

Beatitudes: Mourning

Matthew 5:4

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TRANSCRIPT:

Matthew 5:1-12 reads as follows:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain 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 they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Let us pray.

Lord God in heaven, we ask now that You would send the Holy Spirit to do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. To open the eyes of our understanding, to give us ears to hear, hearts to respond, to bring us to places of humility and also places of exaltation, where we might sing for joy over the work of God's grace in our lives. And we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

We continue in our series through the Beatitudes, and last week, or the week before, should I say, we considered what it means to be poor in spirit, and how that poverty of spirit is having a right attitude concerning oneself, that one is really empty and in need of the supply of God, one who is sinful and in need of the grace of God, one who is in need of God. And those that are poor in spirit, that realize that they are nothing, they have nothing and can do nothing, those that are poor in spirit and understand that, the Bible says of them, belong to the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. This is the blessing that God has for those that are poor in spirit.

And now we come to a consideration of verse number four, which says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Now, there is a relationship between verse three and verse four. Verse three, poverty of spirit, serves as a foundation, if I could say, for mourning. You see, mourning is impossible, at least mourning one's own condition, unless one sees one's own condition, unless one feels the weight of their own condition. The proud at heart and the proud in spirit, you will not find mourning after a godly sort. And so, there is a connection and relationship between the two.

Something that is very common and will become more common in the last days, where there will be a sort of hardness of heart, that men will be lovers of their own selves, and they will be without natural affection. There won't be that feeling, if I could say, that produces mourning in the lives of individuals. I think that's been well illustrated to us by the events of the passing week. A 16-year-old boy taking a knife and walking into a church and stabbing a bishop in Wakeley. And once he was pinned down by the police and all that, there are photos of him smiling. And laughing, mocking, making fun of the situation. And one looks at that and comes to wonder, what hardness and what callousness of heart is required to have such a scene like that and to feel nothing with regards to mourning?

And what does Jesus mean when He says, "Blessed are those who mourn"? Mourning is a common theme throughout the scripture. And a simple definition of mourning might be something like this: It's the grief expressed, or experienced, should I say, with relationship to tragedy. As tragedy comes into a person's life, the grief that accompanies that tragedy could be called mourning, could be called that grief, whether in the face of death or whether in the face of disaster. And mourning is expressed in many ways. There are people that simply weep. There are others that take up a lamentation, where there is weeping, but they go beyond tears. They go to the place of howling and wailing out their grief.

And if you look at Jeremiah's book, the book of Lamentations, that's what it is. He takes up a lamentation, a howling, an expression of grief over the destruction of Jerusalem. Then there's even some more public displays of mourning in the scripture, where there is the wearing of sackcloth and ashes, or the disfiguring of somebody's face, or the shaving or plucking of one's beard or hair. And all these are in many ways cultural expressions. But nonetheless, they're expressions in scripture that relate to the concept of mourning because those individuals have come into face-to-face with tragedy, or face-to-face with death or disaster. And due to what they have seen and experienced, they respond in such a manner.

Now, there are different types of mourning in the scripture. There is a

type of mourning which we're not so used to here. Unless you're Middle Eastern, there's probably still some of the remnants of it in our culture. There is professional mourning. That sounds strange to Aussies, but professional mourning. And the Bible speaks of that, and it talks about it in Jeremiah 9:17-18: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for skillful wailing women, that they may come. Let them make haste and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run with tears, and our eyelids gush with water.'" And so, there were the tasks of certain women, predominantly, that would take up this professional role of lamentation and sorrow and the pulling of hair, and the wailing and all that, so that they can help others get the tears going.

Now, a story interesting to that, my uncle used to work for a funeral business, and he used to drive the hearse. And there was a few Arabic ladies in the back having a chat as to how they're going to go about this, when the car stops, how they're going to go about this mourning session. And they had their little plans going, talking to one another. And they didn't realize that my uncle driving the car could hear everything they could say, and he was Arabic as well. And so when he opened the door, to their surprise, he gave them an Arabic greeting, and they walked out, and they were a little bit shocked as to the fact that he heard everything that was going on there. But that is rare in our day today, especially in Australia. But very common in the biblical context and still in many cultures even today.

This is not the mourning that Jesus is referring to. That's an exaggerated, unnatural, and professional mourning. There's a natural mourning. That's the mourning that we're most familiar with. And what I mean by natural is that it's the ordinary response of one's heart and affection to death or disaster. It's not something you have to put on. It arises. It's genuine. There's something that's seen, heard, happens, and one feels after that situation.

Now, Jesus is also not talking about natural mourning. And the reason why I say that is because the Beatitudes very distinctly describe those that are marked by evidences that they belong to the kingdom of God. And so, the mourning that Jesus is referring to cannot be something that is common among men, but rather common among those that belong to Him, that have tasted of His grace, and that know the power of His work in their lives, just like poverty of spirit had to be a work of God's grace in the heart. So, this mourning that Jesus refers to is a spiritual mourning.

They say, what's the difference between spiritual mourning and natural mourning? Well, not much actually. Not much at all in terms of the expression. But the difference lies deeply in what motivates and moves one to mourn. You see, the mourning has a connection to the mind. Mourning

begins as a psychological phenomenon that affects the physical. So, there's tears, there's expression, but there's something that happens in the mind that motivates that. And when Jesus talks about "blessed are those who mourn," He's referring to a spiritual mourning.

