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Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Matthew 5:4

Prayer: *Father, we just want to thank you and praise you for the goodness, we want to praise you and thank you for who you are, we thank you for this church that you have raised up, for the privilege that we have of extending membership, formal membership to individuals, Lord, this is just part of your church, part of your plan, and we just thank you for them. We thank you for the gift of your church. Father, we as we do each time, we thank you for the gift of your word, thank you for the gift of your son; and Lord, this morning once again we are going into your word, we are looking at the Sermon on the Mount and so we want to pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit to enable us to understand what you've given us in your word. Open up our hearts, open up our minds, open up our ability to understand, we pray. Give us the ability to make your word of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, the story is told of a town in Germany where for a while, you literally could not get the time of day. You see, every day precisely at noon the bell tower rang, and the man who rang the

bell, well, he decided one day to set his watch as he went past the clock maker's store by the clocks that were in the window.

Unbeknownst to the bell ringer, the clock master was setting his clocks by the ringing of the bell. And so they each became each other's point of reference, and together they could no longer tell the time. So it is with us. See, to paraphrase the apostle Paul, when we judge ourselves by ourselves, we deceive ourselves. The Bible is our point of reference, the Bible is our reality check, it is how we check our spiritual watches against the ultimate reality that we see out there. And often times we find that it and that ultimate reality that we believe in is very different. The Sermon on the Mount is one such reality check. Jesus addressed the crowd at the mountain side with God's idea of a life well lived, and it is our task to set our watches accordingly.

We saw last week that the kingdom of God belongs first and foremost to the poor in spirit. That is those who know that their very best is not nearly good enough to satisfy the perfect holiness of God. It is the poor in spirit who know that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son because all of us were perishing, because all of us fall short of God's standard and whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. And so Jesus opens up the Sermon on the Mount by saying: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God.*" But then he said

something truly strange, something that might not fit well with our understanding of life, he says this in *Matthew 5:4*, he says:

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Now Jesus is not saying, hey, when tragedy strikes, don't worry, God is there to comfort you. He is saying something very different. What he's saying is this, he is saying, blessed are those whose examined lives are a source of genuine mourning. I mean, it is a statement so at odds with our culture, a thought so opposite the spirit of this age it may be very simple for us to reject it. You know, the word "blessed" can also be translated "happy." Happy are those who mourn. It's a classic oxymoron. We have happy mourners. That's what Jesus is saying. But he's not saying it as a thought, he's saying it as a paradigm, and that's an idea that establishes a pattern or a direction. The problem is we don't really like that direction. I mean, if we take the statement and the one that Jesus uttered just before it, we see Jesus telling us something very few of us really want to hear. He's saying, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* and *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* Well, you know, words like that, they go from God's mouth, they go through our culture and then back to our ears and when they come back to our ears, it sounds sort of like blessed are the losers, blessed and happy are the morose. When Jesus Christ insists that being poor in spirit is the key to the kingdom, our culture is incredulous. I mean, when

he goes on to say that one of the keys to happiness is mourning, well even the Christian community begins to scratch its head. Happy or blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. And again, this is not just about bearing up under tragedy. This is about spiritual mourning. It's the natural outcome of being poor in spirit. See, being poor in spirit means that we have willingly stripped ourselves of our defenses, that we are willing to look at ourselves as spiritually destitute, broken and unable to pay. That will cause us to mourn, and our comfort will be Christ.

Now, there are at least three different areas that cry out for mourning for those of us who are in the kingdom of God. And the first mourning is the mourning of a kingdom that's been captured and enslaved by the prince of this world, that is by Satan himself. *Romans 8:22* says: *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.* You know now that spring is here, we get to see God's creative power exploding everywhere and it's easy to forget that as spectacular as this planet can be, it is really only a pale shadow of what it once was, of what it one day will be. You see, all of creation is groaning together as a result of the fall of Adam. In *Genesis 3:17* it says this, it says: *And to Adam he, that is God, said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is*

the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life." See, it wasn't Adam alone who just bore that curse, it was all of creation. I mean, we live on a planet that is under a curse that extends to every single living thing from human beings created in the very image of God down to the smallest of living microorganisms. None of them escape the curse. And the curse is death itself. *Romans 5:12* says: *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.* See, this world is not the way it was originally intended or designed because of sin.

