

**Reading:** Psalm 130; Matthew 5:1-12

**Theme:** Those Who Mourn.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Beatitude in Matthew 5v4 speaks of mourners being comforted. Many of us know what mourning is and there can be periods in our life when we experience so many sad and grievous things that our life seems to be full of mourning and grief. The most intense time of mourning occurs on the death of a loved one. Many know what it is like to mourn at times such as sickness, pain, material loss, wounded pride, rejection, lack of love, lack of money and material goods being some. In such situations society would not say “*Blessed are those who mourn*” and we can be told that things will get better, or as a very old song says “*Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile*”! Others would say that we should eat, drink and be merry; that we should struggle on, for time is a great healer. Some would go out to drown their sorrows in drink, or take drugs to achieve a high and so forget their sorrows. Some throw themselves into something new and exciting to take their mind off the problem. We live in a world that promotes pleasure and we should throw ourselves into it, there seems to be a pleasure addiction or mania in society that is promoted by so many.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> beatitude stands out in stark contrast to society in our days and throughout the ages. We are to realise that the 2<sup>nd</sup> beatitude is a further characteristic of a person who belongs to God’s kingdom and it moves us on in what we saw last week from the first beatitude. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> beatitude the word used for “mourning” in the Greek is a very strong word - it indicates a grief and sorrow caused by profound loss, which is most noticeable in the loss of a close relative and loved one; it is a grief which so takes possession of the whole being that it cannot be hid, but it is an obvious grief that is revealed and demonstrated. It is this type of deep and painful mourning that is here said to be blessed and bring comfort! So let’s look at this mourning and see why it is blessed and the comfort that will follow it. I want to do so using 3 headings:

## 1. What This Mourning Excludes.

We've noted, and will have to note again, that these Beatitudes are not just natural characteristics of people, they're not just diversities of human personality types, but are spiritual graces, characteristics found to a lesser or greater extent in all Christians. This means we have to recognise that such mourning is not because we are of a sad or melancholy disposition; or because we are of a hypersensitive nature which takes things personally, chewing over and feeling hurt, which causes us to mourn. It is not a mourning that is on a natural level - loss of material goods, of things physical and this will involve the loss of a loved one, a broken relationship, a job etc. In our lives there are so many things that could prove to be a source of grief for us and yet such mourning is not the mourning spoken of here. Many will shed many tears for this, that or the other, but have no concern for their spiritual well-being and the Lord Jesus and can be both antagonistic and dry eyed concerning Him, His death and suffering.

We are to realise this mourning spoken of by Jesus excludes many types of mourning. Many will mourn because they're frustrated in their attempts and desires to do wrong. We have examples of such in both OT and NT. In OT we read **Amnon** mourned and was sick. Why? Because he could not enter into an immoral relationship with his sister! How many mourn their failure to rob, steal, cheat, embezzle, hurt and harm others? Their mourning is excluded from the blessedness, comfort Jesus speaks of. So too is the mourning of those who do good to others and regret it - **Pharaoh** repented when he let the people of Israel go. Many regret and mourn their waste of money which is given to a charity, or a cause, or for some good done that will not profit them. **King Saul** mourned, even saying he had sinned, but he was hypocritical and he tried to excuse and diminish his sin. **Cain** mourned - not because he killed Abel, but because he had been punished; he did not mourn his evil, but his punishment. He like many others shed crocodile tears - with no

heart involved, only just an outward show. This type of mourning is excluded here. In NT we read of **Judas** mourning and his mourning was heartfelt, was a despairing mourning. These types of mourning are not what Jesus means here, but did him no good. We are to realise it does not mean that in times of genuine grief and sorrow that God is angry or uninterested. Not at all, for He cares for us far more than we realise in such time for He knows and feels for us in all we experience and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Yet this is not the mourning Jesus specifically speaks of here. Let's move on and see:

## **2. What This Mourning Includes.**

I seem to have excluded quite a range of human mourning and sorrow. Perhaps you are wondering "*What is left?*" The Beatitudes are spiritual characteristics and as we looked at the first beatitude last week, we saw it was not referring to physical poverty, but spiritual. We saw it referred to a person being brought to a place of realisation of what they were like compared to Almighty God. No matter how good, nice, moral, respectable, influential or religious we feel we are compared to others, we have to compare ourselves to God and we are to realise something of what we truly are in heaven's sight and estimation. Such an experience will cause us to realise how poor we are in spiritual matters, how beggarly and bankrupt we are before God of any spiritual good, wealth or commendation.

