

The Great Reversal: Those Who Mourn

Josh Blevins

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Those who mourn in Christ can find comfort because the source of their comfort is greater than the cause of their sorrow.

Matthew 5:4

Matthew 5:1-12 NKJV – 1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Beatitudes are the manifesto and framework for the life of the one in Christ’s kingdom.

- Not the “DO” attitudes. The beatitudes are not a new set of rules for us to follow, but the kind of people we become inwardly as we follow Jesus and are relationally connected with Him.
- We know that these characteristics and attributes don’t come naturally because they are spiritually birthed and formed. **There is no one that naturally pursues the course that Christ prescribes.**
- This is why we call our series, “The Great Reversal.” Jesus is introducing an upside-down kingdom, which actually brings everything right-side-up.
- I thought of this when my daughter snapped a photo of **this about a year ago [image]** – it’s the great reversal! Except Jesus’ great reversal doesn’t put us in a cage, but rather brings us out of the world’s cage into true freedom.

Last month we opened the first beatitude, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

- Christ’s present spiritual kingdom and His future physical kingdom is only available to those who recognize their own spiritual depravity. Those who aren’t looking for the riches and security of the world to fill their inner spiritual void, but have come to recognize their need for God.
- To walk as one “poor in spirit” means to live in true humility. Not seeing yourself as having what it takes, but as spiritually in need of God’s grace and empowerment.

Today, we dig deep into the second beatitude found in Matthew 5:4. It reads, **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”**

Out all the beatitudes, this one seems to be the most ironic. In plain English, it’s a true oxymoron.

- It could literally be translated, “Happy are those who are sad.”

The Greek word used here for “mourn” is the strongest word in the language you can find for expressing true grief, sadness and experiencing a significant loss.

- For any normal human being, this beatitude is hard to grasp. After all, it seems so counterintuitive to expect a blessing to come from undesired pain, sadness, or loss. Commentator William Barclay expressed it well:

“It’s an astonishing thing to speak of the joy of sorrow, of the gladness of grief, and of the bliss of the brokenhearted...”

William Barclay, Commentary

To mourn – To be profoundly affected by grief and feel deep sorrow.

APPLICATION

Before we move forward, we have to set an important precedent.

- We have learned through experience and observation that everyone will mourn on some level, at some point in life. Everyone will experience undesired or unexpected loss and emotional trauma or pain.
- As long as sin is a reality, death will be a reality on earth; people will mourn. Every culture on the globe has its own rituals and expressions to try and deal with loss and pain.
- **Ancient Chinese philosophy has two perspectives: Daoism (Taoism) expresses that grief and mourning should be completely dispelled and forbidden and that one should not allow any place for mourning. The Confucianist response is that mourning should be drawn out and elongated so that it becomes a teacher.**
- **Hinduism has an immediate 13 day period of intense mourning where the family is forbidden from any celebratory activity or sweet foods and must create good karma for the deceased. After that, a 1-year mourning process ensues during which festivals and weddings are discouraged.**
- **After the burial, Judaism observes an intense 7 day mourning period called “Shiva”. The family and friends spend 7 days inside a home. They sit on the floor, they wear no leather shoes, and they do not participate in any joyful or comforting practices. They are forbidden from all the positive “thou Shalt” commands and can only study the portions of the Torah that deal with mourning.**
- **Isn’t it interesting that the disciples, along with Jesus’ mother and the women, would have been participating in this Shiva process three days after Jesus died?**
- **When Jesus showed up in the room where they were all gathered after he rose from the dead, he was interrupting their mourning process with His resurrection power.**

- [Jesus is not interested in having us pretend that grief doesn't exist, neither does he want us to wallow in prolonged sorrow. No, with Jesus he promises that in the midst of true grief, He can be supernaturally present, bringing hope, comfort, peace, and even joy in the midst of it.](#)
- BUT, I believe that the blessings of these beatitudes only come to those who mourn in Jesus. This isn't just talking about general mourning, but the person who mourns in a particular way... a kingdom way.
- In 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Paul tells us that those who mourn without Christ mourn without hope. But those who mourn in Christ have resurrection hope of things to come.

Those who mourn in Christ can find comfort because the source of their comfort is greater than the cause of their sorrow.

Josh,

JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE OF COMFORT IN MOURNING

It's pretty amazing that we have a Savior, who though perfect in every way, showed us that mourning and sorrow is a very real part of the human experience.

Prophesying of the Messiah, Isaiah writes:

[Isaiah 53:3a NKJV] He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...

When we see Jesus, we see clear moments of Him embracing the act of sorrow.

