

## **“Kingdom Character: The Beatitudes” (part 3)**

Matthew 5:4

There are certain truths about life that we don't like to emphasize and maybe even try to ignore. Grief and sadness and suffering would be among those truths. Society around us likes to downplay grief, highlighting laughter rather than sadness. In certain segments of the church, some have even developed a theology that says pain and hardship ought to have no part in the life of the true man or woman of faith.

Yet nowhere in Scripture is the fact of pain and suffering hidden from us. In fact, there are only four chapters where there is an absence of pain and sorrow:

- Genesis 1-2 and the perfect earth as originally created
- Revelation 21-22 and the new heaven and new earth

The rest of Scripture deals with the pains and hurts of life as we now live in a world that is ravished by the consequences of sin. And yet while pain is definitely not pleasureable, Scripture shows is that pain is profitable in our lives. And strange as it may seem, Jesus even connects pain to true happiness.

The Bible nowhere tells us to pretend that we do not hurt, nor are we to approach life as if pain and sorrow are not real.

Most of the Psalms were born in seasons of difficulty. Most of the Epistles were written from the prison cell.

- Abraham mourns over the death of Sarah in Genesis 23
- Joseph weeps upon confronting the brothers who betrayed him in Genesis 45
- Hannah weeps at an altar before God over her barren childless condition in 1 Samuel 1
- David is heartbroken over the news that his son Absalom had been killed in 2 Samuel 18
- Mary and Martha cry by the fresh grave of their brother Lazarus in John 11

Most of the greatest accomplishments of the greatest people of all time had to pass through the fire of difficulty.

John Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress from jail. During the greater part of his life, American historian Francis Parkman suffered so severely from a debilitating neurological illness that he

could not work for more than five minutes at a time. His eyesight was so poor that he could scrawl only a few words on a manuscript at a time, yet he contrived to write twenty magnificent volumes of history. At just 19 months old, Helen Keller contracted an illness that left her both deaf and blind. Yet she learned to speak and spent much of her life giving speeches and lectures. She learned to “hear” people’s speech by reading their lips with her hands.

Sometimes it seems that when God is about to make use of someone, he puts them through the fire, and that always involves pain and suffering.

Followers of Jesus respond differently to pain and suffering than unbelievers do.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13 - “...lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.”**

**Psalm 56:8 - “You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?”**

No follower of Christ is immune to grief.

**v. 4 - “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”**

In the second beatitude, Jesus deals with the very raw reality of sorrow, pain, and mourning in this life. In the Greek text, there are nine words used for “mourning.” But the word that is used here in Matthew 5:4 is the strongest of them all.

*“Mourn” - word is ‘pentheo’ and means to experience sadness or grief as the result of depressing circumstances; the condition of persons who are sad or grieving*

The word is so intense that it is usually accompanied with weeping and tears. It is most often associated with mourning for the dead. It speaks of a sorrow so deep that it pierces the heart and opens the tear ducts.

Remember that in these beatitudes, Jesus teaches us what true happiness is and how it is characteristic of those who belong to Him. His words stand in stark contrast to everything that we feel and hear from the world around us.

How can gladness ever link arms with sadness? How can happiness ever come from hurt? How can a smile ever come through tears? The world says this is impossible. Jesus says that this is the way to true happiness.

The type of mourning that Jesus is speaking of in the life of His followers shows up in several ways. It involves:

## **1. SORROWING over one's own sinfulness**

The mourning that Jesus speaks of is the outflow of humility and poverty of spirit. Verse 4 merely build upon what He has said in verse 3. Those who are poor in spirit are broken over their own sinfulness.

**Kent Hughes** - *"The intimate connection of this second Beatitude with the first is beautiful and compelling. The first Beatitude, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' is primarily intellectual (those who understand that they are spiritual beggars are blessed); the second Beatitude, 'Bless are those who mourn,' is its emotional counterpart. It naturally follows that when we see ourselves for what we are, our emotions will be stirred to mourning."*

Jesus confronts us with the need to acknowledge our own bankruptcy which leads to brokenness before God over our sin.

This is all preparatory to the gospel. This is the attitude of those who trust Jesus Christ as Savior.

Experience genuine brokenness over our sin is the opposite of rationalizing them. It is coming to the point of making no excuses and agreeing with God about it. It is the attitude reflected by David upon being confronted with his sin:

**Psalm 51:3-4** - **"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight--that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge."**

The only finger that David points is at himself.

Those who mourn are those who mourn at their own sinfulness as well as the toll that sin is taking in the lives of others.

The prophet Jeremiah was known as "The Weeping Prophet" because of his agonizing over the sin that was so prevalent in the lives of his people. He was a heartbroken prophet with a heartbroken message, and he preached for more than 40 years having bathed his message in tears of compassion for a wayward people.

