

## BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

Text: Matthew 5:4

Reading: Romans 7:14-25

INTRO: Our topic is the beatitudes of Matthew chapter 5. We have introduced the Sermon on the Mount, which is Matthew chapters 5-7. And we have introduced the beatitudes and you will remember that as I view it, when it says, 'blessed' it means, 'to be envied.' To be envied is the person described in these beatitudes. We have looked at the first beatitude, which is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The poor in spirit, as I see it, are those who have come to see themselves in light of who Jesus Christ is. When it comes to righteousness and godliness, the poor in spirit have seen themselves as falling short of the mark of Christ-likeness. We considered last time the Apostle Peter. Jesus was in the boat with him and He said to Peter, "Let's go do some fishing." Well, they had fished at night, and caught nothing and Peter said, "The fishing's no good. We fished all night and we got nothing." Now you can imagine that Peter is tired and, now that the best fishing time is past, he has no interest in going fishing. But he said to Jesus, "Nevertheless, at Your word, we'll go." Well, they now caught so many fish that Peter called over to their partners boat, and they were both filled. And when Peter saw this, he said, "Depart from me O Lord, for I am a sinful man." He had become poor in spirit.

And before we go on, let me say that to be truly saved, we must become poor in spirit; and we must come to mourn our sinful state. But after we get saved, and especially if we were saved when we were quite young; we will have to learn in life's circumstances that our hearts are desperately wicked. And we will have to become poor in spirit, and mourn our condition again and again as we grow spiritually.

## II. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

### A. The Character Of The Mourner

So, we turn now to the second beatitude which says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." What a wonderful thing is comfort, when we have been sorrowful! We will first consider the character of the mourner. We have discussed the word 'blessed', makarios, and that it does not mean 'to be happy'. Does this work for you, "Happy are those who mourn"? That just does not seem to fit, not even as a paradox. Again, I think it is, "to be envied are those who mourn..." Now when we know what this mourning is about, we would say, "Such a man is neither happy, nor is he to be envied." But there is a sense in which he is to be envied. Think of a person who has a disease growing in his body, but he does not know it and he can't as yet feel it. But this disease is of such a nature that once you feel it, it is too late. But this man does not know it and he is carefree and happy. Is he in a blessed condition? Well, not really.

But then, by chance, his condition is discovered. Now this person is devastated. It causes sorrow. But because it has been discovered in time, it causes him to deal with it before it is too late. Now he is a blessed man, though he is devastated, because the disease was discovered in time to cure it. Just so is the man who is poor in spirit. Now that he has discovered his spiritual condition, he is devastated, and he mourns because he has recognized his or her own sinfulness and has become poor in spirit. It will naturally lead to mourning. The word, to mourn here comes from the word 'to sorrow.' When one comes to a realization of one's own sinfulness, it leads to sorrow.

So, the person on whom the Lord has shone the light of His Word, and he has come to a realization of his or her own sinfulness, will naturally become heavy of heart about that. Such a person will mourn his or her condition. Heaviness of heart or mourning over that new realization will now put such a person in a position of wanting to right his or her own life. And

so, for us, to come to the place where God must bring us to in order that He can do His work in us requires that we come to the place where we mourn over our own sinfulness. When we truly get to see ourselves in light of Christ, then we become prepared for God to work further in our lives. Before we come to this state, that is not possible. That, it seems to me, is why those who mourn are blessed.

Now, when it says, "Blessed are those who mourn...", it is not speaking of natural mourning. It is not talking about those who have lost a loved one or those who mourn because of some tragedy. It is not that there is not value in going to the house of mourning. Ecclesiastes says it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting. The reason it is better to go there is because, as the verse says, "For that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart." So there is value in going to the house of mourning. But I do not think that is what our passage is talking about.

