

Happiness and Mourning

Matthew 5:4

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

For the past few weeks, we have been looking at the Christian and happiness. We have seen that happiness is a choice that is based on our right relationship with Jesus Christ and right attitudes about ourselves and others.

As we continue our study in this area, we have come to what seems like a stunning contradiction. Do *happiness* and *mourning* go together? Is it possible for the *perfume of happiness* to be *extracted from the gall of sorrow*?

Who in his right mind would think of congratulating a person whose face was wet with tears? “It's nice to see you crying today, Linda, Keep it up, love. It's good for you.”

When we weep, we are in good company. When Lazarus died, ***Jesus wept.*** When He knelt on the Mount of Olives and looked out over the city of Jerusalem, ***He wept.*** **When Paul left the town of Ephesus, he and the elders wept with sorrow at their parting.** ***John*** wept on the isle of Patmos because no one was found worthy to open the scroll that would reveal God's plans.

When Jesus said, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”, He used the strongest word in the Greek for “mourn.” It is a word that indicates a breaking heart and unrestrainable tears.

The New Testament records that the Pharisees were intensely proud, for they counted themselves as righteous; they deemed themselves to be spiritually superior and in need of nothing. This word is addressed to them and to those who follow their path. The

man who is characterized by spiritual pride is on a road to spiritual destruction. Therefore, Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven.”

But the Lord is *not* teaching a new message here. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise.” Again in Psalm 34:18, “The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” When the psalmist referred to a broken, contrite heart, he did not mean a heart crushed because of bereavement, but a heart that has come to the end of itself, which sees no help in itself, and cries out to God for deliverance.

When Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted,” He placed the emphasis is on being “comforted”! He is saying that the God of all comfort promises to comfort us.

The God who comforted Abraham as he walked toward Mount Moriah to sacrifice his beloved Isaac - that God will comfort us.

The God who comforted Paul on the raging sea moments before he was shipwrecked - that God will comfort us.

The God who comforted the early Christians as they were being burned alive by their persecutors - that God will comfort us.

The first thing we will feel in eternity is the gentle hand of God, wiping the tears from our eyes. Even now, in the dark of night when our hearts are breaking, He sits beside us. When we have been abandoned by our dearest friend on earth and feel so absolutely alone, He picks us up in His massive arms and holds us close until the storms pass by.

The Word of God shouts to the millions of unhappy people: “You shall be comforted!” **Who says so?** The God of all comfort says so!

Every Sunday, immediately after the sermon, I invite all who wish to respond to the gospel to come forward to the altar. Many times, there are those who come with tears streaming down their faces.

Why? Because the Lord is at work. There is a sorrow that is born out of conviction and that kind of sorrow leads to happiness. Shattered dreams are being rebuilt, fractured marriages restored, ruptured relationships healed by the power of God. The pressures of life are easing and the burden of sin lifting as people bask in the happiness that only God can give. Through the tears, they may look sad on the outside but, they are happy on the inside!

In other words, it is a sorrow that expresses itself in our happiness. It cannot be contained and must be expressed.

Tears are living proof of life. Babies cry to show life. The man who cannot shed tears is not fully alive. A tear in the eye tells us that there is at least one spring in the soul. It may lie buried beneath emotional scars, a bitter divorce, rejection by parents, or a hoard of bitter memories that will not die. But that one little tear trickling down our cheeks cries out, "I'm alive!"

In 1 Timothy 4: 1-2, we have this description of the days before the Return of Jesus Christ, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirit, and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." If you have ever burned your finger, you know that the skin becomes tough where the burn was. In Ephesians 4:17-19 there is a sad commentary on the lostness of humanity, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto

lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Paul speaks of people who have "being past feeling", or who have "lost all feeling." **Their conscience no longer stings when they break the law of God.** It is a dangerous position to be in. There is supposed to be Holy Spirit conviction when we sin. That is how God alerts us to the need for repentance!

I remember the story of a man by the name of Father Damien, the leper priest. In answer to God's call, he became a missionary to the lepers on the island of Molokai. For thirteen years he lived among them as their teacher, their companion and their friend.

At last the dreaded disease laid hold of him. One morning he spilled some boiling water on his foot and felt not the slightest hint of pain. Then he knew - he was doomed. The loss of feeling was proof that leprosy had conquered.

That is the way it is with a lost person. When you become unable to "mourn" over *sin in your life*, and the *drawing power of the Holy Spirit* that bids you to salvation *seems dormant*, then you are in a very dangerous position.

But that is not the whole story. "Happy are those who mourn" over wrongdoing, for they are being *forgiven*. And *forgiveness* leads to *happiness*!

Sin and happiness are never found together in the life of a child of God. Consider the lives of *King Saul* and *King David*.

Saul was handsome, powerful, the choice of the people. As long as the praise of Israel was directed toward him, all was well.

Then came David's stunning victory over Goliath. When the army was returning from the field of battle, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet them. 1 Samuel 18:7 records that

they danced and sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

Saul was enraged. He sent David away and then hunted him across the hills of Israel like an angry hound pursuing a fox. Slowly but surely Saul conquered his conscience. **In earlier days he expelled witches and mediums from Israel.** Now, having "lost all feeling," he disguised himself and went by night to the witch of Endor, grievously violating the law of God. **Jealousy and pride will cause a person to do strange things!** Jealousy and pride destroys marriages, families, churches, and relationships.

In all the Scriptures there is not the slightest hint that Saul ever mourned over his sin toward David, or over his defiance of God's law concerning witchcraft. He died in bitterness and anguish, utterly void of the joy that could have been his as God's anointed king.

Now consider King David. After many years on the throne, he became addicted to the nectar of power. When he saw the beautiful woman Bathsheba, he used his absolute authority to have her brought to him. He committed adultery with her and, to cover up his crime, craftily arranged for her husband to be killed.

David's lust led to murder, which in turn led to falsehood and estrangement from God. But God was not finished with David. Therefore, 2 Samuel 12:1-12 tells us that God sent the prophet Nathan to King David. **He told the king a story of a wealthy man who had stolen and eaten the only sheep of a poor man.** Verse 5 tells us that David was enraged and said, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!" Only then did Nathan point his finger at David and reply, "Thou art the man!"

At that moment, David's life before God hung in the balance. What decision would he make? Would he mourn for his sin? **Or**

would he, like Saul, choose to override his conscience and ignore that voice of God? The Scriptures record his decision in 2 Samuel 12:13, "Then David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord." **Child of God, our sin is always against the Lord!**

That one simple statement delivered David from *spiritual leprosy*. He mourned his sin before God with tears. Listen to the shepherd king of Israel as he weeps before the Lord. **Hear the mourning in his voice.** Hear him moving from sadness to joy as he contemplates God's forgiveness in Psalm 51:1-2, 7-8, 12, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin...Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice...Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

It is true – David's sorrow led to confession, which led to forgiveness, which led to restoration of fellowship with God. The promise is clear in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."