There are certain contemplations that happen in the mind that drive the heart to feel the way that it feels and the body to respond in such a manner. There are certain cases of this in the scripture. Lamentations 3:51, Jeremiah sitting there looking at the destruction of Jerusalem and he says, "My eye affects my heart." Or another way to translate that is, "My eyes cause me to grieve." And what he's simply showing is this connection between what is happening in his mind, what is happening through the eye gate, and how it's affecting his heart and affecting his response in the taking up of this lamentation.

Even the psalmist in Psalm 119, David himself says this, "Rivers of water run down my eyes." Why, David? Why do rivers of water run down your eyes? And he says this, "Because men do not keep God's law." Because men do not keep Your law. Even the Lord Jesus, in Luke chapter number 19, as the judgment has been denounced upon Jerusalem, and if we could say that they were past the time of their repentance, that generation, He says in Luke 19, "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, expressly in this your day, the things that make for your peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and enclose you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"

So, Jesus sees, He sees the city, but He does not weep over the buildings, but He weeps over the realization of what shall come upon them for their rejection of Himself, that God had visited His people in His Son, the long-awaited Messiah, and they rejected Him. That God has visited His people in His Son, the long-awaited Messiah, and they rejected Him. And so, David looks at the people of God or hears of the trouble in the kingdom of wickedness and vileness and disobedience, and he says, "Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they do not keep Your laws." What you see here is something very important. What we see here is a connection between the mind and the mourning. These all had a distinct knowledge of something that moved them to mourn in the way that they mourned. And what is the difference then, in that sense, between natural mourning and spiritual mourning? Well, here's the difference: Those that are spiritual have a knowledge that the natural man does not have. For the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. But those that have the Spirit, these are the ones—the

spiritual ones, those that possess the Spirit—they are the ones that understand and know the mind of God.

And so, when Jesus talks here about "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted," He is talking about those that see spiritual realities that the world does not see, that affects their hearts in such a manner that they weep as God weeps over the city, for example, of Jerusalem. They see the reality of judgment for sin. They see sin and its consequences and how disgusting the nature of sin truly is. As Ezra, when he was there bowing himself on the ground, and the Bible says weeping and weeping before the people. Why? Because they intermarried between believers, pagans, and the Jews, and they intermarried. And Ezra is so full of weeping. I mean, people think, what's wrong with you? You know, why are you weeping over that for? He understands the mind of God. He sees what man does not see. The natural man does not see, and he feels, therefore, what the natural man does not feel. And he's moved to the mourning that is regarded here as a true spiritual mourning.

You see the glory of God being dragged into the dirt by men, treading under the blood of the Son of God, as it were. Even in natural disaster that we see, the believer looks upon the news in a different way than the unbeliever looks upon the news. They see certain realities that the unbeliever does not see. And they move to mourn over the condition of our society, over the condition of different crime and things that happen in the world, because they understand things that others don't see. When we hear of people dying, there should be a sense in which we understand more than the fact that they have just died and gone to the ground. Most of those people have probably perished and are burning in hell.

And so, the believer has this understanding when they see that there is the closing down of churches or the corruption of things on the news and the exposing of things. They understand that the glory of God is being affected in terms of not His glory, but the glory among men that He displays. And so, man, this spiritual mourning is seeing that which they do not see and feeling, therefore, that which they do not feel. And so, when Jesus comes in this text of scriptures, we come to this text of scripture and hear the words of Jesus, we should understand Him in that way. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." What does all this look like?

Well, the mourning here is in the present tense. It gives the implication that there is a life marked out by mourning. And I do not believe that Jesus is referring to here to a continual stream of tears running down our faces, and that there is no room for rejoicing. There is a way in which these two things can come together. That there may be joy and sorrow is the spiritual realities that are felt by the people of God. But what does Jesus mean

here? He is not suggesting continual tears or a constant disfiguration of one's face so as to always look like they are upset. Mourning cannot be put on. As I mentioned before, it arises within us, and it is moved by a true concern, a true sobriety, a true feeling.

Now, the believer understands this about himself, that he sees his own indwelling sin. He knows that although he has been saved by the grace of God and is no longer under the condemnation of sin, he realizes that there is sin indwelling within his heart. The principle of sin remains. And he recognizes the sin that plagues his own heart, and it moves him to mourn. It moves him to understand that, "God, how wretched am I, help me, assist me, give me grace." This is something that you don't hear much of today in modern evangelicalism. Mourning has seemed to have disappeared from our churches.

But David Brainard, who was a missionary to the American Indians, if you read his diaries, he marks out someone in the 17th century, in 1740, and this is one of his diary entries. And by the way, I've read all the diaries, and they're all quite similar to this. This is what it says: "The 18th of October, 1740." Now, when I read through the lives and diary entries of David Brainard, I didn't know what to make of all this. I thought, mate, what is wrong with this guy? It's OK. Be happy. It's all right. You've been forgiven. And you see that coming through. But what you see in his diary entries is "blessed are those who mourn," followed by "and they shall be comforted." And you see this aspect in his life that he realized the indwelling sin. He realized his nature. He realized his own corruptions. He did not block and blind himself to the knowledge of who he really was, understanding all about himself that the scripture says of him. And so, he felt it and mourned over it before the Lord.