You cannot put on a long face, never laugh and never smile, and become truly mournful. It does not work like that. I have told you about the little girl who went to grampa's farm. And when she saw a horse she said, "Wow, that horse must be a good Christian." And when they asked what made her think that she said, "Because he has such a long face." A man is not a good Christian because he has a long face, and a long face does not make a blessed man.

One cannot say, "I want to be the blessed man, so I will learn to mourn." One cannot become poor in spirit by deciding to become poor in spirit. All of these beatitudes are by-products. We become poor in spirit when we see ourselves in light of who we truly are inwardly in comparison to Jesus Christ. This takes all the wind out of our sails, so to speak. And when we see who we truly are inside, this will bring us into mourning.

Lloyd Jones says, "To mourn is something that follows of necessity from being poor in spirit. It is quite inevitable. As I confront this holiness and contemplate the life that I am meant to live, I see myself, my utter helplessness. I discover my quality of spirit and immediately that makes me mourn."

So just what is this mourning about? Well, if this beatitude builds on the preceding one, the preceding one dealt with the poor in spirit. And the man who has become poor in spirit has come to see himself in light of what he is with regard to righteousness and Christ likeness. No one can ever truly become a Christian without some sense of one's being a sinner and offensive to God. No one can get saved who does not first become lost.

Millions upon millions of people are going about their daily life and they have no idea that they live in the danger of hell fire every moment. Their life is in jeopardy every moment and they do not know it. At any moment their life could end and it would be hell for all eternity. And before such a person is saved from eternal destruction when he dies, He must get to see himself in light of who Jesus Christ is, and if he truly does, he has two decisions before him. And if he becomes poor in spirit, blessed is that man.

And then he begins to mourn his inner condition. If he did not mourn that inner condition, he would now be in worse condition than before he discovered it. But having seen himself he now mourns his condition. That is a truly blessed man. Ask him if he feels blessed and he says, "I feel wretched, not blessed." But he IS blessed. There now is great hope in his life. He has now come to the place he has to come to before he can go on.

But, not only must we initially become poor in spirit and then mourn our sinful condition before we can truly become Christians. Once we are Christians, I believe, the Lord will lead us from one new discovery

of area of need in our lives to another. And again and again, in the process of sanctification, we will need to become poor in spirit and mourn. We has come to the place Paul was when, as a Christian, he cried out, "O wretched man that I am." And when we learn what we are like inside, when we learn that all our righteousness is like filthy rags, when we learn that in our flesh nothing, not even one good thing dwells, we become poor in spirit. But it naturally leads us to mourn our inner condition which we now recognize.

Look at Romans 7, at a man I have no doubt is born again (read 7-14). This saved man rejoiced greatly in his salvation. Then as he progressed in life and read the Word of God, that is the law, he found in himself all kinds of problems. When we go to the doctor and he says we have this disease, is that now the fault of the doctor? Is the doctor bad? No! I have found out there is bad in me! So the doctor is good, but I am not in good shape. He has only revealed it to me. So it is with the saved person. Now look at verses 15-24 (read). Here is a Christian who is mourning. He is a blessed man, and does not know it. But in verse 25 he has found the victory because he has mourned (read).

I wonder, have you and I seen what we are like? How about with our wives; our husbands; our children? Have we seen what we can be like? How about with other people? How many times am I unkind, inconsiderate, selfish etc...? How about on the job? Have I seen what I can be like? What about in business? Have I seen what I can be like? How about in sports? Do I get upset when I lose? Etc... etc...

Lloyd Jones says we must become aware of the evil within us. We must ask ourselves, "Why am I like this?" Why should I be irritable? Why should I be bad tempered? Why am I not able to control myself? Why do I harbor that unkind, jealous and envious thought? What is it in me? And we discover the members within ourselves at war with each other, and we hate it. And

we mourn. And our text says, 'Blessed is this man that mourns.'

