

5:1 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.

⁴ Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

Have you ever known a person who was diagnosed with a terminal disease, but soon after the diagnosis they discovered the disease was **100% curable**?

Did they experience a sense of **mourning**?

Probably

Did they experience **great joy**?

Probably.

Could you say “**happy** is the person who is diagnosed with a terminal disease when the disease is **curable**?”

Or maybe **happy are the sick when they will be cured**?

Yes. That is not hard to grasp.

Would we not also think, **sad** are the people who are blissfully unaware of having a terminal disease that **could be** cured?

Would we not regard them in a very **sad** state, even if they were temporarily **blissfully happy** in their ignorance?

Sure.

We might find it helpful for us to look at **our text** this morning in a similar light.

Now we have been talking about happiness a lot lately. It has been the focus of much of my reading and some of my study. I have emphasized that **only serving Christ** will make us truly happy. I have also said that we have **many reasons every day** to be happy.

And that is all true.

But what do you know about people when they **mourn**? Are they happy? No. There is little that is more sad than when people mourn. So how can this be?

Happy are the sad?

How can that make sense? That is what we will look at this morning.

I want to pose a statement here and I hope to visit it later.

One of the main reasons that many of us believers are not as happy as we should be, in the way that we should be happy, is because we are not as sad as we should be in the way that we should be sad.

Let me say that again.

Many of us are not as happy as we should be, in the way that we should be happy, because we are not as sad as we should be in the way that we should be sad.

And one of the reasons that people are not drawn to churches is because both of these things are true.

Last week we looked at the blessing of **being poor in spirit**. We saw how the more "**poor in spirit**" we are, the more we fail the "**I would never**" test. We see ourselves **as we truly are** in our heart of hearts. And we are left calling out to God because **only He** can help us. **Only he** can give us what we need. And we continue doing that every day of our lives.

That leads very logically into our text today. Blessed are those **who mourn**. Now a lot of people read this passage at funerals as an absolute statement of **God's blessing** on anyone who is **mourning** the loss of a loved one. But that

is not at all what this is about. Remember that these are all **only blessings** toward those who are **Kingdom members**, to those who are believers. It is interesting that the word **Mourn** here is the strongest Greek word for mourning. This is intensity **10** mourning on a scale of 1 to 10. It is intense gut wrenching mourning. It is the “cry until you are exhausted” kind of mourning. It is interesting that this was the word choice. This was no accident. Christians are people who experience **intense mourning**.

But from what?

The Bible is full of **all kinds** of mourning over **all kinds** of things. There are people who were mourning because they could not fulfill their sinful lusts. Obviously that is not going to tear at God’s heartstrings. There is legitimate mourning by believers for **all kinds of things**. And God is gracious about all those things. He is kind to His children.

But this is different from the mourning that all humans have. This is mourning only particular to Christians. This mourning has a supernatural cause.

John MacArthur said it well:

Paul speaks of this sorrow in his second letter to Corinth. “For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you” (2 Cor. 7:10–11). (He says)The only sorrow that brings spiritual life and growth is godly sorrow, sorrow over sin that leads to repentance. Godly sorrow is linked to repentance, and repentance is linked to sin¹

The mourning being done in our text is **mourning over sin** and all of its ugly horrific degrading effects. The blessing is for those who are **upset about sin**. Jesus mourned like this. We are never told that Jesus laughed. I cannot help but believe that He did. There are so many things in life that are genuinely funny. Even the appearance of some of the animals He created leads me to believe that He has a sense of humor. And those animals play in a way that

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [*Matthew*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 156–157). Chicago: Moody Press.

makes us laugh. He creates cats that shove themselves into fish bowls after all.

But we **are** specifically told several times that **Jesus cried**. We are told that He was a **man of sorrows**.

Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. **Jn 11:35** We have looked at this before. Jesus had no reason to cry because He had lost his friend. He knew he was bringing him back. Then why did he cry? I think it was because of the effects that sin has on His creation.

Jesus wept over the **city of Jerusalem** soon before His death.

Jesus mourned the **presence and the consequences of sin**. He was deeply disturbed at what sin had done to His creation. He mourned what the people **were doing**, the **positions** they were **taking**, the **effect** sin was having, and the **misery** that was in store, all because of sin.

But Jesus had no sin of His own. He never repented of His own sin. He never needed to.

But we are **very different** in that regard.

(This is a side note. I sometimes feel like I am cheating when I quote commentaries, but the truth is I sometimes do not know how I could possibly **say something better** or clearer than the writer does. I study to make sure of what scripture says. But I owe it to you to present the word clearly, and sometimes this is the very best thing I can think of doing.) This is from Martyn Lloyd Jones.

