



Ministry of the Word

*Wednesday 2020*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:4

**Subject:** Part 16 – Kingly Comfort

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

You would be forgiven if you thought that this beatitude is saying, “Happy are the unhappy”. If this is what we thought then we would have to ask, “*What kind of sorrow can bring us blessing and joy?*” You can see how some might misapply this to those who mourn the loss of a loved one. Certainly some might indeed be happy if they were standing to inherit a lot! But for most people, not devoid of a bit of humanity, it would be cruel to say such a thing, that in all your grief there is joy. When we look at this statement Jesus made, it seems like a contradiction. So what do mourning and happiness have in common here? How could they have any common ground? Here we see Jesus preaching about His Kingdom. He doesn’t speak like any other King which would speak about borders, ethnic rights, military support, resources or even material wealth. King Jesus ignores politics, even the philosophies of what ordinary sovereignties would concern themselves with. Jesus, King of Kings, gets to the point, He goes right into the character of its citizens! G. Campbell Morgan wrote: “*Character creates conditions which result in happiness*” (*The Gospel According to Matthew; p.42*). We need to realise that the Christian life, according to Jesus, is not all joy and laughter. Some think that if you are Spirit filled you go around with a smile on your face and you should be all bubbly? But that’s not Biblical, is it?



To comprehend what mourning and happiness have in common, so to speak, we need to understand what is meant here by mourning. *Who is mourning and what are they mourning about? What has caused them such grief, that they need to be comforted? Finally, what is the comfort that is given as well as who brings it to them?* To fully understand this beatitude, just like the last one, to understand the fullness of what Jesus was teaching His disciples, we need to break it down, but what is more, we need to personally apply it.

We know of a general sorrow. The kind that is normal, acceptable. In fact, being able to grieve is very important because it allows pain and emotion to be released. It is a gift of God because to hold all that emotion without any outlet would be poison to your emotional system but then it would also be dangerous to you physically because all that stress would play havoc right down to a cellular level. Being able to grieve and cry, actually permits the healing process, it allows a way for the pain, remorse, sorrow, stress, and all the other emotions that comes with mourning, out. Abraham wept when his wife died, so was his right. Jesus even wept when He heard about Lazarus. It's a natural and healthy thing to do.

*What does mourning mean here?*

The word found here for mourning in the Greek is *penthountes (p-n-th-o-u-n-t-es)*. It is the strongest possible word that expresses deep sorrow, a broken heart, profound grief. It's a desperate and helpless sorrow. This strong word for mourning here, is reserved for mourning for the dead, that passionate lament for one you so deeply loved and lost. This verb is present tense with a continuous action, so it is saying 'the ones who are continually mourning are the ones continually being comforted.'

The New Testament uses nine different verbs which the Greek language uses to describe grief. The fact that there are nine different verbs goes to show that grief is part of life and humanity, and that there are different types.

This particular word is used of Jacob's grief when he believed that his son Joseph was dead as we read in Genesis 37. It is also used in Mark 16 verse 10 when they mourned and wept over the death of Jesus. You will also find it in Revelation 18 when the evil system bewails the



death of its commerce in Babylon's destruction during the time of tribulation. This word is a deep inner pain. We see it in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51.

There is another sorrow and grief we find in the bible which is over the absence of God. We see this in the Psalms when the Psalmist through the tears, cried out. For example Psalm 42 verse 9 which says -

*I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"*

Even Psalm 22 verses 1 and 2, which was actually partially the cry of Christ from the Cross  
*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.*

The Psalmist had tears of loneliness as we read in Psalm 42 verse 3 which says -

*My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"*

Yes, loneliness is reason enough to cry, and many of God's children feel lonely and estranged from God. Lots of people throughout the bible cried. Hezekiah mourned when he knew that he was going to die in 2 Kings 20v3. Jeremiah had tears of disappointment in Jeremiah 9v1. A Father had tears of love for his son to be delivered from a demon in Mark 9. Paul had tears of care and anxiety in Acts 20v31. Even Timothy had tears of discouragement in 2 Timothy 1v3&4. We see time and again, how people cried and grieved throughout the bible for different reasons. Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 is very clear that there is a time to be born, a time to die, a time to laugh and a time to cry.

There is an unhealthy mourning. For example, when someone can't let somebody go.

There is another kind of weeping, mourning, that is different from this. It is not proper or even appropriate mourning. You may think that's a harsh statement, but let's look at the bible for examples. Turn to 1 Kings 21 and it is the account of Ahab who coveted Naboth's vineyard so much he couldn't even eat.