We may have realised something of that, but what then is the next step? Do we shrug our shoulders and say "*That is how I am, I cannot change! It's hopeless!*" Not at all! Such a realisation and confession in ourselves of our poverty of spirit should lead us to the blessed, happy experience of gospel mourning! It is gospel, spiritual mourning that will entitle a person to the blessedness spoken of here. So what then is this blessed mourning? Most simply is mourning over our spiritual poverty - not that we are poor in spirit, but that all we have sin. It is an utter sorrow, grief and

hatred of sin. It is not hatred of sin's consequences, or the discovery of our sins, not even an excusing of our sin, but it is mourning over having sin.

As we see ourselves before God, it is not only a lack of good we see, but an abundance of wrong and evil in His sight and estimation. As we see the sin in our own lives, it will cause us to mourn over it - not because we are forced to, but it is a spontaneous thing, and we feel what else can we do! It is not because of any suffering it causes or will cause us. We mourn over our sin because of what our sin is in and of itself - it is an act of open rebellion and hostility against God, it is contrary to God's holy nature and being and we see and realise this as we stand before Him in our poverty of spirit. We see sin as being contrary to all God is, says and does. As such it is seen as an affront against Him and in our poverty of spirit we realise that it grieves Him and is against Him and His holy law. We see our sin not only as an offence, but as ingratitude against the God who keeps us alive from moment to moment, who provides us with beating hearts, air to breathe, strength to live and it should grieve us we have done wrong against Him.

As we see our sin, it will cause us to mourn – not just because we are sinners, but because our sin is such an offence to God. We are to be God centred and directed in our mourning. It will also affect us that we do not see, realise the sinfulness of our sin as this shows us how far removed from God we are, that we can even tolerate so much that is an affront, is obnoxious to the holy God in heaven. All this is an outworking of realising our poverty of spirit - it is not just “*I am undone*”, but a heartfelt cry of mournful desperation “*Woe is me, I am undone*”.

Such mourning leads us to recognise along with Paul that “*nothing good dwells in me*” (Romans 7:18 & 24). Before God shows us ourselves as we are before Him we may admire ourselves; yes we may acknowledge there is room for improvement, but on the whole

we praise and congratulate ourselves so often. Yet when we see something of ourselves as God sees us, we loathe ourselves as God loathes the sin which is intrinsically bound up in our members. We begin to realise we have no hope or confidence in ourselves or what we can do, for we see we are full of sin, even our heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and we realise we didn't know it, but as we begin to know what we're like, we mourn and grieve because of it.

This is something of what this mourning involves concerning our own lives, yet it also involves mourning over the sins of others - friends, family, the nation, the church, but first and foremost it centres on mourning over our own sin before the holy God. Incredibly such mourning is a blessed thing, for from such mourning blessing can come! Finally see:

### **3. What This Mourning Concludes In.**

Why is such mourning blessed? How are such mourners comforted? Surely this will drive us to despair, to a sense of uselessness, a sense of dark inadequacy! Surely will make us morbid, introspective, depressed and melancholic people? Yet thankfully it does not make us like this. For such mourning is centred on God. Yes it sees His holiness and purity, but this God doesn't leave it there. This sight of God may cause much sorrow and grief, but it is the sight of the same God that will also bring comfort! Our godly sorrow turns our devastated, helpless soul to God as our only hope. Here is a strange contradiction, a paradox, for the God who we have sinned against is the one, the only one, who can forgive us and comfort us.

Our blessed mourning sends us to God to seek His forgiveness. Such mourning over our sin causes us to want to leave it, to be rid of it and its consequences and we are driven to turn to God. As we see we are helpless, hopeless, have this sin in and on us and we mourn. Then and only then will we seek a Saviour, seek someone to take away our sin which we can do nothing about. We see as we

mourn that we want to leave our sin and this is a work of God the Holy Spirit. He will point us to Christ; show us of His redeeming work, of His all sufficiency to be our Saviour. In this there is no room for hypocritical, false mourning. We realise that no way we can put on pretence of sorrow for sin to impress God. Yes it may deceive, fool and impress those on earth, but not the triune God!

