

Kingdom Attitudes

PART 2 • MATTHEW 5:4 • Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
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It is so good to be together with God's people this morning! If you are visiting with us today, we would invite you to fill out a visitor card online, and we would also give the reminder that the elements for the Lord's Supper are available on the table in the entryway.

As we get started today, we would like to invite you to obey the gospel. The gospel is the good news that Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and was raised up on the third day. We obey the gospel by believing it, by turning away from sin, by confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with him in baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. And today, we have an interesting example, coming to us from the Clarke County congregation down in Athens, Georgia, just east of Atlanta. They say that "This young man was told by his mom to watch the live-stream service of the Renaissance Church of Christ (Atlanta) as she left for work Sunday morning. He watched and understood what he needed to do to be saved. Today, we were thrilled to assist him in obeying the Word in water baptism! Welcome to the body of Christ Nyzier! We and the angels rejoice." Is that not the best news we've had all week? I know that we have had a tough couple of years, we've had a tough week, but one benefit of what we've been through is that most congregations now have some kind of livestream. The livestream is not quite like being together in person, but there are some benefits! For one, a mom can tell her son, "You'd better watch church before I get home!" And there are some who will join us online who may never be with us in person. And that seems to have been the case here. We are thankful for Nyzier's example, and if you are thinking about making the decision to follow Jesus, we would encourage you to get in touch. The contact information for all three of our elders is on the front of the bulletin. You can either call or text me on the church phone at 608-224-0274, or you can pull me aside after worship this morning. We would love to study God's word with you.

This morning, I would invite you to be turning with me again to Matthew 5 as we return to our series of lessons on the "Beatitudes" or "Kingdom Attitudes," as found in the Sermon on the Mount. Last week, we noted that Jesus has started preaching that "**the kingdom of heaven is at hand,**" he is healing people left and right, word gets out very quickly, large crowds are gathering, and when we come to Matthew 5:1, we find that Jesus goes up on the side of a mountain near the Sea of Galilee, and he sits down to teach. As we learned last week, he is teaching his disciples, but others are also listening. His words, then, describe what life is to be like in the kingdom, but his words are also something of an invitation.

With this as background, we then moved into these “Kingdom Attitudes” last week, coming to us in the form of eight blessings, where Jesus uses a word that is often translated into English as **“blessed,”** and is sometimes translated as **“happy.”** However, this is more than happiness based on passing circumstances. To be **“blessed”** (in this context) is the joy that comes from enjoying God’s favor or approval, an inner peace that comes from being right with God. Because of the way it is arranged, we noted that the book of Matthew was most likely intended as a teaching tool. So, we also noted these statements are very easy to memorize. They come across almost like bullet points. And I put a copy of this text on the table right inside the front door to help us memorize these.

We also noted that these short statements that are paradoxical, we might say – they seem to be contradictions. And we absolutely see this with the first one, because last week we looked at the Lord’s statement (in verse 3), where he said, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** We looked first, at the BLESSING, and then we looked at the REWARD. The poor in spirit are those who are willing to admit that they are spiritually impoverished before the Lord. God is God and we are not. We looked at King David, and Isaiah, and Peter for examples of this, and we also noted Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son (once he came to his senses) as well as the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. It’s the Tax Collector who is held up as an example, **“God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”** And then we noted the REWARD, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** Those who are willing to admit that they are poor in spirit are those who are given the kingdom of heaven. If we are already in the kingdom, we took all of this as a reminder that we must absolutely stay humble. And then we also noted that for those who may be here observing this morning, this kind of humility is a prerequisite for entering the kingdom of heaven.

Well, this leads us to the second beatitude (in Matthew 5:4), where Jesus says, **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”** Once again, this one is also pretty easy to memorize, isn’t it? **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”** As we did last week, let’s focus in on the blessing itself, and then let’s look at the reward.

I. First of all, then, let’s focus in on the BLESSING itself, **“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN.”**

And right away, this just doesn’t seem right, does it? Like most of the others, this one is also a paradox, a statement that seems like a contradiction. It’s almost like saying, “Happy are those who are sad.” This doesn’t make sense at all. Generally speaking, in our culture, we are not too comfortable with mourning. In fact, we try to avoid weeping, if at all possible, because obviously, we usually associate crying with grief and with pain, and grief and pain are bad! I don’t want to be sad! I don’t want to be in pain!

And certainly, in the Bible, we do find those times when people mourned over some absolutely heart-breaking situations. We think of King David weeping as he is harassed by his enemies in Psalm 6:6-7 when he says, **“I am weary with my sighing; every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears. My eye has wasted away with grief.”** Sometimes, we have people weeping over the loss of a loved one. Abraham, for example, weeps at the death of Sarah in Genesis 23:2, where we find that **“Sarah died...; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.”** Or we think of David weeping over the death of his son Absalom in 2 Samuel 18:33, **“The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, ‘O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!’”** Or, we might think of Jesus weeping at the death of his friend Lazarus. In John 11, John tells us that when Jesus saw Mary weeping, and when he saw the Jews who came with her also weeping, **“He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,”** and then we come to John 11:35, the shortest verse in our English Bibles, **“Jesus wept.”** Or, we think of Hannah, so upset that she was unable to have children, and we find in 1

Samuel 1:10 that ***“She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly.”*** Weeping, then, is not pleasant.