To 'mourn' is something that follows, of necessity, from being 'poor in spirit'. It is quite inevitable. As I confront God and His holiness, and contemplate the life that I am meant to live, I see myself, my utter helplessness and hopelessness. I discover my quality of spirit and immediately that makes me mourn. I must mourn about the fact that I am like that. But obviously it does not stop there. A man who truly faces himself, and examines himself and his life, is a man who must, of necessity, mourn for his sins also, for the things he does. Now the great experts in the life of the spirit have always recommended self-examination. They all recommend and practice it themselves. They say it is a good thing for every man to pause at the end of the day and meditate upon himself, to run quickly over his life, and ask, 'What have I done, what have I said, what have I thought, how have I behaved with respect

to others?' Now if you do that any night of your life, you will find that you have done things which you should not have done, you will be conscious of having harbored thoughts and ideas and feelings which are quite unworthy. And, as he realizes these things, any man who is at all Christian is smitten with a sense of grief and sorrow that he was ever capable of such things in action or in thought, and that makes him mourn. But he does not stop merely at things he has done, he meditates upon and contemplates his actions and his state and condition of sinfulness, and as he thus examines himself he must go through that experience of Romans 7. He must become aware of these evil principles that are within him. He must ask himself, 'What is it in me that makes me behave like that? 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 he discovers this war in his members, and he hates it and mourns because of it. It is quite inevitable. Now this is not imagination; it is actual experience and true to fact. It is a very thoroughgoing test. If I object to this kind of teaching, it just means that I do not mourn and therefore I am not one of the people who, our Lord says, are blessed. If I regard this as nothing but morbidity, something a man should not do, then I am simply proclaiming the fact that I am not spiritual, and that I am unlike the apostle Paul and all the saints, and I am contradicting the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But if I bemoan these things in myself, I am truly mourning.²

I am getting old. And every year I live I am more convinced of the importance of self honesty and self accuracy. I am convinced that our internal prosecuting attorney and defense attorneys need equal time. We need to have both the **courage** and the **discipline** to look at **what** we did today and **why**. We need to look at what we did in our pasts and ask why. I think we carry way more guilt than we need to because we will not tell the truth, the whole truth, that is required to actually **integrate the forgiveness** that God offers us. We confess **partial sins** and receive **partial restoration** of fellowship. We do not have the richness of fellowship with God and others because our confessions are not **thorough**, they are not **complete**.

² Lloyd-Jones, D. M. (1976). [*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#) (Second edition, pp. 61–62). England: Inter-Varsity Press.

Think about this. If I say, God forgive me because I shot a deer on my neighbors property, but I didn't know where the line was, God will surely forgive me for that. But if the reality is that **I knew where the line was, or I intentionally refused to find out where the line was**, what good will that forgiveness do me? I will not really experience forgiveness for the sin I committed. I am receiving forgiveness for an **imaginary sin**. I will know deep down I was **not coming clean**. And God is not going to offer a restoration of fellowship on an **impartial or deceptive** confession when we could know better. And forgiveness for a sin that is **not truly confessed** is not going to provide us **the release that we want**. 1st John was teaching us all about walking in the light. It was teaching us about true confession. It was teaching us that the **benefit of the fellowship** is **proportional** to the **accuracy of the confession**.

Do we not owe it to God and to each other to **ask the right question**? We should not ask the question, "What **makes sense** about why I would have done what I did?" Or why **might** have I done such a thing? Or why **must I have** done what I did? We will quickly gravitate to a theory that puts us in the best light. What we **should ask** is "What do I remember about what I was thinking and feeling when I did that thing? Why did I **really** do what I did? Do you see the difference? One requires much more effort and honesty, and often humility, but it gives so much better results. It bases fellowship, not on theories, but on true confession. And the forgiveness we receive from God, and even other believers, is so much sweeter because we know that He is forgiving the **real us**, that He is willing to receive and love **the real us**. That is the sweetest fellowship.

Incomplete and inaccurate confession and repentance is much like having our **spouse** die and we **mourn for a distant relative instead**. It places the cause of our sin, the guilt for our sin, **elsewhere** and prevents us from mourning it as we should. When we **mourn accurately**, it strikes very close to home, in our heart of hearts and soul of souls. We must say "I am the sinner".

What is mourning? Well, what happens when someone dies who you depend upon for the most important things in your life. There is a gut wrenching sense of loss, a crying out in the experience of that loss, a life changing realization and appreciation for **that which is gone**. In the case of sin, it is not so much that we mourn what **we have lost** but that which **we have done**. And what what we **have done** tells us about ourselves.

Now how does this mourning happen?

True mourning over sin does not focus on **ourselves**, not even on **our sin**. It focuses on **God**, who alone can forgive and remove our sin.³

As the light of Christ looms larger, the shadow of our sin casts further. This mourning is a process over the whole Christian life. As we **know more about Christ**, we see our **sin and failure** with greater **clarity and intensity**. We begin labeling our failure for what it is with fewer excuses. And it pains our souls that we are that kind of people.

Do not expect for that kind of mourning to **stop** any time before we see Christ. But there is also a flip side to all of this. Our mourning is **not proof** that we are **not Christ's**. It is **sure proof** that we **are** Christ's. If we are mourning like Peter and not like Judas, we will continue to receive the promised end. When we must admit **one more failure**, we can rest in the knowledge that this is not an **abnormality** in the Christian life. It is the **norm**. Christians will be in the process of mourning their sin until the day they die. And while the sin is **never ok**, it is not **proof of lostness**.