This is not an outward show or act, to be accepted by men and women, to impress them that we are doing something religious or dramatic. It is a realisation of sin in our innermost being, in our soul and our desperate need to be right with God. The Psalmist saw a dreadful prospect in Psalm 130:3 *“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?”* Yet he went on to show us an astonishing fact in v4 *“But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.”* In Psalm 51 David realised his sin, mourned it and he sought God for forgiveness **and he found it!**

If we truly mourn for our sin, we shall be comforted, for there is a Saviour who can deal with all our sin, all our poverty of spirit. We see such blessed mourning brings us to the Saviour and the comfort that He and He alone can give of the forgiveness of sin and give us true peace with God. Have we seen our poverty of spirit, have we mourned and grieved for our sin in any way? If so do not stay there, but go to the only place where that poverty and mourning can be dealt with and you know true blessings - they drive you to the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour. You may not know what this means, you may have a vague understanding about such things, but you know it's vitally important. If that is the case, then talk with me; talk with others you know here and we will tell you of this Saviour and what He and He alone can do for you, for He has done the same for us.

True mourners after having been comforted in this way will then continue to experience a right mourning over their ongoing falling into sin, giving in to temptation. This can panic us, cause us to fear

that we are not Christians and cause us to think that we have blown our salvation. Yet this is not the case, for we continue to know ongoing comfort from the same Saviour. We are to realise that until we get to heaven we are all still continually affected and dogged by sin and sin must be mourned over, confessed and brought to the Saviour for a realisation of His pardon. We are like leaking ships that must always have the water pumped out of it. We leak sin and must pump it out with mourning and repentance - not to be saved again and again, but to be restored in our relationship and to maintain our walk with our Saviour. \* William Cowper's hymn "O for a closer walk with God" v4 especially.

*FOR a closer walk with God,  
a calm and heavenly frame,  
a light to shine upon the road  
that leads me to the Lamb!*

*2 Where is the blessedness I knew  
when first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
of Jesus and His Word?*

*3 What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
the world can never fill.*

*4 Return, O holy Dove! return,  
sweet messenger of rest!  
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,  
and drove Thee from my breast.*

*5 The dearest idol I have known,  
whate'er that idol be,  
help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
and worship only Thee.*

*6 So shall my walk be close with God,  
calm and serene my frame;  
so purer light shall mark the road  
that leads me to the Lamb.*

William Cowper, 1731-1800

The Christian life goes on in this way - mourning for sin and comforted, sorrowing and yet happy! This life is a battle, sometimes we feel we are wonderfully comforted, yet we walk a tightrope and it is not always a smooth journey, but one day all who have mourned for sin will be truly comforted. What a day of comfort that will be, when God our Father and God our Saviour the Lord Jesus will wipe away every spot and stain of sin, when He Himself will be with His people and wipe away every tear from our eyes – then there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying or pain. On that day we who have mourned for our sin in our lives will be eternally and perfectly comforted. Those who refused in their lives to mourn, to confess, to cry to God to remove their sin, they will face an eternity of mourning in hell. Hell is a place of eternal regret, tears and mourning for all lost opportunities to believe on the Lord Jesus, for the rejection of His comfort and Him dealing with our sin and this will aggravate the torments, pains and horrors of hell!

Yet in stark contrast to those eternal mourners, all who have mourned over their sin and gone to Jesus for safety, for forgiveness of their sin and received His salvation, these and these alone will praise the Saviour for His sweet and glorious work in them – that may have caused them to mourn in their lifetimes, but what a blessed work it produced in them through His amazing grace. In our last hymn about how sweet God's work is in us [*Sweet is the work, my God, my King*] we will sing in v3-5 these words

*“3 My heart shall triumph in the Lord, and bless His works and bless His Word; Your works of grace, how bright they shine, how deep Your counsels, how divine!*

*4 And I shall share a glorious part, when grace has well refined my heart; and fresh supplies of joy are shed, like holy oil, to cheer my head.*

*5 Sin, my worst enemy before, shall vex my eyes and ears no more; my inward foes shall all be slain, nor Satan break my peace again.”*

I pray we would know of this mourning which Jesus speaks of here, so that we would know so much more of the wonderful comfort it will ongoingly bring to us in both time and eternity.