

“#blessed: Those Who Mourn”

Matthew 5:1-4

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#blessed #blessed#Jeremygross #blessed Marilyn king #blessed Leah Wheeley #teamPHUMC
Thank you Jeremy for taking my phone call around 9 p.m. on Saturday night, receiving my sermon manuscript and preaching last week. Wow, those words of that sermon sounded familiar. Thank you, Marilyn, for being called up for duty with our prayers, and Leah for doing Children's Moments. #blessed

Well, as Jeremy and I said last week...we have begun a series on The Beatitudes. We must remember that these Beatitudes were given to individual believers NOT the unsaved of the world. Scripture says that Jesus' disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. The crowds were there to perhaps overhearing, or listening to Jesus's instructions of how to live righteousness in the world. There can be an external righteousness based on law, but true and vital righteousness begins in the heart.

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day were concerned about the details of conduct, but they neglected the character of daily living. True conduct flows out of character. How can we be with Jesus in the real world and have a conduct that flows out of the character that He instills in us? We should be concerned about our daily living.

Blessed are those who mourn. We mourn anything we lose. Mark Twain said, **(image)**, “Out of all the things I have lost, I miss my mind the most.” Certainly, some of us are mourning that because of age we are not what we use to be. When we were kids, we played, “Head and shoulders, knees and toes.” Now we play “wallet, glasses, keys and phone.” As we age, we mourn and grieve those changes, and yet we try to cope with them.

We mourn when there is a loss. A loss of income, a loss of a relationship, a loss of time, loss of health. However, when we typically think of mourning and loss, we usually think of that as related to death.

Now some may be keeping count, and although this is a new sermon, back in the summer of 2014 I preached a series on The Beatitudes. I reviewed the sermon from 2014 and I wanted to repeat the 4 types of Mourning that I used in that sermon.

Before we get into that I wanted to remind you of the mourning that was done in the Bible. It was mourning done with sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth and ashes were used as a symbol of mourning, and/or repentance. Someone wanting to show their repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of their head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat's hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear. The ashes signified desolation and ruin---that is why the season of Lent/a time of repentance begins with *Ash* Wed.

When someone died, the act of putting on sackcloth showed heartfelt sorrow for the loss of that person. We see an example of this when David mourned the death of Abner, the commander of Saul's army (2 Samuel 3:31). Jacob also demonstrated his grief by wearing sackcloth when he thought his son Joseph had been killed (Genesis 37:34). These instances of mourning for the dead mention sackcloth but not ashes.

Sackcloth and ashes were also used as a public sign of repentance and humility before God. When Jonah declared to the people of Nineveh that God was going to destroy them for their wickedness, everyone from the king on down responded with repentance, fasting, and sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:5–7). They even put sackcloth on their animals (verse 8).

Very simply, sackcloth and ashes were used as an outward sign of one's inward condition. Such a symbol made one's change of heart visible and demonstrated the sincerity of one's grief and/or repentance. It was not the act of putting on sackcloth and ashes itself that moved God to intervene, but the humility that such an action demonstrated. God's forgiveness in response to genuine repentance is celebrated by David's words: "You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy" (Psalm 30:11). (much above from website, Gotquestions.org)

I want to make sure that we know the Beatitude, ⁴**Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.** I want to focus on the part after the comma. They WILL be comforted. This is a faith fact. Now the interesting and frustrating thing is we don't know when the comforting will completely happen, but it will happen.

4 Types of Mourning

1. Blessed are those who mourn for their own sin.

Yes, blessed are those who mourn for their own sin they WILL be comforted. An old term used in the Methodist church and early protestant evangelical churches was the term, Mourner's Bench. (image)

Let me share some Methodist history from Mark Shenise, United Methodist General Commission on Archives and History:

"In Methodism you had a mourner's bench and the mourner's bench transcends the colonial period. It was there you would go and sit to feel sorry for your sins, to repent, to have the new birth, or to rededicate yourself to Jesus.

"It is plain. It's just made out of available wood, long planks. They didn't form it into a very nice-looking piece of furniture. It wasn't meant for that. It's the old rugged cross.

"You're there to mourn for your sins. That wasn't meant to be done on a comfortable pew with a lot of cushions. It was supposed to be hard.

"When you went to the mourner's bench the theology was this: normal time, normal space, that gets suspended. You're now in sacred time in a sacred space. It's where God would meet you. Heaven comes to Earth and Earth goes to Heaven at the same time. It could be during the service. If the Spirit was talking to your spirit and convicting you of your sins you would get up, and you go, and you literally incubate on the mourner's bench or kneel to the mourner's bench as you have this new Kingdom of God experience breaking through into your life, getting yourself right with God. This is the lightning strike place, so to speak, spiritually. This is the awakening."

So where are the mourner's benches today. Every church I have served has had what we use to call a "chancel rail," which use to be the mourner's bench. And every church I've served the chancel rail, kneeling rail has been padded. Hmmm...a padded area to repent. Maybe, just maybe we go back to the hard-wooden benches as we know that repentance is 'hard' and what Jesus did for us was not easy. Just sayin'.