See, the mourning of indwelling sin in the lives of believers, but more than this, we also see mourning in the lives of what we see in others. This is important too. It's so easy in the Christian church to see error and problem and sin and corruption in the lives of our brethren, and puffed up in pride, we are quick to judge and to condemn, and not to go out and to assist, and not to mourn over their condition, so as to see them helped. But blessed are those that mourn, not only over their own sinful condition, not only their own corrupted nature, but also grieve over the sins of others in such a way.

You listen to the prophets, you read the minor prophets and the major prophets, and you come to someone, for example, like Daniel in Daniel chapter nine, and he takes up, as it were, a prayer for the people of God. And he says, "Lord, we have sinned against You. We have transgressed Your commandments. We have not followed after Your laws. We are deserving

of judgment. We, we, we," he draws himself in with the people of God and recognizes that "we have sinned," as it were, "together." And he pleads for mercy. He doesn't say, "I'm the prophet that haven't worshiped Baal." He gets himself all in and pleads, saying, "God, we have sinned." He mourns and grieves over the sins of others. In fact, so much so, that that in the New Testament, the apostle Paul reprimands the church as Corinth because he says this sin that is among you, of this man having his father's wife in this fornication relationship, he says, "you were puffed up and have not rather mourned." They say, hang on a minute, your response to this sin in the life of the Christian church should not be proud, "Let's go on. Nothing's wrong. Everything's OK. Happy go Larry attitude towards the issue that was arriving in them." He says, no, you're going on with your gifts, and you're going on with your praises, and all these things, but there is sin. You should mourn, deal with the sin. And in a sense, get that leaven out of this lump. But he says, you should have mourned, as opposed to being puffed up and ignoring the reality of sin in the lives of others.

But also, there's a mourning that we can have over the condition of our society. You know, the prophets desire to see righteousness in the land. But more than that, even, we see in the Lord's prayer, "thy kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And so, it should grieve the people of God that when we do not see God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven, it should grieve us and move us and cause us to long to see the will of God worked out and obeyed by people in the world.

There is a vast contrast between the way the world views the world around them and the way that the Christian views the world around them. You see, the world is not marked by mourning. They are rather marked by a frivolity and a joviality and a kind of lightheartedness to the things that go on in the world. In fact, the motto given to us in Scripture of people that do not know God is this: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." You know what that attitude is? That attitude is one that is perfectly described by the world. The world, the word frivolity or joviality, this kind of lightheartedness, is going to eat, we're going to drink, and we're going to be merry. You know what that's simply saying? We are blind to the realities that are around us. We are blind to the tragedies. We are blind to the corruption. We are blind to the death and disaster that is around and before us. And what we're going to do is close our eyes to that, erect a bubble to live in, and so ignore all the things that are taking place around us. That's how the world responds to the world around them. A denial, because they do not want to mourn.

You see, to this world, mourning is an inconvenience. It happens by a kind of like a necessary evil that we just hope to get on with it. And hey, you know, it should be right. Let's just have a few more beers to forget about

that sorrow, or just let's get move on, move on, move on. Denial, denial, denial, denial. They don't face the realities that are before them. They hide themselves in a bubble and keep themselves from those tragedies that are before them. This is the way that the world responds to trouble.

But the Christian church should respond otherwise. The Christian is not blind to these realities that are around them, but rather those realities are so real to them, they are inescapable to them, that if there is a bubble, it doesn't last very long. It gets popped very quickly. You see, the Christian is one that is sincerely honest about tragedy, sincerely honest about death, sincerely honest about disaster. The Christian grapples with death. The Christian grapples with destiny. You know, this says it in Ecclesiastes. This is the attitude of the Christian. This is how the Christian thinks about trouble: "It is better to go into the house of mourning than to the house of feasting," it says, "because that is the end of all men, and the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the fools is in the house of mirth." You see what the preacher is saying here? You see what Solomon is saying here to his audience? There is a distinctive blessing of being in the house of mourning, because in the house of mourning, you see true, rock-solid realities that the world wants to blind their eyes to.

In fact, those that mourn are truly those that belong to God. Ezekiel chapter 9 verse 4, when Ezekiel has a vision, God sends these angels, or should I say these men, in the vision anyway, to go with a sword and to slay those people that were the wicked of Jerusalem. And the Lord said to him, to this angel, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark—listen to this—a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." He says, when you go to the angel, mark out those ones and don't touch them, don't kill them; the rest, destroy. But the ones you do not destroy, the ones who escape the judgment, are the ones that mourn and grieve and sigh over the abominations that are happening in this city. And this is how God marks out His people. They are known as those that mourn. This is the remnant of God's people, a people that are marked by mourning.

How can a mourner be truly happy? If blessedness refers to one's true reality of happiness and having this blessing of God in their lives, how can a mourner truly be happy? Well, let me put it this way: The ability to mourn is indicative of the fact that your heart has not grown cold, hard, callous, and past feeling. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." The ability to mourn shows that you are one who is not become so indifferent that you are unmoved, untouched, nonimpacted by the things that are going on around you, by the sin in your own heart, by the sin in

the church of God, by the sin in the society. But the ability to mourn shows that your heart has not grown cold and callous.