You know, one of the shortcomings of intelligent design, it's a movement, it's an idea, it's an idea that seeks to make the case that creation itself gives ample evidence of the fact that it wasn't randomly assembled by chance but that it was literally intelligently designed by something. See, the intelligent design community is very careful not to assign deity to that designer. They simply want to assert that creation itself gives ample evidence of design, and in that they're absolutely correct. I mean, clearly many of the intelligent design folks believe that there's a God but somehow they think that it's not an appropriate point of argument. But what that does, you see, is that sets up a counter argument, and the counter argument says if all of this life was indeed assembled by this intelligent designer, well, then he

certainly had an awful lot of design flaws because the vast majority of his designs wound up extinct or defunct, and this world that he created certainly has pain and cruelty and death and disease and decay as part of its very design. So what does that say about the designer? Well, it seems to me that the fundamental flaw of intelligent design is that it makes no room for the fall. It makes no room for the curse that all of creation is under. See, if we assume a designer who's responsible for his design, well then the fall and the curse of the fall and the cross, they make perfect sense. I mean, it's the perfect answer as to the way the world is and what God did about it. You see without the cross, what we are left with is a world that from top to bottom arguably is an incredibly cruel, hot mess.

Henri Fabre was an entomologist. He wrote over a hundred years ago, and he wrote a book, he wrote a book about hunting wasps. He may have even been a believer because his description of one particular type of wasp gives as good a description of the horror of the curse that all creation is under as anything I've ever read. Fabre gives a description of the *Philanthus* wasp, it's also called the beewolf. This is a creature whose behavior gives a microscopic view of the horrors of the fall. This is a wasp that captures and kills honeybees. And if she somehow senses that the honeybee that she's captured has a belly that's swollen with honey, before

killing it, she squeezes its crop. This is what he says: "So as to make her disgorge the delicious syrup, which she drinks by licking the tongue which her unfortunate victim, in her death agony, sticks out of her mouth at full-length." Now Fabre goes on to describe one particular incident he observed involving this wasp capturing a honeybee. She captured this honeybee which she proceeds to kill in the way he describes but then he adds this other layer of horror to his description. This is what he writes. He writes: "At the moment of some such horrible banquet I have seen the wasp with her prey, seized by a mantis: The bandit was rifled by another bandit. And here is the awful detail." He then goes on to describe this same wasp captured and held in the arms of a praying mantis who is eating it alive, and this is what he says: "The wasp then continues to lick the honey of her bee, unable to relinquish the delicious food even amidst the terrors of (her own) death." See if you can get this picture. This is a praying mantis eating a wasp alive who is eating a honeybee alive. And he says this. He concludes his description by saying: "Let us hasten to cast a veil over these horrors."

This is not the creation that God saw and called good. C.S. Lewis has a similar horror of what creation has become. In his introduction to his book "The Problem of Pain," he describes what his answer would be to someone asking him why he was an atheist

back when he was an atheist, and his answer consists largely of just looking around and seeing the horror of this creation. This is a small portion of what he said about life itself, he said this: "And what is it like while it lasts? It is so arranged that all the forms of it can live only by preying on one another. In the lower forms this process entails only death, but in the higher, there appears a new quality called consciousness, which enables it to be attended with pain. The creatures cause pain by being born, and live by inflicting pain, and in pain they mostly die. In the most complex of all the creatures, Man, yet another quality appears, which we call reason, whereby he is enabled to foresee his own pain which henceforth is preceded with acute mental suffering, and to foresee his own death while keenly desiring permanence. It also enables men by a hundred ingenious contrivances to inflict a great deal more pain than they otherwise could have done on one another and on the irrational creatures. This power they have exploited to the full. Their history is largely a record of crime, war, disease, and terror, with just sufficient happiness interposed to give them, while it lasts, an agonized apprehension of losing it, and, when it is lost, the poignant misery of remembering."