- When one of His best friends died and He arrived at the funeral and saw unbelief, the Bible says, **“Jesus wept.”**
- There is a clear sense of mourning after Jesus was fully rejected by His own people as their Messiah and He cried from the hilltop:
 - **[Matthew 23:37 NKJV] 37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!**
- In the garden of Gethsemane sorrow gripped His heart. The weight of the world and all its sin about to be placed on His shoulders. The physical weight of the cross and all its tortures on His mind.
 - **[Matthew 26:37-39 NKJV] 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.” 39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”**

AND YET, Jesus, the man acquainted with sorrow and grief, was also the most truly joyful, happy, and comforted human being to have ever lived. Prophetically speaking of Jesus, King David penned these words:

[Psalm 45:6-7 NKJV] 6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. 7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

So how do we come into this place of Christ-likeness? How is it we should mourn and what is the blessing God provides in the midst of our mourning?

We will explore 4 aspects of mourning in Christ and how to find the source of comfort that Jesus promises.

1 We must mourn the death within us

APPLICATION

Mourning is the intense grief associated with something that is broken or not as it should be. It is the response to death; not merely physical death, but any kind of death that sin brings. Physical death, spiritual death, and emotional death all should bring us to the point of mourning.

- **This is why Jesus considers mourning a blessing because mourning is the first step in recognizing that death exists.**

The first step in fixing what's broken is realizing it's broke. Jesus will comfort the person who stops pretending all is well and mourns over their own brokenness.

The Christian is one who doesn't simply know that they broke God's rules but genuinely experiences the pain and grief that his or her brokenness has caused.

- **EXAMPLE:** Not long ago, my son hit my nose as I was bending over him. If I was a rock statue, it wouldn't have done anything to me, but because I'm flesh, I felt it!
- The Christian should be someone who no longer has a heart of stone, but has an awareness of how their sin breaks God's heart.
- In many Asian and near eastern countries, the practice of professional mourning has been happening for centuries.
- Even today, in China you can hire **young professional mourners**, who like a DJ at a funeral, will bring full sound systems, lights, bands and perform elaborate mourning ceremonies.
- A couple of years ago in England, a company called Rent-a-Mourner supplied, "professional, polite, well-dressed individuals" to swell the numbers at poorly attended funerals and wakes.
- The idea behind this is that we need to have the appearance of mourning, even if it means hiring someone who can fake it for the sake of ceremony.

But for the Christian, mourning isn't something we do just because we are "supposed to feel bad." Mourning over the sin and death within us isn't to be like a forced apology that we sometimes make our kids do. It's a genuine response or true sorrow that starts in our hearts.

Let's face it, we are all broken people who have been affected by sin... our own sin.

- We have all experienced the reality of rebelling against God in thought, word, or deed.
- None of us is innocent of breaking God's perfect law.
- **But what's your internal reaction when you make a decision, even for a moment, to love something God hates, to do something that insults His grace or mocks His sacrifice? Do you feel it, sense it, know it?**
- **Does it break your heart that there are still parts of you that want to go the opposite way of the way God desires?**

"Oh Josh, we don't want to be legalistic! Josh, we don't want to dwell on our sin!" I wholeheartedly agree! But that doesn't mean we should ignore God's conviction or have a hardened conscience to the reality of our fallenness.

- The truth is until you've wept and **mourned** over your sin, you won't experience the true **comfort** of His forgiveness and grace. Until you've been horrified by your flesh, you won't know the true comfort of His Spirit as His mercy washes over you.
- This is why the NT author James writes to the Christian:

[James 4:8-10 NKJV] 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Those who justify, defend, and revel in their sin prove their lack of submission to the Holy Spirit. Without godly sorrow, true repentance is not possible.

Josh,

[2 Corinthians 7:10 NKJV] 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

The Christian should never live in a continual state of condemnation or legalism but should live in a continual state of awareness of the depths of their own sin and the depths of God's grace.

It is only when we sorrow over our sin that we can know the comfort of the cross.

ONE DAY, THE MOURNING WILL BE REVERSED

Now, people in the world laugh at sin, rejoice in their iniquity, persecute and mock the righteous, but there is a day coming when the table will be reversed!

Matthew 24:30 NKJV – 30 “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Who will be comforted then? We will be riding on white horses behind Jesus clothed in white robes, the angels will gather together the tribulation saints from the earth and raise them up. While we experience the eternal comfort of Christ, the rest of the world will be mourning as they seek to hide from the brightness of His coming, crying out for the mountain to crush them rather than having to stand before the judge of the universe without any atonement for their sin. Those who never mourned over their sin when God gave them the chance to receive His grace will be mourning then when they give an account before the righteous judge, Jesus

Now is the time. Mourn over your sin now, so that you might know the promise of eternal comfort. Jesus is the God of all creation, He lived, He died a sacrificial death for the sins of the world, He rose again conquering death forever, He is coming back to judge the living and the dead, and on that day you can either be comforted through the forgiveness of Jesus or enter into eternal mourning.