When Jesus told the parable in Matthew chapter 13 of the sower that sowed seed, he spoke of these people whose hearts had grown dull. Their ears had waxed cold, as it were. Their eyes, they have shut; their ears, they have stopped from hearing, lest they should hear with their ears and see with their eyes, and I should heal them, and they should be converted. But you know what the Bible says when Jesus looked at His disciples? It said, "but blessed are your ears, for they hear. And your eyes, for they see." You understand what I'm trying to say here? If your eyes, if your heart is so callous, the knowledge of those realities do not press hard on your heart. They do not touch the innermost affections of your person because you're callous and cold, and therefore, you're not marked by mourning. But the softer the condition of the heart, the more readily the heart is ready to mourn. And so, blessed are those who mourn because that blessedness proves that your heart has not come to the place of coldness and callousness, where you no longer feel and no longer see and no longer taste and affected by that which affects the heart and mind of God.

It says, "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Not only are they blessed because they have a tender heart, but more than that, look what it says here: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Notice what is being said here. Notice the certainty. They shall be comforted. This is the promise of God. That as they mourn, those that are marked by mourning shall be comforted. Notice the passiveness of the statement. It is not that they shall comfort themselves; it is not that they will be the ones that are comforting, although that is also true. But what God is saying here, what Jesus is telling us here, is they shall be comforted. And the implication is that they will be comforted of God. That the God of heaven and earth, who is described to us in the pages of scripture as the God of all comfort, attends to the aid and help of those who mourn and ministers comfort to their hearts.

How does He do this? How does He administer comfort to the hearts of those that mourn? Well, listen very clearly. He does this first and foremost by the sending of His Son. Listen to what was read this morning to us by our brother. In Isaiah chapter number 61, verse 1 to 3, the Bible says that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, and has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called

trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." And God is saying is here, "I have sent my Son into the world to comfort people in their affliction." The messianic mission includes the comforting. The Spirit of the Lord would come upon Him so as to comfort His people. Listen to what it says here: "to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Jesus Christ the Lord, when He was a little baby, and Simeon took Him up in his arms, he said, "this is," they were waiting for the consolation of Israel. When Simeon took Him up in his arms, he said, "I'm ready to depart, for I have seen the salvation of God." This little Jesus, gentle, meek, and mild, in the hands of this prophet, was declared as it were to be the consolation of Israel. And God has sent His Son into the world to send the comfort, the comfort of His salvation, that those who mourn over sin might know by the blood and power of Jesus the mercy and forgiveness of God, that their sins which are many might be covered by His mercy and their grace. The weight of the sin that is upon them may be satisfied by His shed blood, that their broken hearts over their sinfulness and condition may be healed by His tender touch. This is the ministry of Messiah. Beauty for ashes. Comforts those who mourn. And God sent Him to comfort us.

But then we go on in scripture and see that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to comfort His disciples. And He says, "I will not leave you comfortless," or as orphans. He says, "I will come to you." And He comes to His disciples in the person of the Holy Spirit, who is called the Comforter, the Helper, the One who comes alongside and assists and consoles and encourage and directs God's people. So not only in His Son does He give comfort, but in His Spirit is sent to our comfort.

And God not only does that, but the God of all comfort also sends us His word. And the Bible speaks of this to us in Hebrews chapter six, verse 18, that by two immutable things, God's promise and God's oath, in which it is impossible for God to lie, that we might have strong consolation, strong consolation through the word of God. Paul says that we have comfort. These are the comforts of the scripture, that we might have hope. And God not only gives us His word and His Spirit and His Son, by His providence, He sends messengers of comfort to us. How often are we afflicted? How often are we down? And for some reason, someone who does not know our situation speaks a word fitly spoken that touches our hearts, that consoles us. Or we receive a visit, or we receive a call, or something happens in the providential way that was outside of our control in any way, shape, or form, that God shows that He's ministering comfort to our hearts.

Not only does it through His providence, but dear people of God, He would do it once and for all in His coming. You know, as we mourn our condi-

tion and the world around us, the sights of the things that we see, and our hearts weep and cry and mourn over the things that we see, we must always be reminded that yes, we receive comfort here. And yes, we receive it moment by moment, bit by bit, here, there, there a little. But one day, there is coming a day when the Lord Jesus Christ will come, and He will come in blazing fire, and the skies shall open, and He will come in His glory of His kingdom and of His majesty and of His power, and then shall be the end of all mourning for those that believe on His name. That shall be the day where our tears shall be turned into joy. And as Revelation puts it so clear to us, He says, "and I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. And God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' And for all the mourners here below, they will be met with the comfort of God when He comes in the glory of His angels in flaming fire. Yes, He will take vengeance on those that know not God, but He will comfort us with a comfort that we have tasted in part below, but shall fully be realized in the glory of His majesty, that there, in the consummation of all things, as we are there before the presence of the almighty God with exceeding joy and greatness and glory, we will never remember and think and sorrow and have our minds filled with the troubles of this fleeting life. But we shall be in the eternal bliss forever and forever more. And all the loss and all the death and all the decay and all the sorrow and all the sin that weighed us down in our pilgrimage here on Earth shall be finally and forever removed. And we will stand in the presence of God as His people, and He shall be our God. And we will fellowship with Him in a sweet communion in such a way that sin shall never molest, and sin shall never ever, ever corrupt. And we shall taste of His blessing in a way that we have never tasted before. And we will live all of our days for all eternity, basking in the joy of heaven. And there will be no more tears, no more sadness, for there shall be no more sin and no more death. And that will be the day where the God of all comfort will pour out all His comfort, if we could say, at one time, in one place, on all His people, and they will sing the praises of the Lamb that redeemed them by His blood. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Do you know anything of this mourning? Do you know anything of this comfort? If you say, "Joshua, this comfort is so foreign to me," then I ask you this question: Have you truly mourned in a spiritual way? Because the promise of God is that all mourners shall be comforted. And if you say, "Joshua, I don't know anything of this comfort that you are speaking of," then I ask you this serious and sober question: Have you mourned after a godly sort? Because the promise of God is all who mourn shall be comforted. It begins for us in gospel mourning, when the Holy Spirit opens the