However, we also need to realize that there must be at least some sense in which mourning might, indeed, be considered a blessing. First of all, let’s think about mourning over our own sins. When I sin, if I come to understand what I have done, and if I mourn over my sin, that kind of mourning might be considered ***“blessed.”*** It certainly beats the alternative, which is being proud of my sin. We might think of James’ inspired advice in James 4:8-10, where he says, ***“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*** In this case, weeping over sin is the preferred outcome; in fact, it is commanded. We think of Peter weeping bitterly after betraying the Lord (Matthew 26:75). That weeping was ultimately a blessing to Peter, as it helped turn him back to God. This is the weeping Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 7:10, when he says, ***“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*** There is a difference, then, between the sorrow that leads to salvation and the sorrow that comes simply from being caught. I can be sorry that I have to pay a speeding ticket, or I can be sorry that I was speeding. There is a difference. So, first of all, mourning over our own sin can be a blessing – if, of course, our mourning leads to repentance.

Secondly, our mourning over the sins of others might be a blessing. We might think of Jesus in Luke 19:41-42, where Luke says that ***“When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.’”*** This, of course, is as Jesus is on his way into the city, and we might say that these tears were perhaps somewhat motivational. We might even see a parallel between this and a reference Paul makes to his time in Ephesus in Acts 20:31. Speaking to the elders of the congregation, he says, ***“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”*** It seems to me that Paul wept over the sins of the people, and that’s part of what kept him going as a preacher, as an apostle. He had the same concern for members of his own family. As he says in Romans 9:2, ***“I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.”*** This grief motivated Paul to keep on preaching the gospel. There’s at least one time in scripture when a church was condemned for NOT grieving over sin. We think of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, when he said, ***“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.”*** Mourning over sin, therefore, can be a blessing in that it motivates us to do something about it.

I know I’ve already mentioned Jesus weeping over the death of Lazarus as something of a negative, but there is a way that weeping with others might actually be considered a blessing. We see it even with Jesus and Lazarus. He wasn’t weeping over Lazarus. Jesus knew what he was about to do (raising Lazarus from the dead); Jesus wept because he saw the weeping of others. He was empathizing with them. As Paul would go on to say in Romans 12:15, we are to, ***“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”*** Christianity is a religion where we are allowed to be real. When we hurt, we are allowed to pour out our sorrow, not just to the Lord, but we are also encouraged to share our sorrow with each other. Sometimes, then, weeping truly can be a blessing – when we weep over our own sins, when we weep over the sins of others, and when we weep with those around us.

Ultimately, the Sermon on the Mount cannot be separated from the One who first spoke these words. So, before we move on to the “reward” part of this “kingdom attitude,” I would add one more blessing that comes in mourning, and that is: In mourning, we identify with our King, who came to this earth as a **“man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”** (Isaiah 53:3). Think about this for just a moment: When Jesus was born, his birth brought the death of dozens, if not hundreds of other little babies (thanks to King Herod). Jesus, in fact, was the only male to survive during a two-year period. If you mentioned being born in Bethlehem back during that time, just the mention of those years would have brought great sorrow. We might compare it to someone being born on 9/11. Yes, it’s great you were born, but that’s just a terrible birthday! In the same way, Jesus’ birth was accompanied by great sadness in those days. Not only that, but he was born into a world of poverty and grief. And then, imagine being Jesus, and as you grow up you see people around you get sick and suffer and die. You know that you have the power to do something about it, but it’s not your time yet. What a gut-wrenching way to grow up! Jesus truly was **“acquainted with grief.”** And so, when we grieve and mourn, there is at least some benefit or blessing to it in that we identify with our King, a man of sorrows.

II. The fact that Jesus spoke these words leads us to the rest of this text; so, let’s continue by looking at the REWARD, “Blessed are those who mourn, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.”

So, the question is: What does the kingdom mean for those who mourn? How is mourning different for us than for those who are in the world? Obviously, as I mentioned just a few moments ago, this passage tells us that there is room for mourning, and crying, and pain in the kingdom of heaven. In the song “Come Share the Lord,” we sing, “no one is a stranger here, everyone belongs.” And this moves us to the actual blessing, **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”** And I do find it interesting that, in my view, the opposite of mourning is rejoicing; however, Jesus does not say (in this passage) that those who mourn will rejoice. Instead, Jesus says that those who mourn are blessed, **“for they shall be COMFORTED.”** So, it’s not that all pain and sorrow will be magically and instantaneously disappeared, but those of us in God’s kingdom “shall be comforted.”