Now think of this beatitude from another perspective. Think of it from the world's perspective. To be envied are those who mourn. How ridiculous. Once more you need but to watch the adds on TV or in newspapers or in magazines and you will find the one who mourns does not by any stretch of the imagination meet the qualities of the man that the world envies. Do you know any unbeliever who wants to know what he is like on the inside? To learn what one is on the inside is just not something the world considers enviable. Even we Christians shrink back from discovering our inner being.

2 Corinthians 5:1-2 says, "For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven..." Oh, when we groan in this life we look forward to the time when we will be on the other side. No doubt the mourner looks for the coming of Christ.

In Luke 6:25 Jesus puts this all in the reverse. He says, "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep." Consider once more the many adds we see. And look at who the world thinks is the blessed man. He is the man who kicks up his heels with a beer in his hands and is carefree, footloose and fancy free. But Jesus said, "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep." Those who are happy and satisfied in this world do not look forward to His coming. Those who laugh now do not want to talk about what they are like inside. They will hide that in the deepest darkest closet, and please don't talk about that or death or such matters. No, he wants to laugh.

Could I ask you, do you wish sometimes you could be like the pictures of some of those adds? So happy? Laughing. Have it made? Don't envy that. Jesus says 'woe' to them instead of 'blessed are they'. That does not mean that in the Christian's life there are not times of laughter and enjoyment. All of that is

in order. But when that is what we seek, and we want to make that our life, woe to us.

## B. The Promise To The Mourner

But then consider what our text says further. It says, "Blessed are those who mourn." Why are they blessed? Because they will be comforted. Now let me say a few things about the word translated 'comforted'. It is the word, *parakalew*. It means 'to call to one's side'. It may be used in two senses. Someone may come to one's side to exhort us, or to comfort us. The idea here is 'to comfort.' You may recall that the Holy Spirit is called *the Comforter*. So we have a song in some of our hymn books called, "The Comforter Has Come." Now, the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter four times by the Apostle John (John 14:6; 14:26; 15:26 and 16:7). In John 14 we are just before the time of Christ's crucifixion. Go to this chapter (read 14:1-4). Jesus comforted His disciples after He had told them He was going away and that where He was going they could not come now. And so He comforted them with the words of 14:1-4.

Now go to verses 15-16 (read). Jesus said He would send to them another Comforter. He had been their Comforter, but He was going away. But He would send them another Comforter. And this Comforter would abide with them forever. He would not go away. It is this Comforter we still have with us today. In 16:7 Jesus said it was good for them that He was leaving, because if He did not leave, the Holy Spirit would not come. There is something very special about that. You see, Jesus, in His physical body, could only be at one place at one time. But when the Holy Spirit came, He was everywhere present at the same time. So, today, all Christians all over the world can receive comfort at the same time.

It is interesting that the Holy Spirit is also the Convictor who causes men to become poor in spirit. For this we go to John 16 (read 7-11). Now the NKJV calls the Holy Spirit 'the Helper' here. But it is the same word, *parakleetos*, or Comforter. But in verse 8 we are told that He will also convict the world of sin. So He is both Convictor and Comforter.

Go with me to another passage, 2 Corinthians 1 (read 3-5). God is here called the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Five times the word 'to comfort' in one form or another occurs in this passage. God is the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our tribulation. And this is so that we may be able to comfort others by the same comfort with which God has comforted us.

You see, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." And now, in 2 Corinthians we find that when we have been comforted by God, we in turn are to comfort others by that same comfort by which He has comforted us.

Look at 2 Corinthians 7 (read 2-7). Paul had written the first letter to the Corinthians and he had reprimanded and corrected them on many things and he did not know how they would respond to that. So he now shares all the things that have befallen him and how they were troubled on every side and their flesh had no rest and they were filled with anxieties. And then God, in His great mercy, sent Titus to them and he comforted them. And not only that, but he brought very good news about how well the Corinthians responded to his letter. And he was comforted. You see, the Christian who mourns in life and ministry is comforted again and again. And the Lord comforts the Christian so that the Christian in turn can comfort others. Those who mourn are comforted again and again.