eyes of our understanding to see our vileness and our corruption, to see our deadness in our sin, to see the way that our sin is repulsive to a holy God. And the sinner, coming under that insight, by having that information and having that conviction brought to their heart, brought into their soul, brought into their mind, begins to grapple with these realities: "I am a sinner against God. I have violated His law, and I am not right with Him." And the sinner begins to mourn their sin. They begin to come to the place where they realize that their sin is welling up within them, and "I must have the mercy of God."

And the same Holy Spirit that shows them of their conviction of sin, and of the righteousness, and of the judgment to come, also comes to them with comforting words of sweetness and says, "There is a Lamb of God that was slain for sinners. And His sins, and your sins, and iniquities shall be remembered no more if you come to Him and believe on Him and trust in His precious blood." And that sinner that has come under the heavy weight of his sin and has began to mourn their condition and grant a sorrow over their corruption, are then taken by the Holy Spirit to Calvary's mountain, to see the blood that flows there for their redemption. And they trust in Him and are comforted. And they join God. And they recognize that God has had mercy on their soul. And He died the death that they deserved. And they hear the words of that glorious comfort.

You know, Thomas Watson put it this way, very confronting statement, but he said this: "We have many who can mourn over a dead child, who cannot mourn over a crucified Savior." We have many that can mourn over a dead child—and he's not saying you shouldn't mourn over a dead child—but he's saying, "they cannot mourn over a crucified Savior." Do you see the difference? One is a natural mourning. The other is a spiritual mourning that comes by the work of the Spirit of God, that so touches the heart that they see Jesus in His dying sorrow for their redemption, and they mourn over what He has done for their sins. This is where it all begins.

As a Christian has entered into that mourning, if we could say, of their sin, and received the comfort of the gospel, that dance never ends. Where he still sees his sin. In fact, in his conversion, he starts to see more of his sin. He starts to realize that "I have sinned I never knew that I had, even when we didn't know God." These little attitudes and thoughts and these carnal appetites that I just went with, and I didn't know. But now they're so real to me. And I loathe them, and I want to leave them, and I hate them. And he begins to mourn over his condition. And he says, "Lord, how false and full of sin I am, but You are full of truth and grace." And he comes to God, and God forgives his sin and comforts his sin, and reminds him of the precious blood that was shed to redeem him.

Now, he doesn't do this under the sense of condemnation like the unbeliever does, but he does this because he realizes that he hurts a Savior that he loves so much. And he continues on this pathway of mourning, where he sees his sin, and sees God's grace, and sees his sin, and sees God's grace. And then he groans, as it were, with the creation, waiting for the redemption of the body, and says, "Come, Lord Jesus. I can't take this anymore. I want to be with You. Cleanse me from every secret fault."

Do you know anything of this mourning? Or has your heart become so callous that you don't see your sin anymore? You get angry, and then you do not grieve. You lust, and you do not mourn. You live in greed, but you do not follow that with sorrow. Has your heart become callous? Has it become cold? Have you erected a bubble in which you live, whereby you don't get touched by the eternal realities that remain, that you should be thinking of, believing in, understanding, and allowing to affect you? Do we mourn over the sin of our nation? When we hear of Scripture getting kicked out of the schools, as it were, the Bible out of Parliament, does it cause the heart of God's people to mourn? Or you may not shed tears, and that's not what is being referred to here, but does your heart grieve? Does it cry out, "Oh Lord, how long? Oh Lord, give us more time. Have mercy on this nation"? Does your heart yearn when there's this approval of homosexual marriage and this glorying in sin in the land, where those things were counted as sin and wrong and evil and repulsive? Does it hurt the hearts of God's people, whereby we say, "Lord, we have sinned against You"? Do we look at the Christian church and see our brothers that are falling and failing and struggling in their lives, and do we lift up ourselves with pride like the Pharisees and say, "I'm glad that I'm not like other men are. Look at me. Look at how righteous I am. Look at how holy I am"? Or do you grieve over their sin in hope for their restoration?