This is in keeping with Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 61, where the prophet speaks of the coming Messiah and says,

***The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn...***

The coming King was to be a comforter, and this certainly fits in with what we learn about Simeon, the elderly man in the temple who meets Jesus as a baby. In Luke 2:25-26, Luke tells us that Simeon **“...was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”** That word **“consolation”** is the same word Jesus uses in Matthew 5:4. Our King is a comforter, and I love that Jesus actually moved toward those in sorrow and pain during his ministry. Today, we are often uncomfortable with those who mourn. When someone is crying, we often don’t know what to say or do; we don’t always know how to respond; there are times when it’s awkward. Jesus, though, gravitated to those situations. He spent time with those who

were suffering loss. He ran to those difficult situations. And even when he came back from the dead, he used his own suffering as a way of reaching out. Have we ever wondered why the Lord's resurrected body still had scars and nail holes? Have we ever wondered why he still had the hole from the spear in his side? Why didn't all of that disappear when he came back from the dead? We see the answer eight days after his resurrection (in John 20:27), as he invites Thomas to reach out and to put his hands into those holes in his side. In that case, Jesus (as a comforter) uses his own past to encourage, to comfort. And this is very close to what Paul suggests for us in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, where he writes, ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."*** In God's kingdom, those who mourn are comforted – by the King himself, but also by one another, and the comfort we receive allows us to go out and comfort others.

The word we have translated here as ***"comforted"*** is a word that ultimately goes back to the idea of "calling someone to your side." To me, it's the idea of somebody coming up next to you and putting their arm around you. Isn't that the best thing we can do in some situations? Sometimes we need that! It's not necessarily a word that is spoken, but it's the idea of being there for somebody, ***"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted,"*** they shall be reassured. They shall have the arm placed around their shoulder, in a sense. Again, it's not that the reason for our mourning will magically disappear, but we will be ***"comforted"*** through it. In a sense, God himself will come to our side. And in a very real way, God's family will come to our side, which means that we, in turn, will do this for others.

And there is a sense in which the ultimate comfort may still be out there on the horizon. We have that passage in Revelation 21:4, with reference to the New Jerusalem, where John predicts a time when the Lord ***"...will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*** Jesus promises comfort for those who mourn

Conclusion:

****PPT**** As we apply these words to our lives today, I'd like to make two applications: First of all, let's make sure that we are mourning over those things God mourns over. Above all, when we sin, and when we truly mourn over what we have done, Jesus has promised comfort. As David writes in Psalm 34:18, ***"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."***

And the second application this morning is close to the first, and that is: When we mourn over the sin and the pain that we see in the world around us, let's not mourn as those who have no hope, let's not just whine and complain about how terrible things are, but let's mourn and then rise up and do something – we share the good news, we help in some concrete way. We have several opportunities to work together as a congregation over the next few weeks, don't we? We have the clothing give-away this Saturday. We plan on meeting here on Wednesday at 7 o'clock to watch the Bible study, and then we plan on having what has become known as "Cardio Night," where we bring all the clothing up here, getting it ready to give away on Saturday. If you can be here to help on Saturday, that would be awesome, as we actually do something to help those who may be struggling. And then as you have seen in today's bulletin (and in the email last night), we are back to collecting school supplies for the kids over at Kennedy Elementary, a school about two blocks east of here, where we have several students who are actually homeless. Many more do not have the most basic of supplies. When my wife started teaching from home two years ago, she came up the stairs torn up, and said, "Some of my students don't have pencils." She's teaching math to kids right here in Madison, and they don't have pencils. Can you imagine not having a pencil in your house? I can hardly even think about that. And then imagine trying to learn

basic math in middle school without having something as critical as a pencil. Over the next few weeks, then, we have an opportunity to comfort, to stand beside, 1.) Our teachers, and 2.) Some kids right here in this neighborhood who are having a very difficult time. This isn't just wishing them well, but this is "being Jesus" as best we can.

Before we continue with the Lord's Supper, let's close our study by going to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

Thank you for the promise through Jesus that in your kingdom those who mourn will be comforted. We are thankful for the comfort that comes from knowing your Son, and we are also thankful for the many ways you allow us to comfort one another. We come before you today recognizing that your word is so different from what we see in the world around us. We pray that we would not despair or lose hope, but we pray for wisdom and courage as we share your message with those we love. Be with our efforts to share the love of your Son here in Madison over the next several weeks. Bless the upcoming clothing give-away, and use us, Father, to bless the children in this neighborhood as they begin a new school year.

We pray that you would bless those who are recovering from COVID this week. We pray that their symptoms would continue to be mild, that they would recover quickly, and that they would lean on you during their time away.

Bless Amy and Jason as they begin their lives together this weekend.

Thank you, Father, for hearing our prayer. In Jesus we pray, AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com