

The Beatitudes: Those Who Mourn

When I mourn over my sinfulness, I am in a place of receiving God's blessing.

Matthew 5:4

June 16, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Matthew 5:4**

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

FIRST THOUGHTS

No one really looks forward to going to a funeral. What makes us uncomfortable about funerals? Some funerals, though, just have to be seen to be believed. Here are the top 5 most expensive funerals:

1. Alexander the Great—estimated cost in today's dollars: \$600 million. He was buried in a solid gold coffin, placed on a gold cart pulled by 60 horses across a specially constructed road from Babylon to Macedonia.
2. Ronald Reagan--\$400 million. Most of the expenses came from security. This was the first major gathering of world and U.S. leaders following the September 11 attacks.
3. Kim Jong Il--\$40 million. Of this amount, \$10 million was spent on a single statue and \$1 million was spent to bring in special embalmers so the body could be preserved in a glass casket.
4. John F. Kennedy--\$14 million.
5. Pope John Paul II--\$12 million.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

As we think about mourning, here is some background on Jewish mourning customs. Mourning was an important part of Jewish life with very prescribed ways for it to be performed. Jews would prepare the bodies of their close friends or relatives for burial. It was customary for someone to always be with the body from the time of death until the burial. For the spouse, parents, or children of the deceased, the 7 days following the funeral are called "Shiva" (meaning 7). During this time they are to stay at home and cover all mirrors (to show they are not concerned with their appearance during this time). They perform only basic activities during this time—no cooking, cleaning or working. Friends bring meals to the family. Each day there is a prayer service in the home. Following the "shiva" comes the "sheloshim" meaning "30". This is 30 days where the family returns to normal activities like work or school but is not to engage in anything pleasurable. Typically today a ceremony is held 1 year after the death where the tombstone is revealed and the family remembers their loved one. We get hints of the origins of these traditions in the burials of the Old and New Testaments. Lazarus's sisters, Mary and Martha, were in the midst of the "shiva" when Jesus arrived and raised their brother from the dead.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

3 Types of Mourning

- **Natural Mourning**—the natural feeling of grief and loss that comes from the death of a loved one. What are some ways that people mourn naturally?
- **Sinful Mourning**—a selfish obsession over something that you desire but God has chosen not to give you. What are some examples of sinful mourning?
- **Spiritual Mourning**—sorrow over our sins against God. This is the kind of mourning Jesus is referring to here. This is a recognition of our own sinfulness and genuine response of repentance.

What is Spiritual Mourning?

- How would you describe spiritual mourning?
- What are some things that keep us from "mourning our sins"?
- Consider this definition that we will unpack in today's lesson: *"Spiritual mourning is a heartfelt sorrow over particular sins, arising from humility and infused with hope, that leads you to forsake these sins at the cross."*
- *"... a heartfelt sorrow ..."*
 - What does the word "heartfelt" mean to you?
 - Think about when someone has apologized to you (maybe a friend who hurt you or a disobedient child)—how did you know if it was heartfelt or not?

- The Bible uses the word “repentance” to describe true, heartfelt sorrow. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. There is a progression from sorrow to repentance to salvation. What is repentance? How is sorrow to lead to it?
- “. . . over particular sins . . .”
 - Why is spiritual mourning about particular sins rather than sin in general?
 - What are some ways to identify particular sins in my life?
- “. . . arising from humility . . .”
 - This humility reminds us of last week’s Beatitude: “blessed are the poor in spirit”. As we mourn we must remind ourselves that we really can’t overcome sin on our own. We are poor in spirit. We have nothing to offer. But we come to God and seek His help.
 - Read Romans 7:14-25—have you ever felt this way? Where do you see Paul’s humility expressed in these verses? Where does Paul turn for help in dealing with habitual sin?
- “. . . infused with hope . . .”
 - How can mourning and grief and sorrow be infused with hope? Why is hope so important in this spiritual mourning process?
 - The Holy Spirit will never lead you into despair. He will lead you to mourn over your sins, but that mourning is always infused with hope.
- “. . . that leads you to forsake these sins at the cross.”
 - The ultimate goal of spiritual mourning is a change in our lives, a forsaking of our sins, true repentance. This happens at the cross. When we look at the cross we see two incredible truths about God:
 - First, we see how costly sin is and how offensive it is to God. When we realize that Jesus had to die for our sins, we understand how serious sin is. 1 Peter 2:24 says *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”*
 - Second, we see how much God loves us that he would take the punishment for our sins so we could have a relationship with Him. Romans 5:8 says *“But God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

The True Blessing of Mourning

- So how is it that we can be blessed when we mourn? How can sorrow over the depth and cost of our sin be something we should seek—something helpful? The blessing of spiritual mourning comes when it leads us to repentance and true change in our lives.
- Romans 2:4 says *“Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that His kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?”*
- It is because God loves us that He leads us to and through spiritual mourning—so that we may grow closer to Him.

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- Ask God shine a flashlight in the darkness of your sin—to gradually reveal to you specific sins you need to deal with. When He shows you one, stop and write it down. Confess it and ask Him to help you genuinely mourn it. Think about what it cost Jesus for that sin. How it could cost you and your loved ones if you persist in it. Perhaps enlist another person to pray for you in this area.
- Next week we will talk about “meekness”. This is not a word we use often. Think about what it means in our world today.
- Take the summer challenge to memorize the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). Start with one verse per week and add to it as you go. Write them down somewhere you will see them. Repeat them to yourself when you are alone. Meditate on them daily.

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

16th – 1 Kings 17-19; Colossians 2 | **17th** – 1 Kings 20-21; 2 Chronicles 17; Colossians 3 | **18th** – 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 18-19; Colossians 4 | **19th** – 2 Kings 1-3; Psalm 82; 1 Timothy 1 | **20th** – 2 Kings 4-5; Psalm 83; 1 Timothy 2 | **21st** – 2 Kings 6-7; 2 Chronicles 20; 1 Timothy 3 | **22nd** – 2 Kings 8-9; 2 Chronicles 21; 1 Timothy 4