We saw in an earlier message that the Apostle Paul came to a point in his Christian life where he struggled. And in that chapter, Romans 7, in the end he said, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" And then he burst out, "I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!" There is the comfort. Now look at 8:18-23 (read). There is comfort for the mourner in this life, but the greatest comfort lies ahead of the true Christian. Some day we will get out of this state of mourning. Oh, what a glorious day.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, the Apostle Paul informs the Thessalonians more closely on the great catching up of the Church. He had taught them that Christ



might come at any time and deliver them from the wrath to come. Now some of their number had already died and they were saddened by the fact that they had missed out and would not be caught up. And so Paul told them that they were not to sorrow as others who had no hope, because those who had died would be caught up first, and then those who were alive. So they had not missed out. Then he says we will all meet the Lord in the air together; both those who died in Christ and those who lived in Christ. So look at this passage (read). Now note verse 16. We are to comfort one another with this great hope.

But there is another comfort that can encourage us. It is a comfort that we may all experience even if we die before Christ returns. Turn to Luke 16. In the account of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man who laughed in life went to hell and mourned when it was too late. But Lazarus went to glory and notice what it says in Luke 16:25 (read).

Now think of all this and compare it to the world. The mourner is promised comfort. What promise does the world have for its followers? What lies ahead for the world? Is there hope to be found in our political world? What comfort can it bring to the dying? Will they, in the end, make everything good? Is there hope in the United Nations? Will they bring peace to earth? Even if it were to be so in this life what hope does it hold out for those who die? May I ask, is there even any hope in Rick Warren's peace plan? Is there any hope in kingdom now theology? Are we going to make this world better and better? But the believer has hope, both here and forever. Blessed are those who mourn now in this life, for they shall be comforted!

But let us consider for a moment before we close, the life of the Apostle Peter. After Jesus had commemorated the Passover with His disciples, which we call 'the last supper', and they were making their way to Gethsemane, Jesus said, "All of you will be offended because of Me this night." And Peter said, "Not me Lord. I will never be offended in You." And Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired, or asked, for you that he might sift you as wheat." It seems to me that Satan had asked, and the Lord had

given Satan permission. The very same contest that took place in Job will now take place in Peter; and this same contest will take place in truly born Christians at some time in life.

My wife pointed out a Scripture to me the other day. After Satan had tempted Jesus and Jesus had overcome him, it says Satan left him for a season (Luke 4:13). The NKJV says he left him until an opportune time, and that is, I think, a good translation. He was not yet done with Christ. He will meet Him again. And now he has desired to have at Peter.

And Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to die for You." And Jesus said, "Are you really ready for that? Let me tell you what will happen this night. Before the rooster crows you will deny Me three times!" And Mark says Peter spoke vehemently saying, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And what we forget sometimes is that all the disciples said the same thing.

Well, as they walked along Jesus spoke a lot of things with the disciples and finally they arrived at Gethsemane. There Jesus prayed for three hours. It may have been one o'clock in the morning when He was done, and the disciples kept sleeping in. And no sooner was He done, and Judas came with the band of soldiers. Well, you will remember that Peter tried to protect Jesus with his sword, but eventually they tied Jesus up and led Him to the former High Priest, Annas. He soon sent Him to Caiaphas, who was the High Priest. All the while Peter followed from a distance, though the other disciples had all fled by now.

While Peter watched from a distance, warming himself in the cool night by the fire a woman who watched the door said, "Are you not one of His disciples?" And Peter said, "I don't know what you are talking about." You see, Satan is here. And Peter is on trial. And now he said this in front of all the people. A short while later another maid saw him and said, "This guy was also with Jesus of Nazareth." And

the others said, "Are you one of His disciples?" And Peter denied it with an oath saying, "I don't know the Man."

