin, first and foremost, is God's full and free forgiveness of their sins.

Full and free forgiveness of their sins. That's how they're comforted. They're comforted through forgiveness, through divine forgiveness.

[ 34 : 33 ] forgiveness. It comes from God because all sin is ultimately against God. And so he's the only one who can forgive us, who can bring comfort to our souls for our sins.

The former slave trader, John Newton, captured this truth in his wonderful hymn, Amazing Grace, in the second verse, when he wrote, "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved." "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear." Without God's grace, none of us will fear. Without God's grace, sin will not be something that we mourn about. Sin will be something that we cozy up to. Sin will be something that we love.

Sin will be something that we cloak. And we won't even be mindful of the consequences. We would not even be mindful of a holy God.

Newton writes that it was grace that taught his heart to fear. Brothers and sisters, it's the same for us. It was grace that taught our hearts to fear as well. But the other side of that is, it's the same grace that relieves those fears.

[ 36 : 03 ] The same grace that awakens us to a holy God who pours out his wrath on sin is the same grace that relieves that fear by giving us full and free forgiveness.

forgiveness. This divine comfort that we receive through God's grace that is full and free assures us that there's no condemnation.

No condemnation to us now and no condemnation to us in the future. And that never changes. When God pronounces his forgiveness to us, that will be our status for the rest of our life and throughout all eternity.

We don't go from not condemned to condemned to not condemned again. no, we, that is our enduring status. That is our permanent status before a holy and merciful God.

[ 37 : 25 ] That is a permanent comfort that he gives us. Yes, in the midst of living in this life, we are troubled. But that verdict that is declared over us through God's forgiveness forgiveness is unchanging.

Throughout this life, though, we'll continue to sin. God will forgive us and comfort us. We mourn over our sin.

He comforts us. This will be our lot until the day we die or the Lord returns. But Jesus in Matthew 5, 4, is promising something more than a temporary comfort that we would experience when we sin and we mourn over our sin and he forgives us of our sin.

He's also holding something out to us that is more permanent than that. There's coming a day when we will have a permanent comfort. comfort. In Revelation chapter 21 verses 1 to 4, the Lord gave John a vision of that permanent comfort that he would bring to all of his people.

And this is what it says in Revelation 21, 1 to 4. 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.

[ 39 : 08 ] And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

That's the ultimate divine comfort that God promises to his people. And it will be permanent. Sin will be no more.

The effects of sin will be no more, which includes mourning over sin, because of sin. All of that will be no more.

And so each time you and I enjoy the comfort of forgiveness of sins over which we have mourned and repented, is a reminder that there's coming a final day, there's coming an ultimate day, and there will be no more sin.

[ 40 : 33 ] There will be no more death. There will be no more mourning. There will be no more crying. There will be no more pain, because the former things have passed away.

And all the effect of the fall from Adam will be removed. God will usher in a new day.

The day that he always desired that man would enjoy away from his sin and his rebellion. And all of our mourning is wrapped up in that day.

And that's all the more reason to long for that day. And so all the more reason to join with John and say, come Lord Jesus, when we will be permanently comforted by our God and our Savior.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for the promise that those who mourn will be comforted.

[ 41 : 49 ] Those who mourn over their sin personally and sin generally will not only be comforted with forgiveness in this life, but they will be finally and permanently comforted when you return, when you usher in a new heaven and a new earth.

And Lord may all those who belong to you look for that day and long for that day. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's stand for closing song.