James 4:8-10 New International Version (NIV) ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

He WILL lift you up. You WILL be comforted.

4 Types of Mourning

- 1. Blessed are those who mourn for their own sin.**
- 2. Blessed are those who mourn in this world because of the evils of this world.**

Are you mourning, grieving over what is happening in our world, our country? Are there times when you watch or hear the national news, even the local news, and you mourn and grieve over the evils of this world.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, preached several sermons from the Sermon on the Mount, including this section on the Beatitudes. He said this, "Still, there is another most blessed kind of mourning that remains in the children of God. They still mourn for the sins and miseries of humankind; they "weep with those who weep." (John Wesley, Sermon 21, Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse 1)

4 Types of Mourning

- 1. Blessed are those who mourn for their own sin.**
- 2. Blessed are those who mourn in this world because of the evils of this world.**
- 3. Blessed are those who mourn the death of a loved one.**

In 15 days, it will be one year since my mom died and went to be with the Lord. I know there are many here who have had to deal with the loss of loved ones or friends recently. My dad who died at the age of 64 in 1994 use to say in his profound and simple way, "You are not going to get out of this world alive." Profound statement dad!

Death will come, for us all. Death will happen in family and relationships. And let me say, and I mentioned this in my weekly email, Direct From Dave, people grieve differently. People do not grieve the same. We know that Jesus stood beside his good friend Lazarus grave and wept. (John 11:35). However, I found that tears, which I call liquid love, can be done outwardly, but I have known many that do not outwardly, or publicly weep, but on the inside, they are crying and are torn apart. Some people grieve and mourn and want to be by themselves. Sometimes we do not know how to respond to people's grief.

4 Types of Mourning

- 1. Blessed are those who mourn for their own sin.**
- 2. Blessed are those who mourn in this world because of the evils of this world.**
- 3. Blessed are those who mourn the death of a loved one.**
- 4. Blessed are those who mourn as we share the pain and grief.**

Please be mindful not to ignore people who are grieving, especially perhaps a tragic death, because you don't know what to say. Also, I caution you to be careful not to say something to try to make it all better. Because you can't make it all better. We can't simply give platitudes. Sometimes we say things we think we ought to say and actually I think that they might make us feel better, when it makes the family feel worse, or at least feels awkward. Sometimes, all we can say is, "I'm so sorry."

Romans 12:15: Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

A faith fact is, according to scripture, "You WILL be comforted." I don't know when. You may not feel comfort now. There will always be a hole in your heart. But you WILL be comforted.

For the last several years Rev. Cathy and Stephen Ministry has had a Blue Christmas Service. We will have one again this year. It is a time of worship, reflection, and Holy Communion for those that have suffered loss within the year. A time to mourn.

This last year I shared this at this service. May you find this helpful.

It is a story from Winnie the Pooh. **(image)**

It occurred to Pooh and Piglet that they hadn't heard from Eeyore for several days, so they put on their hats and coats and trotted across the Hundred Acre Wood to Eeyore's stick house. Inside the house was Eeyore. "Hello Eeyore," said Pooh. "Hello Pooh. Hello Piglet," said Eeyore, in a Glum Sounding Voice.

"We just thought we'd check in on you," said Piglet, "because we hadn't heard from you, and so we wanted to know if you were okay."

Eeyore was silent for a moment. "Am I okay?" he asked, eventually. "Well, I don't know, to be honest. Are any of us really okay? That's what I ask myself. All I can tell you, Pooh and Piglet, is that right now I feel really rather Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. Which is why I haven't bothered you. Because you wouldn't want to waste your time hanging out with someone who is Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All, would you now."

Pooh looked at Piglet, and Piglet looked at Pooh, and they both sat down, one on either side of Eeyore in his stick house. Eeyore looked at them in surprise. "What are you doing?"

"We're sitting here with you," said Pooh, "because we are your friends. And true friends don't care if someone is feeling Sad, or Alone, or Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. True friends are there for you anyway. And so here we are."

"Oh," said Eeyore. "Oh." And the three of them sat there in silence, and while Pooh and Piglet said nothing at all; somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore started to feel a very tiny little bit better.

Because Pooh and Piglet were There. No more; no less.

(From the Facebook blog "I know, I need to stop talking")

Be there. Christ is there. But is there someone you need to be there for this week to be Christ with Skin on.

Sunset and sunrise. Although there are sunsets, we know, we know that there *will* be a sunrise. A new day. A new beginning in our loss.

When that sun comes up, it's a new day shining. God is with you. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Hear these words from Psalm 30:

Psalm 30

- ¹ I will exalt you, LORD,
for you lifted me out of the depths...
- ² LORD my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
- ³ You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.
- ⁴ Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
- ⁵ weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.
- ⁸ To you, LORD, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
- ¹⁰ Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me;
LORD, be my help."
- ¹¹ You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
- ¹² that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
LORD my God, I will praise you forever.

/////alternate ending for The 11:05 service/////

Hear these words from Psalm 121.

Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;

⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

Those who mourn WILL be comforted. God will come through always. His help is on the way.