Well, about an hour later, the man whose ear Peter cut off in the garden of Gethsemene, thought he recognized Peter and he said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him? Surely you are one of them. Your speech gives you away. You are a Galilean." And Peter began to curse and to swear and to say, "I do not know this Man." And Mark says that immediately, while he was yet speaking, the rooster crowed! Peter would not have slept at Gethsemane, but would have prayed if he had known what Satan was up to. Satan had been right there all along. He knew exactly how to get to Peter. And now he had him!

Now go to Luke 22 (read 60-62). Don't you just mourn with Peter? Only hours earlier he had spoken so boldly, and now he is devastated! And I ask, what happened to Peter after that night? Well, after Jesus arose from the dead and the women had found the empty tomb early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene ran and found Peter first and told him the tomb was empty. And Peter and John ran to the tomb and found it empty. And they believed, but it seems still they found it hard to believe. I learned something I had never noted before. When Jesus met the two on the road to Emmaus He then revealed Himself to them. So go to Luke 24 (read 32-34). Somewhere, and we are not told where, but Jesus had revealed Himself to Peter first. In 1 Corinthians 15:5, it appears that Jesus showed Himself to the Apostle Peter before He showed Himself to the rest of the disciples. Whatever happened between this time and that fateful night, Peter has been restored. Satan did not win the battle in the end.

Later Jesus told the disciples to go to Galilee and wait for Him there. While they were waiting Peter went fishing and some of the disciples went with Him. And while they were fishing, Jesus appeared on the

shore. So look at John 21 (read 1-7). Peter will meet more tests in this life, but he will never leave the Lord again and in the end he did die for the Lord.

But go to 1 Peter 1, a passage that will be familiar to many of you. Here is this same Peter, later in life (read 3-9). Let me first say that the word translated 'blessed' here is not our word *makarios*. I would translate it literally like this, "May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be well spoken of." And why should God be thus blessed? Well, Peter will tell us why. It is because He has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We will be resurrected to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and which does not fade away. And it is now reserved in heaven for the believer! That is comforting!

And Peter says that we greatly rejoice in this inheritance though now, if need be, we are grieved by various trials. These trials can take a lot of zest out of our lives, but we have this great comfort found in such passages as we have before us. And though we do not see Christ now, yet by believing in Him we rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. And in the end we receive the salvation of our souls. How great is not the comfort of Scripture!

Look at Peter still later in life. The book, *Martyr's Mirror*, says that Peter was 72 when he died under that most wicked Roman ruler, Nero. The book says, "But esteeming himself unworthy to be crucified with his head upward like his Savior, he requested to be crucified with his head downward; which he easily obtained, for the tyrants were forthwith willing and ready to increase his pain" (81). So tradition says he was crucified upside down! But no matter how he died, for almost 2000 years, Peter has been in glory! Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted; comforted, both here and throughout all eternity!

CONCL: And so, let us conclude. Sin! Dreadful sin! It is an interesting thing that there is no record in the NT that Jesus ever laughed. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. When He came close to Jerusalem He wept over

the city. How He longed to collect them to Himself and comfort them as a mother hen does her chicks. But sin! Sin kept them away from Him! Did He foresee the dreadful consequences the sin of Jerusalem would have just 40 years from now? No doubt He did! Jews would be piled knee deep in death in this city, only 40 years later. Could it be He saw even further, to hell fire itself? No doubt he did. And He looked over this city and mourned. Yes, He was a Man of sorrows. Laughter is far away. Could it be that He saw that before they would come to Him they would have to become poor in spirit and would have to be brought to mourn over their sin? Could it be that He saw how hard it would be for this proud city to do that?

He went to the tomb of Lazarus, and wept. Why? Could it be that He mourned over the consequences of sin? Could it be He longed for the day when death would be no more? However all that may be, the blessed Gospel says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." And when we fail as Christians, like Peter did, still if we mourn, there is hope! May we take courage to humble ourselves when God calls us to that.