Blessed are those that mourn, not only over their own sinful condition, not only their own corrupted nature, but also grieve over the sins of others in such a way. You listen to the prophets; you read the minor prophets and the major prophets, and you come to someone, for example, like Daniel in Daniel chapter nine, and he takes up, as it were, a prayer for the people of God. And he says, "Lord, we have sinned against You. We have transgressed Your commandments. We have not followed after Your laws. We are deserving of judgment. We, we, we," he draws himself in with the people of God and recognizes that "we have sinned," as it were, "together." And he pleads for mercy. He doesn't say, "I'm the prophet that haven't worshiped Baal." He gets himself all in and pleads, saying, "God, we have sinned." He mourns and grieves over the sins of others. In fact, so much so, that that, in the New Testament, the apostle Paul reprimands the church as Corinth because he says this sin that is among you, of this man having his father's wife in this fornication relationship, "you were puffed up and

have not rather mourned." They say, "hang on a minute, your response to this sin in the life of the Christian church should not be proud. Let's go on. Nothing's wrong. Everything's okay. Happy-go-Larry attitude towards the issue that was arriving in them." He says, "no, you're going on with your gifts, and you're going on with your praises, and all these things, but there is sin. You should mourn, deal with the sin." And in a sense, get that leaven out of this lump. But he says, "you should have mourned," as opposed to being puffed up and ignoring the reality of sin in the lives of others.

But also, there's a mourning that we can have over the condition of our society. You know, the prophets desire to see righteousness in the land. But more than that, even we see in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come, and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And so, it should grieve the people of God that when we do not see God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven, it should grieve us and move us and cause us to long to see the will of God worked out and obeyed by people in the world.

There is a vast contrast between the way the world views the world around them and the way that the Christian views the world around them. You see, the world is not marked by mourning. They are rather marked by a frivolity and a joviality and a kind of lightheartedness to the things that go on in the world. In fact, the motto given to us in Scripture of people that do not know God is this: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." You know what that attitude is? That attitude is one that is perfectly described by the world. The world, the word frivolity or joviality, this kind of lightheartedness, is going to eat, we're going to drink, and we're going to be merry. You know what that's simply saying? We are blind to the realities that are around us. We are blind to the tragedies. We are blind to the corruption. We are blind to the death and disaster that is around and before us. And what we're going to do is close our eyes to that, erect a bubble to live in, and so ignore all the things that are taking place around us. That's how the world responds to the world around them. A denial, because they do not want to mourn.

To this world, mourning is an inconvenience. It happens by a kind of like a necessary evil that we just hope to get on with it. And hey, you know, it should be right. Let's just have a few more beers to forget about that sorrow, or just let's get move on, move on, move on. Denial, denial, denial, denial. They don't face the realities that are before them. They hide themselves in a bubble and keep themselves from those tragedies that are before them. This is the way that the world responds to trouble.

But the Christian church should respond otherwise. The Christian is not blind to these realities that are around them, but rather those realities are so real to them. They are inescapable to them, that if there is a bubble,

it doesn't last very long. It gets popped very quickly. You see, the Christian is one that is sincerely honest about tragedy, sincerely honest about death, sincerely honest about disaster. The Christian grapples with death. The Christian grapples with destiny. You know, this says it in Ecclesiastes. This is the attitude of the Christian. This is how the Christian thinks about trouble: "It is better to go into the house of mourning than to the house of feasting," it says, "because that is the end of all men, and the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the fools is in the house of mirth." You see what the preacher is saying here? You see what Solomon is saying here to his audience? There is a distinctive blessing of being in the house of mourning, because in the house of mourning, you see true, rock-solid realities that the world wants to blind their eyes to.

In fact, those that mourn are truly those that belong to God. Ezekiel chapter 9, verse 4, when Ezekiel has a vision, God sends these angels, or should I say, these men, in the vision anyway, to go with a sword and to slay those people that were the wicked of Jerusalem. And the Lord said to him, to this angel, "go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark—listen to this—a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." He says, "when you go to the angel, mark out those ones and don't touch them, don't kill them; the rest, destroy. But the ones you do not destroy, the ones who escape the judgment, are the ones that mourn and grieve and sigh over the abominations that are happening in this city." And this is how God marks out His people. They are known as those that mourn. This is the remnant of God's people, a people that are marked by mourning.

How can a mourner be truly happy? If blessedness refers to one's true reality of happiness and having this blessing of God in their lives, how can a mourner truly be happy? Well, let me put it this way: The ability to mourn is indicative of the fact that your heart has not grown cold, hard, callous, and past feeling. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." The ability to mourn shows that you are one who is not become so indifferent that you are unmoved, untouched, nonimpacted by the things that are going on around you, by the sin in your own heart, by the sin in the church of God, by the sin in the society. But the ability to mourn shows that your heart has not grown cold and callous.

When Jesus told the parable in Matthew chapter 13 of the sower that sowed seed, he spoke of these people whose hearts had grown dull. Their ears had waxed cold, as it were. Their eyes, they have shut; their ears, they have stopped from hearing, lest they should hear with their ears and see with their eyes, and I should heal them, and they should be converted. But

you know what the Bible says when Jesus looked at his disciples? It said, "but blessed are your ears, for they hear. And your eyes, for they see." You understand what I'm trying to say here? If your eyes, if your heart is so callous, the knowledge of those realities do not press hard on your heart. They do not touch the innermost affections of your person because you're callous and cold, and therefore, you're not marked by mourning. But the softer the condition of the heart, the more readily the heart is ready to mourn. And so, blessed are those who mourn because that blessedness proves that your heart has not come to the place of coldness and callousness, where you no longer feel and no longer see and no longer taste and affected by that which affects the heart and mind of God.