Yikes. You know, Lewis took off the rose-colored glasses and he simply described life as it is. And so -- in so doing, he described an existence well worth mourning. I mean, if we just

take time to look down at the creatures at our feet, we will find authentic horrors all around us. And on the other side of the scale lies the horrors that are even worse, and that is us. That's the creatures who were created in God's own image. I mean today we only have to look at the daily reports about ISIS to see the new depths of human depravity glowingly self-reported each day to see and understand that our fallenness knows no bounds. Lewis understood that, but he argued it's not creation but the fall of creation that gives anyone who ponders it good reason to mourn. But we have an immediate solution. We just seldom if ever ponder it. We don't even think about it. Now, Jesus says blessed or happy are those who mourn, and we ask why? Jesus says, well, they will be comforted. But what is our comfort? Our comfort is the cross. You see, on the cross and for his sheep, Jesus ended once and for all the depravity that has its grip on your soul and mine. Just as one man Adam plunged this entire world into chaos and decay, so one man Jesus through the free gift of the cross, he rescued it. Our comfort is *Romans 5:16* which says this: *And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through that one man Jesus*

Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Now, the second area of mourning for us is the life of Jesus Christ himself. Now think about this just for a second. If the one that you are closest with, the one that you love deeply, if that one is suffering greatly, then you can't help but suffer as well. And to the extent that you love the Lord Jesus Christ will be the extent to which you are pulled into the magnitude of his sorrow and suffering. So, too, will be the extent to which you will mourn.

You know, Mahatma Gandhi was an individual who sought peace and he used non violence to try to transform Indian society, and for his efforts we all know he was assassinated. I feel bad for Gandhi but I don't mourn him. He died 66 years ago and his story is largely faded from most people's memories. Jesus Christ died over 2,000 years ago, and even today, I and other believers mourn not just his passing, but his entire life as well. And so we say why? Why do we mourn that, and one of the reasons is -- one of the reasons that we mourn is because he mourned. I mean I hate to say it, but there's absolutely no evidence in scripture that Christ ever

laughed. I mean he may have. And we know for a fact that some of his stories contain evidence of humor but the scripture gives very little evidence of Jesus's laughter. It does, however, tell us that Jesus wept. It tells us that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we know that if it was precious little laughter in Jesus's life, it's only because there was nothing funny about the task that he undertook. I mean, his purpose was to bring glory to his Father, his mission was to save and to seek the lost, and his goal was to have his body broken and his blood offered as a sacrifice to pay the price of our sin. What's funny about that? See, his mission meant that every single thing in his life would point to his death even when he was an infant. One of the gifts that was brought to the infant Jesus was bizarre to say the least. I mean, we know gold was absolutely appropriate, Frankincense perhaps, but myrrh? You know, myrrh has medicinal uses but myrrh's primary use is as an embalming spice. We know that because the events surrounding Jesus's body for burial point this out. In *John 19*, it says this, it says: *After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen clothes with*

the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. So myrrh had this one primary use and that was as an embalming spice. Put that into 21st century context. How would you like to get the gift of a gallon of formaldehyde for your newborn? Myrrh is a gift that's appropriate only when death is the purpose of birth, and Jesus came to this planet in order to die. He came to die so that you and I could live. And you can't really fathom that without mourning it as well. Jesus's first miracle was changing water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana. And so in the midst of all of the joy and all of the laughter and all of the celebration Jesus has created the very symbol that he said would be his blood, the blood that he was going to shed. Years later on the night before he died, Jesus took up another cup of wine and said in *Matthew 26*: "*Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" So here we picture Jesus, he's in Cana, he's at the very start of his public ministry and what is he doing? He's reminding himself of what is to come. You know, as one person said in the midst of this celebration of life, here is Jesus staring literally into death. For Jesus from his infancy through his adolescence even till the moment that it unfolded, there was never an escape from the cross, and so the Sermon on the Mount's call to mourning reflects that. It is a call

to see the world through God's eyes. And those eyes don't see our culture the way God does. God calls us to worship a Lord who Isaiah says was *despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* Now, does that mean that God wants us morose or depressed or self-absorbed? You know, blessed are the bummed out? I don't think so. I don't think that was -- it's not what God is looking for. You know, serious Christians can and do laugh at this life and they laugh heartily, but they laugh because they know that the ultimate answer to the sorrow in this life is victory in Christ. And all that means is that we know in the end we win. You know, I don't mean that in a "gotcha" sort of way but simply to say that for the last 2,000 years, every single person who has put their faith in Christ if not in this life then in the next, has come out victorious, and that includes folks whose lives look anything like a success. And if you're familiar with Hebrews, you know that catalog of the tragedies that it describes in Hebrews 11, it says this, it says: *Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated -- of whom the world*

was not worthy -- wandering about in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

What God is saying here is that some, some, yes, were incredibly blessed in this life, but others though commended through their faith did not receive what was promised. You know, those 20 or so men who were marched out to the beach and then beheaded by ISIS for the crime of claiming Jesus as savior, they certainly didn't receive what was promised in this life. But we by faith believe that they will receive that promise in the next life and that all eternity will confirm that by giving up their lives, they made the right choice. Jesus himself said in *Revelation 2:10*: "*Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*" You know, the same Jesus who says, "*Blessed are those who mourn,*" well, we understand that he's saying half that scripture, the other half says, "*for they will be comforted.*" Now for those men whom ISIS butchered, their comfort is the crown of life.