David himself cried out often and long.

He said this: "**For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me**" (38:4) and, "**I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me**" (51:3).⁴

James tells us what to do when we encounter sin in our lives. **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.**

This passage, along with our text this morning, should cause us to do some soul searching. Have we ever had a **gut wrenching cry** about our **sin**? And the cry I am speaking of is **not** because **we got caught**. It is easy to cry when we get caught. And this sadness is **not** because of the consequence we will be forced to pay. Don't most kids cry when they know a spanking is eminent? And this sadness is **not** because of how our sin embarrassed us or humiliated

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 160). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, p. 161). Chicago: Moody Press.

us. Our regret over embarrassing ourselves is not a spiritual thing. But have we ever had a gut wrenching cry from the realization of **what kind of person** we must have been to do such a thing? It is more than the realization that **I did the sin**. It is the realization that **I am the sinner**. I am truly **that kind of person** deep down. It comes from the realization that **it was just like me** to do what I did. Sometimes we look at our sin and we think it is some kind of anomaly, like it was something **much unlike** how we really are or were. That is the wrong view. Mourning says I am **that kind** of person. Whatever we did whenever we did it, that is the kind of person we were. And we see the sin we committed in light of what our Lord requires and deserves. And it **breaks our hearts**.

That is the kind of personal confession and repentance that **personal spiritual revival is made of**. That kind of corporate repentance is what **church revival** is made of. And that is the condition that leads to the great revivals. It is a condition **created by the Holy Spirit** and **responded to** by God's people. This kind of deep seated mourning over sin only happens when people get brutally honest with themselves and with God, when all excuses are removed, and we come clean before a Holy God.

Now what happens to those who mourn their **sin**, mourn their **failure**, mourn their **lack of giving Christ what He deserves**.

For they shall be comforted.

We need to understand that mourning is not the **source** of the happiness, of the blessing. Mourning is the **condition** of it. Mourning our sin **must happen** in order for us to **receive the blessing**, the **happiness**. Much like the diagnosis of the disease must happen before the cure is received.

The **comfort** that comes is the **coming alongside** word, the paraclete word, when the Holy Spirit comes alongside of us and communicates our forgiveness.

We have got to see that the **end goal** is not for us to **suffer the mourning**.

That is just the **appropriate** response when we recognize the state we are in. And that is the **necessary** step for receiving the blessings that God has in mind for us.

What God wants is **restoration, reconciliation**. God wants us to bask in the love He holds out for us.

Godly mourning results in **God's forgiveness** which results in **God's happiness**. That is how it works.

I said this earlier:

Many of us are not as happy as we should be, in the way that we should be happy, because we are not as sad as we should be in the way that we should be sad.

I hope now that what I meant is clearer.

There is **no joy** apart from the **conviction of sin**. We must have a **real sense of sin** before we will have **real joy of salvation**. Bad news must precede good news. A gospel that does not clearly reveal **the bad news** will never have the life changing power as **good news**. It will be perceived as an **option** to **improve** a person's life, not a **life saving device** that one must drop everything else to have and **cling to** for one's survival.

A believer must, at some point in their life, **begin to mourn** if they are truly a believer. It is best if it comes at the very beginning. But the Gospel is not always portrayed the way it should be. So many people pray a prayer to accept Christ. And that is the beginning of **a process** in which God must bring them to the point of despondency, a point of brokenness, a point of mourning. They must understand that God did **not invite them** because He desires **what they can contribute to His cause**. He brought them because He chose them as a true worshipper of His. And that is ultimately His design for them. But to do that they must **orient to reality**. They must mourn their shortcomings and sinfulness.

Now this comfort that we will receive is both now and in the future.

Receiving forgiveness of sin in this life cannot be over rated. It is such a wonderful thing to know that, even though we have sinned, and even though we **chose** that sin either **knowing** it was sin, or because we did not care enough about Christ to find out **if it was**, that Christ will forgive our sin completely in such a thorough way that it will **never again be held against us**. That is absolutely incredible. That is supercharged comfort.

And then we have the future hope of a life that will contain **no sickness or sorrow**. All our sin will be past tense. All our forgiveness will be **past tense**. We will no longer need mourning. We will no longer need confession. We will no longer need repentance. Won't that be absolutely wonderful?

It is so true, what we are promised here.

Let's close with a word from our brother Lloyd-Jones

That is the type of Christian seen in the Church in ages past, when the doctrine of sin was preached and emphasized, and men were not merely urged to take a sudden decision. A deep doctrine of sin, a high doctrine of joy, and the two together produce this blessed, happy man who mourns, and who at the same time is comforted. The way to experience that, obviously, is to read the Scriptures, to study and meditate upon them, to pray to God for His Spirit to reveal sin in us to ourselves, and then to reveal to us the Lord Jesus Christ in all His fullness. 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.'