**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 9-13-2020 – Blessed Are Those Who Mourn**

Just 2 days ago was 9/11. If you were like me, you watched some television that day that took you back to that tragic day.

And every year we mourn together as a nation and much of the world mourns as well. It’s important. I’m glad we don’t treat it as just another day. It’s healthy to mourn. We must never forget.

And this reality of mourning reminds me of one of the books of the Bible that rarely gets preached or taught on in the church in the book of Lamentations. The entire writing is a lament. It is a poem expressing deep sorrow and grief.

And often, this is not highlighted as important because it is not a real feel-good message. But nevertheless, it is important. It is inspired Scripture and like all Scripture it is there to teach us and help us learn how to live.

\*Jeremiah, who was likely the writer of Lamentations, was expressing the deep sadness that resulted on the tragedy that was the nation of Israel.

Israel had repeatedly turned its back to the LORD and eventually, the LORD gave them over to invading armies.

Israel was desolate because of its sin and the consequences that resulted. And so Lamentations is a book of mourning.

Lamentations, as I mentioned before, is written as a poem. Sometimes poems can be powerful avenues to help us mourn or express other powerful emotions. Just look at the book of the psalms.

And not only was it written as a poem; it was written as an acrostic poem. Each of the first 4 chapters is written with verses that begin with successive letters in the Hebrew alphabet. There is a sense of order and beauty to this.

But then, in the 5th and final chapter, this is no longer the case. There is no acrostic. So the writing itself mirrors this sad reality of brokenness and disorder that had fallen upon Israel. So even the way it is structured is an expression of mourning.

But there is always hope, even in despair and mourning.

For the most well known verse of Lamentations are these, found in chapter 3 verses 22 & 23.

**“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”**

Jeremiah knew that even in mourning and in brokenness, the Lord’s love and compassions will never fail and are new every morning.

And so God’s people are not to mourn as people without hope. We are always to mourn as people of hope, even in our brokenness.

Now while mourning is something that is a part of our lives, it is not something that God just tolerates us of doing from time to time.

Let’s see what Jesus had to say about mourning. I invite you to turn with me to Matthew 5:4 as we hear from Christ’s words together.

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

Jesus is speaking through these beatitudes on what a truly blessed life looks like from His perspective. And Jesus says these surprising words, “Blessed are those who mourn.”

Why would a blessed life be a life that mourns?

I think it’s because God is looking for people that are real. God doesn’t want people to put on a happy face when it is a time to mourn.

The Lord is not a fakey God. He wants people that have emotions and who offer those emotions over to Him. Just reading the book of Psalms, as we are invited to next month for our Book of the Month, we can see this very clearly. We are to bring all our emotions over to the Lord and offer them as a prayer.

There is something that is powerful when mourning takes place. On one level, this is true when it comes to the loss of loved ones.

My Brother David’s cat passed away this week. Mourning is appropriate and our mourning invites God’s conforming presence to give us a special grace in those times. Our God is the God of all comfort.

But I believe that while this form of mourning is important, in all likelihood, Jesus is speaking of a broader understanding of mourning.

Jesus statement of blessing, according to Christian Commentator Leander Keck, is **most likely referring to the mourning of lament that characterizes God’s true people when they consider the state of God’s people and of all of people of the world.**

A fitting Psalm that relates to this beatitude is Ps. 119:136, which reads **“Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law in not obeyed.”[[1]](#footnote-1)** The psalmist was mourning the lack of faithfulness within God’s people.

Jesus lived out this beatitude as He did all the others. He was called ‘a man of sorrows.’

It is an interesting paradox, because Jesus was and is the most joyful Person ever. But you can be joyful and at the time also be someone that is easily moved to mourn over sin and its effects. This is Jesus.

And while Jesus was sinless and never mourned over his own sin, Jesus mourned over the sin and brokenness of the world.

When Jesus was coming into Jerusalem before his sufferings, He said **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”**

And so we see Jesus mourning over the spiritual condition of the people that were missing recognizing their Savior.

Jesus also mourned His disciples falling asleep when He told them to watch and pray with them.

Jesus mourned over all that He knew He would endure in his crucifixion and everything that led up to it. He even prayed to the Father, if there is any way that this is not needed, please take this from me. Yet not my will, but Your will be done.

\*The Pharisees, in contrast, where not mournful over sin. Instead, they enjoyed looking down on others that they viewed as less holy them themselves.

There is so much brokenness in the world today. We think of the violence in our cities. We consider all the brokenness in relationships and all the forms of abuse. We think of people being taken advantaged of and mistreated.

We consider nations where Christianity is illegal and even states in America where in-person worship is discouraged or against the law.

We think about the brokenness and division that people are feeling as people try to divide people based on the color of their skin.

And not only this, but there is much brokenness within God’s people. Christians that are struggling with bitterness and unforgiveness. And we could go on and on.

\*Jesus is saying that we are blessed to mourn over these things. The Lord does not want us to be unmoved to struggles around us and within us.

Instead, He invites us to mourn, to grieve, to lament. And friends, mourning is meant to be an important expression of prayer.

So as followers of Jesus, we are to follow His example in this beatitude and invite mourning to be a regular part of our lives. This doesn’t mean that joy isn’t to be our baseline emotion.

It does mean, however, that we can be joyful always and yet still be people who choose to mourn regularly as well.

Part of living out our life in Christ is learning to practice mourning.

There is so much brokenness in this world, so it won’t take long. But I ask that you would ask the Lord to let you feel His heart of mourning over one form of brokenness in this world. And let it lead you to prayer.

Always remember that our prayers release God’s power over the brokenness in this world. So mourning is more than ok, it is encouraged.

Mourn over those who do not know Christ. This is an expression of prayer for them. Our prayers help open hearts to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Mourn over the church that has been converted by the world, rather than seeking to convert the world. Our prayers draw pastors and congregations back to Jesus.

Later this month, on Saturday the 26th, there is a group going to Washington DC to take part in a Prayer March. The Prayer march is a response to the brokenness in our nation right now.

**And the Lord promises us that ‘those who mourn will be comforted.’**

**Our God is the God of all comfort**. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter. And our Triune God promises of that all of our mourning will eventually be overwhelmed by His perfect comfort and peace. Whether this happens soon or when we see Jesus face-to-face, we will be **fully comforted**.

*But in the meantime, may we as God’s people not run from mourning, but view mourning as an important part of our Christian growth and as a form of prayer for God’s powerful hand to bring healing within our broken world.*

FOR MOURNING IS TO BE AN INSTRUMENT THAT RELEASES THE HOLY SPIRIT’S PRESENCE INTO BROKEN SITUATIONS AND BROKEN PEOPLE.

Again, as Lamentations teaches us, **God’s compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”**

**The Lord will bring order out of chaos. The Lord will comfort His people. And so may we choose to practice mourning and may we always mourn as people filled with this hope. Amen.**

Let’s pray…

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A4&version=NIV>

Keck, Leander E. *The New Interpreter's Bible: Matthew - Mark (volume 8)*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Carson, D.A. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: with the New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995.

1. Carson, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)