And so what is our comfort? Once again, our comfort is the cross. You see, the answer to mourning our God and our gospel is that we don't go around mourning. We go through it just as Jesus did. And that's exactly what Jesus did and God gives us Jesus as our prime motivator and example. In *Hebrews 12:1* it says this, it says: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.* So God says to each of us he goes, here in front of you, here's your race. You say, okay, what is the race? What is our race? God says it is to spend your life uniquely and individually being shaped and molded into the very image of Christ so that your life individually will bring honor and glory to him. God says here's your support: There's this great cloud of witnesses surrounding you. Then God says what follows is your example, he says this in verse 2, he says: *Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* You see, Jesus went through the ultimate in rejection, abandonment, and physical torture. He went through the deepest shame that the king of the universe could ever endure. God in the flesh stripped, beaten, flogged, and crucified, and scripture is clear, he despised the shame of it. Yet scripture is also clear that for the joy of glorifying his

father and rescuing his sheep, he was willing to do it. If anything is worthy of mourning, the life of our Savior is. But it's a mourning that's filled with victory, because he who endured that shame is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

But you know, God wants that kind of mourning for his children. It is that kind of mourning that strips us of our resources. It makes us poor in spirit. It takes away our pretense of what life is all about. But you know, many people think, well, maybe this is just too much, you know, where's the fun? Where's the laughter?

Where's the happy times? My answer is they're there, they're right on the other side of mourning. You know, just as the good news of the gospel can't be seen without the bad news of man's fall and sin, so the joy of Christ's victory can't really be appreciated without the mourning of his sorrow. I mean, that's who Jesus is.

And understand, we are being shaped and molded into his image. I'm not saying the equivalent of "wipe that smile off your face," but I am telling you blessed are those who mourn. And it's not that Jesus is demanding depression, it's more like he's saying, look, there's a time and a place for everything and our culture has no time for this. Jesus said in *Luke 6:21*: "*Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.*" He's saying so joy, real joy, the joy that produces real laughter, real happiness, and real satisfaction is joy that is rooted in the victory of the cross.

So we mourn this fallen world that we're all part of, and we mourn a savior who is a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. And finally we mourn our own fallen sinfulness. And for our joy to be full, we too must take up our cross. We have to be willing to die each day to the worship of self, that's a worship that this culture celebrates every single day. You know, our culture says: Don't worry, be happy. Jesus says, mourn with me. He says go through reality with me, see yourself as I see you, as you truly are. No blinders, no rose-colored glasses, no hilarity. And you will be comforted by the God of all comfort. He says furthermore you will be strengthened to pass on that comfort to others. In 2 *Corinthians 1:3*, he says: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* You can't get that comfort if you choose to live in the dream world that this culture is offering us. See, God's love is not cheap. He loves us, warts and all, and he insists that we stop pretending we have none. You see, if you are God's child, think about this, you are the greatest thing he ever created, and he loves you unconditionally. He told us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us but he has no intentions of taking any shortcuts in shaping us into the image of his son, and that long road of necessity is going to take us

through mourning. It's going to take us through mourning my own personal wickedness and the toll that that took on my Lord. Paul summed it up in *Romans 7:18*, he said: *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh.* When Isaiah was taken up into heaven itself and given a vision of God's holiness, he said this in *Isaiah 6:5*, he said: *"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"* Now Isaiah was arguably the holiest man of his entire generation, and so we wonder if the holiest of saints on earth reacts this way when he's exposed to God's holiness, what's in store for us? Well, God gives us a vision of that in *Revelation 21:3*, he says this: *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."* See, God says he's going to wipe away every single tear and mourning will cease. But understand, he is acknowledging that there will be tears and there will be mourning, and I submit to you that our mourning will consist of the full knowledge of what our sin cost our Savior. You know, there's no pain more acute than the pain we feel knowing that we have hurt deeply someone we love deeply. Just imagine the pain

of heart when we realize specifically and to the depths that it really is what our sin cost our Savior.