2 We must mourn the death around us

Physical:

- Loss of a loved one
- Abortion
- Injustice
- Corruption
- Poverty
- Hatred
- Selfishness
- Racism
- Inequality
- Oppression
- Crime

Spiritual:

- People who have rejected God
- People embracing spiritual darkness
- People on their way to stand in judgment before God without Christ

EXAMPLE: A couple days ago I was at “The happiest place on earth.”

- Sadly, I watched thousands of people chasing a false sense of happiness and joy. I saw people celebrating their sexually perverted lifestyles with smiles and Mickey Mouse ears. I saw painted facades, that were empty shells of people who are walking in the ways of death.

There are countless people around us that have no mourning for the very things that were destroying them.

- I was mourning because of what it meant for them. I was mourning because I wanted them to know the love of Christ, know forgiveness and experience the future God desires for them.

BIBLE VERSE

[2 Peter 2:7-8 NKJV] 7 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)–

- Lot was in a state of mourning when he observed the death around him.

When is the last time you wept, inside or out, for a world that is without hope and without God?

3 We must mourn with an eternal perspective

While the context of the passage indicates that spiritual mourning is the emphasis, one commentator points out:

“Given the promise of comfort, the term probably also applies more broadly to all those who are broken, who suffer or have sustained personal grief and responded humbly before God.”

Keener, Commentary

Psalm 34:18 – The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

This promise isn't just for those who mourn spiritually, but those who face the natural mourning of life with a spiritual, eternal perspective.

- When death comes to people we love, when the potential of death stands on our own doorstep, when we lose a deep friendship or family relationship, there is a natural mourning process that takes place. When we are able to keep our eyes and hearts on the reality of our eternal promises, all the sudden our pain, while still real, takes on an element of hope that comforts us.

[1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NKJV] 13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord

Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Only in Christ can one gain a glimpse of God's higher purpose in their loss and find the assurance that their pain will not be wasted. Sometimes our pain and sorrow end up being the catalyst for someone else's healing. When we broaden our perspective to see the more significant work of God amid our grief, the pain might not lessen, but we will begin to have comfort that God is using it for something greater.

Josh.

4 We mourn with God's promise of comfort

Jesus' personal mission statement which he read in the synagogue came from Isaiah 61:

[Isaiah 61:1-3 NKJV] 1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

Unlike the view on mourning we examined earlier, our God doesn't demand that we expel sorrow from our lives and pretend it doesn't exist. Neither does He leave us alone with grief as our sole teacher, or force us to merely go through the ceremonial motions of mourning. It's only in Christianity that you find an almighty, sovereign God who, in the person of the Holy Spirit, comes alongside you in the moments greatest despair, places within you His peace, holds you in His mighty arms, whispers to you His promises, and promises to never leave you or forsake you.

Part of what Jesus accomplished on the cross was to bring the promise of comfort, joy, and gladness to those who are suffering and sorrowful.

THE HOLY SPIRIT - OUR COMFORTER

The word for comfort means, "To come alongside."

- It doesn't mean that everything gets easy in the midst of our pain, but that God walks alongside us, hand in hand, through our difficulty.
- It's the same root word that is used to describe the Holy Spirit. Jesus said:

[John 14:26-27 NKJV] 26 "But the Comforter (Parakletos), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Today, when you come to Christ, He comes alongside you in your mourning. To receive comfort simply means that you're never alone, even in the darkest moments of grief. The Holy Spirit lives in you! He encourages and exhorts us to continue on when we feel as though we can't walk another step. He does miracles in our lives to remind us of the power of God. and He reassures our hearts that we belong to Jesus both now and forever.

According to the wisdom of this world, sorrow is something to escape from at any cost. *The world seeks to find comfort by avoiding pain. The Christian finds comfort by experiencing God's presence and purpose in the midst of their pain.*

When you and I, in the midst of our greatest grief, experience peace when tempted to bitterness, strength in the presence of weakness, and confidence in the midst of questions, we know that it can only be a gift of comfort from the Holy Spirit. His supernatural comfort is a declaration and reminder that Jesus is the ultimate champion over our agony.

Josh,

But this comfort is not merely a present comfort. Like each blessing in the Beatitudes, there is a present realization, but there is also an eternal promise.

- One day Jesus will return to take us up into His eternal comfort, where every pain we experienced in life will be erased and tears will only flow in the direction of joy.
- Paul tells us that God will... **[2 Thessalonians 1:7 NKJV] ...give us who are troubled rest... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,**

If you know Christ, there is no amount of temporary pain that can outweigh the eternal comfort you will one day experience.

Blessed (happy, favored by God), are those who mourn (Mourn the death within them and the death around them), for they shall be (without question, delivered personally by the hand of God) comforted (comforted in that their current mourning has an eternal purpose and comforted by the presence of the Holy Spirit walking alongside them, ultimately leading them into the eternal comfort of heaven.)

Truly, those who mourn with Jesus as their King possess the incredible blessing of His comfort in their lives.