It says, "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Not only are they blessed because they have a tender heart, but more than that, look what it says here: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Notice what is being said here. Notice the certainty. They shall be comforted. This is the promise of God. That as they mourn, those that are marked by mourning shall be comforted. Notice the passiveness of the statement. It is not that they shall comfort themselves; it is not that they will be the ones that are comforting, although that is also true. But what God is saying here, what Jesus is telling us here, is they shall be comforted. And the implication is that they will be comforted of God. That the God of heaven and earth, who is described to us in the pages of scripture as the God of all comfort, attends to the aid and help of those who mourn and ministers comfort to their hearts.

How does He do this? How does He administer comfort to the hearts of those that mourn? Well, listen very clearly. He does this first and foremost by the sending of His Son. Listen to what was read this morning to us by our brother. In Isaiah chapter number 61, verse 1 to 3, the Bible says that "the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, and has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirits of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." And God is saying is here, "I have sent my Son into the world to comfort people in their affliction." The messianic mission includes the comforting. The spirit of the Lord would come upon Him so as to comfort His people. Listen to what it says here: "to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Jesus Christ the Lord, when He was a little baby, and Simeon took Him up in his arms, he

said, "this is they were waiting for the consolation of Israel." When Simeon took him up in his arms, he said, "I'm ready to depart, for I have seen the salvation of God." This little Jesus, gentle, meek, and mild, in the hands of this prophet, was declared as it were to be the consolation of Israel. And God has sent His Son into the world to send the comfort, the comfort of His salvation, that those who mourn over sin might know by the blood and power of Jesus the mercy and forgiveness of God, that their sins which are many might be covered by His mercy and their grace. The weight of the sin that is upon them may be satisfied by His shed blood, that their broken hearts over their sinfulness and condition may be healed by His tender touch. This is the ministry of Messiah. Beauty for ashes. Comforts those who mourn. And God sent Him to comfort us.

But then we go on in scripture and see that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to comfort His disciples. And He says, "I will not leave you comfortless, or as orphans." He says, "I will come to you." And He comes to His disciples in the person of the Holy Spirit, who is called the comforter, the helper, the one who comes alongside and assists and consoles and encourages and directs God's people. So not only in His Son does He give comfort, but in His Spirit is sent to our comfort.

And God not only does that, but the God of all comfort also sends us His word. And the Bible speaks of this to us in Hebrews 6:18, that by two immutable things, God's promise and God's oath, in which it is impossible for God to lie, that we might have strong consolation, strong consolation through the word of God. Paul says that we have comfort. These are the comforts of the scripture, that we might have hope.

And God not only gives us His word and His Spirit and His Son, by His providence He sends messengers of comfort to us. How often are we afflicted? How often are we down? And for some reason, someone who does not know our situation speaks a word fitly spoken that touches our hearts, that consoles us. Or we receive a visit, or we receive a call, or something happens in the providential way that was outside of our control in any way, shape, or form, that God shows that He's ministering comfort to our hearts.

Not only does He do it through His providence, but dear people of God, He would do it once and for all in His coming. You know, as we mourn our condition and the world around us, the sights of the things that we see, and our hearts weep and cry and mourn over the things that we see, we must always be reminded that yes, we receive comfort here. And yes, we receive it moment by moment, bit by bit, here, there, there a little. But one day, there is coming a day when the Lord Jesus Christ will come, and He will come in blazing fire, and the skies shall open, and He will come in the glory of His kingdom and of His majesty and of His power, and then shall

be the end of all mourning for those that believe on His name. That shall be the day where our tears shall be turned into joy.

And as Revelation puts it so clear to us, He says, "and I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. And God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' And for all the mourners here below, they will be met with the comfort of God when He comes in the glory of His angels, in flaming fire. Yes, He will take vengeance on those that know not God, but He will comfort us with a comfort that we have tasted in part below, but shall fully be realized in the glory of His majesty, that there, in the consummation of all things, as we are there before the presence of the almighty God with exceeding joy and greatness and glory, we will never remember and think and sorrow and have our minds filled with the troubles of this fleeting life. But we shall be in the eternal bliss forever and forever more. And all the loss and all the death and all the decay and all the sorrow and all the sin that weighed us down in our pilgrimage here on Earth shall be finally and forever removed. And we will stand in the presence of God as His people, and He shall be our God. And we will fellowship with Him in a sweet communion in such a way that sin shall never molest, and sin shall never ever, ever corrupt. And we shall taste of His blessing in a way that we have never tasted before. And we will live all of our days, for all eternity, basking in the joy of heaven. And there will be no more tears, no more sadness, for there shall be no more sin and no more death. And that will be the day where the God of all comfort will pour out all His comfort, if we could say, at one time, in one place, on all His people, and they will sing the praises of the Lamb that redeemed them by His blood. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Do you know anything of this mourning? Do you know anything of this comfort? If you say, "Joshua, this comfort is so foreign to me," then I ask you this question: Have you truly mourned in a spiritual way? Because the promise of God is that all mourners shall be comforted. And if you say, "Joshua, I don't know anything of this comfort that you are speaking of," then I ask you this serious and sober question: Have you mourned after a godly sort? Because the promise of God is all who mourn shall be comforted. It begins for us in gospel mourning, when the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our understanding to see our vileness and our corruption, to see our deadness in our sin, to see the way that our sin is repulsive to a holy God. And the sinner, coming under that insight, by having that information and having that conviction brought to their heart, brought into their soul, brought into their mind, begins to grapple with these realities: "I am a sinner against God. I have violated His law, and I am not right with Him."