**Jeremiah 9:1** - **"Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4** - **"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."**

We shouldn't weep when its a time to laugh, and we shouldn't laugh when its a time to weep.

Given the state of affairs in our nation and in the weak and anemic modern church, I'd say its a time to mourn on the altar and beg God to move in a fresh way among His people.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who sorrow over their own sinfulness, who come to My nail-scarred hands, who reject all pride and pretense and abandon everything else in pursuit of Me."

## **2. SYMPATHIZING with those around us who hurt**

This mourning that leads to happiness which Jesus speaks of involves sorrowing over our own sinfulness, and it also involves sympathizing with others around us who are hurting.

Christ's followers are not oblivious to the hurts of others, but are sensitive and sympathetic.

**Galatians 6:2 - "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."**

This speaks of the character of Jesus Himself. The Bible says that He is our Great High Priest who sympathizes with us.

**Hebrews 4:15 - "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."**

**"Sympathize"** - *word in Greek is 'sympatheo' and means to share someone's feeling; includes the element of active help and should not be limited to the psychological notion of feeling*

It means that Jesus shares in our struggles and actively helps us through them.

Believers have Someone in heaven with unparalleled capacity for sympathizing and helping us through all the dangers and sorrows and trials which come our way because He Himself was exposed to all these experiences in His earthly life.

Jesus is our Heavenly Sympathizer, and our Friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Jesus went out of His way to minister and sympathize with the hurts of people. In fact, we see Jesus weeping three times in Scripture:

Jesus wept over an individual.

**John 11:35 - "Jesus wept."**

Jesus wept over a city.

**Luke 19:41 - “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it.”**

Jesus wept over the condition of the world.

**Hebrews 5:7 - “Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears...”**

His followers follow in His footsteps. We mourn with those who mourn, and weep with those who weep. Rather than pointing fingers, looking down our noses, and condemning someone else, Christ’s followers reach out in love and grace.

This is the attitude of the Good Samaritan.

In Luke 10, Jesus had just finished explaining the two great commandments of loving God and loving one’s neighbor. A lawyer asked the question, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

**Luke 10:30-37 - “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you. So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves? And he said, He who showed mercy on him. Then Jesus said to him, Go and do likewise.”**

True sympathy goes out of its way to help others.

### **3. SUFFERING through the pains and hurts of this life**

This sadness that leads to gladness which Jesus speaks of not only involves sorrowing over sin and sympathizing with others, but it also involves suffering in our faith through the pains and hurts of this life.

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - “Into each life some rain must fall, some days must be dark and dreary.”**

Perpetual sunshine leads only to a desert.

The fact of the matter is that this life involves suffering. At some point, the rain will begin to fall and the pain will begin to ache.

Yet Jesus promises us that we are blessed when we mourn as believers, for we shall be comforted.

- The pain of loss
- The pain of the cross

**Luke 9:23 - “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”**

**Philippians 1:29 - “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”**

**1 Peter 4:16 - “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”**

Suffering refines our faith like nothing else can.

**1 Peter 1:6-7 - “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

We shall be comforted as believers when we suffer through the pains and adversities of this life.

#### **4. SACRIFICING the immediate for the eternal**

There is happiness in mourning when we sorrow over our sin, sympathize with others, and suffer through the trials of life. It also involves sacrificing the immediate for the eternal, something which is often very painful to do.

This is especially seen in Luke’s rendering of this beatitude:

**Luke 6:21 - “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh [then].”**

We weep now. We carry the cross now. We reject momentary satisfaction now. But we shall laugh then!

So many people are sacrificing their eternity on the altar of the here and now. They only live for themselves and store up treasures for themselves in this life.

Jesus says, "Blessed are you who mourn NOW, for you shall be comforted. You shall rejoice THEN." We reject the passing pleasures of sin in this life because we are in pursuit of eternal pleasures.

D.L. Moody once told about a Christian woman who was always bright, cheerful, and optimistic, even though she was confined to her room because of illness. She lived in an attic apartment on the fifth floor of an old, rundown building. A friend decided to visit her one day and brought along another woman -- a person of great wealth. Since there was no elevator, the two ladies began the long climb upward. When they reached the second floor, the well-to-do woman commented, "What a dark and filthy place!" Her friend replied, "It's better higher up." When they arrived at the third landing, the remark was made, "Things look even worse here." Again the reply, "It's better higher up." The two women finally reached the attic level, where they found the bedridden saint of God. A smile on her face radiated the joy that filled her heart. Although the room was clean and flowers were on the window sill, the wealthy visitor could not get over the stark surroundings in which this woman lived. She blurted out, "It must be very difficult for you to be here like this!" With misty eyes and cheerful smile and without a moment's hesitation, the old shut-in responded, "It's better higher up." She was not looking at temporal things. With the eye of faith fixed on the eternal, she had found the secret of true satisfaction and contentment.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!