And the bad news is the first part of that text: "*Blessed are those who mourn.*" The good news is the second part: "*For they will be comforted.*" You see, there's going to be tears for us even as believers, but God is going to wipe away those tears. I think this is really a tough sell for the church today, I mean, this is not exactly what I would call user friendly. We ask the question who is it that put Jesus on the cross? Was it the Jews? Was it the Romans? The answer is it was you and me. *Galatians 3:13* says: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For us he was slaughtered.* I mean, that's just a fact. It was our sin that slapped his face, that lashed the whip, that drove the nails, because Jesus became sin for us. And if we don't have a deep, deep sorrow, sorrow and a soberness over our sin, then either we don't understand what sin is or we don't understand what it cost Christ.

Listen to what James says in *James 4:8*, he says this, 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 wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord,*

and he will exalt you. You know, James is just expressing another way of saying, "Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted." You know, Paul groaned, Isaiah was undone, and we all know that Peter wept bitter tears. The question is what do we do? You know, psychologists have a pet phrase about past struggles, they say: Chase it, face it, and erase it. Would that that would be true for sin itself but it's not. We can chase sin, we can face sin, and those are critical tasks to attend to, but only God can erase sin. Only God can cure the disease of sin and he cured it at the cross. And so we say according to 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

Now, the Greek word for "confession" is a combination of two words meaning "the same" and "to speak." I've said this before, confession simply means you are willing to same speak with God. To confess sin means that you agree with God that sin is sin. It means that you are willing to own your own sinfulness. And here's where evangelicals and other so-called moral people have a decided disadvantage. See, there are certain sins that we have no trouble whatsoever identifying as sin because they're clear and they're obvious. You know, if you commit murder, if you commit adultery, if you steal something, it's going to be quite obvious to you that

you've broken a commandment and violated the law. Well, same speaking with God on sin is pretty straight forward, but one of the things that we're going to have to learn about, and the Sermon on the Mount is very good at teaching us, is that God is going to go way, way deeper than the obvious to uncover this thick layer of sin that covers every one of us. You know, adultery, murder, stealing, they all shout. But what about the myriad of sins that whisper? What about faithlessness or greed or laziness? What about cowardice or jealousy or envy? See, God is in the business of uncovering in us anything that stands in the way of his holiness. Part of that process is the Holy Spirit's conviction. That's where the indwelling Spirit of God works in our spirit just to get us to agree with him. Same speak with me that sin is sin is what God is saying. Agree with me that being silent about the gospel when you knew you should have spoken up was not being prudent, it was being cowardly. Agree that hanging on to some asset that you had when you know God was telling you to let it go was not being a wise steward, it was being greedy. Agree that the feelings that you had toward a brother or sister who you are avoiding were rooted more in jealousy and envy than you'd like to admit. See, the problem with our own personal wickedness stems from our inability to see our sin as sin and then to see what that cost our Savior and to mourn that loss. We can't mourn a sin we're not aware of. And part of the process that God would have us go through starts with identifying

sin as sin and not just as some little peccadillo, some little faux pas, something of no moment. We serve a God whose holiness is a consuming fire and whose justice demanded that every last sin be paid for in full and all he asks of us is a willingness to call it what it is, to same speak with him and confess sin as sin. And so if we're serious about our sin, we can't help but mourn its effect on our Savior. *2 Corinthians 5:21: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* Believe that and we will be blessed in our mourning by the comfort that he alone can bring, and once again it is the comfort of the cross and the victory that Christ won for us there.

So we mourn this fallen world, we mourn our suffering savior, and we mourn our sin which put him on the cross, and we take comfort in Jesus alone who is our point of reference. Only he can set our clocks and watches to an accurate measure of spiritual reality that includes this hard work, the hard work of mourning. And it's our task to reset our watches accordingly. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for this sober thought, I thank you for the Sermon on the Mount that opens with so many sobering thoughts. Father, blessed are those who are poor in spirit, blessed are those

who mourn, this is not happy, cheery stuff, but this is the stuff of reality. Lord, this is the stuff that you want us to focus on. This is what we need to go through to get to the joy and the happiness and yes, even the laughter on the other side. Father, give us the ability to mourn the fallenness of this creation, to mourn the life that you lived, and to mourn our own sin and what it cost you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.