And the sinner begins to mourn their sin. They begin to come to the place where they realize that their sin is welling up within them, and "I must have the mercy of God."

And the same Holy Spirit that shows them of their conviction of sin, and of the righteousness, and of the judgment to come, also comes to them with comforting words of sweetness and says, "there is a Lamb of God that was slain for sinners. And His sins, and your sins, and iniquities shall be remembered no more if you come to Him and believe on Him and trust in His precious blood." And that sinner that has come under the heavy weight of his sin and has began to mourn their condition and grant a sorrow over their corruption, are then taken by the Holy Spirit to Calvary's mountain, to see the blood that flows there for their redemption. And they trust in Him and are comforted. And they join God. And they recognize that God has had mercy on their soul. And He died the death that they deserved. And they hear the words of that glorious comfort.

You know, Thomas Watson put it this way, very confronting statement, but he said this: "We have many who can mourn over a dead child, who cannot mourn over a crucified Savior." We have many that can mourn over a dead child, and he's not saying you shouldn't mourn over a dead child, but he's saying they cannot mourn over a crucified Savior. Do you see the difference? One is a natural mourning. The other is a spiritual mourning that comes by the work of the Spirit of God, that so touches the heart that they see Jesus in His dying sorrow for their redemption, and they mourn over what He has done for their sins. This is where it all begins.

As a Christian has entered into that mourning, if we could say, of their sin, and received the comfort of the gospel, that dance never ends. Where he still sees his sin. In fact, in his conversion, he starts to see more of his sin. He starts to realize that "I have sinned I never knew that I had, even when we didn't know God." These little attitudes and thoughts and these carnal appetites that I just went with, and I didn't know. But now they're so real to me. And I loathe them, and I want to leave them, and I hate them. And he begins to mourn over his condition. And he says, "Lord, how false and full of sin I am, but You are full of truth and grace." And he comes to God, and God forgives his sin and comforts his sin, and reminds him of the precious blood that was shed to redeem him.

Now, he doesn't do this under the sense of condemnation like the unbeliever does, but he does this because he realizes that he hurts a Savior that he loves so much. And he continues on this pathway of mourning, where he sees his sin, and sees God's grace, and sees his sin, and sees God's grace. And then he groans, as it were, with the creation, waiting for the redemption of the body, and says, "come, Lord Jesus. I can't take this

anymore. I want to be with You. Cleanse me from every secret fault."

Do you know anything of this mourning? Or has your heart become so callous that you don't see your sin anymore? You get angry, and then you do not grieve. You lust, and you do not mourn. You live in greed, but you do not follow that with sorrow. Has your heart become callous? Has it become cold? Have you erected a bubble in which you live, whereby you don't get touched by the eternal realities that remain, that you should be thinking of, believing in, understanding, and allowing to affect you? Do we mourn over the sin of our nation? When we hear of Scripture getting kicked out of the schools, as it were, the Bible out of Parliament, does it cause the heart of God's people to mourn? Or you may not shed tears, and that's not what is being referred to here, but does your heart grieve? Does it cry out, "oh Lord, how long? Oh Lord, give us more time. Have mercy on this nation"? Does your heart yearn when there's this approval of homosexual marriage and this glorying in sin in the land, where those things were counted as sin and wrong and evil and repulsive? Does it hurt the hearts of God's people, whereby we say, "Lord, we have sinned against You"? Do we look at the Christian church and see our brothers that are falling and failing and struggling in their lives, and do we lift up ourselves with pride like the Pharisees and say, "I'm glad that I'm not like other men are. Look at me. Look at how righteous I am. Look at how holy I am"? Or do you grieve over their sin in hope for their restoration?

Dear people of God, if the truth be known, our hearts have become so cold, so callous, so indifferent, that we are unaffected anymore by the very realities that should be before our eyes, that should be churning and turning our hearts. We avoid such contemplations just as the world does because we don't want to feel the weight of such sin and the mourning that follows. We love frivolity. We love lightheartedness. We, like the world, are careless, just wanting to go on, eat, drink, and be merry. We don't want to mourn. We don't want to see. We shut our eyes. We close our ears. We harden our heart to what is taking place before us.

But while we do that, the tragedies still remain, souls still perish, God's people still go wayward. And in the meantime, we feel nothing. We feel nothing. And Jesus here calls us to mourning. And He calls us, as it were, to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice.

Jesus said these words to the disciples of John, or to the Pharisees. They said, "Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples?" And this is what Jesus said, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." You know what days they are, my friends? Those are these days. He hasn't come yet. The bridegroom

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has been taken away from us. He will come again. But these are the days of our mourning.

And may God open our eyes to see afresh all the things that we need to see, that our hearts may once again feel and long after God. Let us pray.