There is also an illicit sorrow, what I mean by this is, when someone is grieving over guilt as if being very remorseful, sorry or extremely mournful is going to atone for their sin, for what they have done, for example in Matthew 27 verse 3 it says -

*“Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”*

All these are types of sorrow which cause people to grieve or mourn differently. The general attitude of a lot of people to this beatitude is ‘this beatitude is just so true, you know, when you weep you feel a lot better’, and there is a lot of truth to this. In fact there is an old poem that goes like this -

*“I walked a mile with Pleasure; She chatted all the way.  
But left me none the wiser for all she had to say.  
I walked a mile with Sorrow! And ne’er a word said she;  
But, oh! The things I learned from her, when Sorrow walked with me.”*

Sorrow can and does teach us a lot but this isn't what Jesus is teaching. He is not teaching about the sorrow of the world whether it is illicit or licit. He is speaking about ‘godly sorrow’ which is very different to all the others. So what is Godly Sorrow? Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 7:10.

*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted;  
but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

Here Paul is telling us that there is a difference between the sorrow of the world and godly sorrow. You can cry about your problems, you can mourn and grieve about situations, loss, disappointments, discouragements, whatever it is, but that is worldly sorrow, not necessarily wrong, but it doesn't bring you life.

Only Godly sorrow can bring life. What is Godly sorrow? It is sorrow over sin, which brings repentance, that leads to Salvation. Godly sorrow, is mourning over our sin as well as the sins of others! Conviction of sin (we are poor in spirit) brings contrition for sin (we mourn over our sin).



*Who is mourning?* It is the person who is poor in spirit, who by the work of the Holy Spirit is being convicted of their true condition before God. It is the person who mourns over sin, it is the person aware of the weight of their sin, and the weight of sin in general. They are aware of failure, limitation and brokenness. They are aware of their distance from God. This person realises that they have grieved God and are conscious that they are unable to take upon themselves the ideals of King Jesus. They also need help from above. Godly sorrow is linked to repentance, and of course, repentance is linked to sin. But the person mourning over sin, is not necessarily just a sinner coming to Jesus. Remember, Jesus was primarily teaching his disciples that day on the mount. And this sermon is still for His disciples today.

Often people can be sorry for when they don't get what they want, some are sorry when they are caught out in their sin, but not repentant. Some feel the guilt but don't want to do anything about it. No! Godly sorrow is being aware of the weight of sin and also being sorry because you are a sinner. You are therefore not mourning over circumstances, but over sin.

We have seen it already, firstly poor in spirit, recognising our spiritually bankruptcy, and that's the intellectual part, now here in verse 4 we see the emotional part of the process. Because you recognise and are convinced of your spiritually bankruptcy, you know you have nothing and can do nothing, you have no resources, no capacity to help yourself. This is where entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven begins. You can't ever enter into the Kingdom without it and you should never lose that sense as a Child of God. It is at this point that your emotion takes over, and you mourn sin.

Today it seems that the whole question of the weight of sin is totally avoided, but the sole purpose of Christ going to the Cross was for all our sin. Past, yes, but also present and future. That means, you still are vulnerable to sinning. I know that seems obvious, but a lot of Christians seem oblivious to the fact that when they sin, it is still very serious. Sin is very serious, *don't you think?*

As believers, we can be lulled into a false sense of security by the enemy of our souls, by treating sin lightly or even flippantly. We can lose our sensitivity to the fact that sin even for the believer can damage our relationship with God. Our prized relationship above all others



should be our first priority. And sin can block that relationship if we are not careful and sensitive to it. A little white lie, here or there... oh yes... it all mounts up, unless we deal with our sin, we take a step back from the throne. *Does this mean God loves us less?* Absolutely not. *Does this mean we are not saved?* Absolutely not. What does it mean? If we don't deal with our sin seriously, then we are not in a rich relationship with God as He wants us to be.

We, as believers, can struggle to have sincere sorrow, to sincerely mourn over our sin as well the sin of others. We live in a broken world. Because of our fellowship with God in Christ, we ought to share the Saviour's outlook on sin, the pain and the sorrow that it brings. Part of the problem can often lie in our refusal to accept God's revelation about sin. God hates it. Full stop. Big ones, little ones, whatever in between. God hates sin. We excuse it.

James 4 verse 8 says

***“Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners. Purity your hearts, ye double minded”***

Then it continues in verse 9

***“Be afflicted and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up”.***

We don't live in this brokenness alone any more, now that we are believers in Christ. But as believers we need to start grieving over sin instead of laughing, instead of treating it with frivolity and silliness that does go on. Now you may think that is harsh but just look at what you are laughing at. *Do you laugh when you see evil, for example, if it is portrayed on your t.v.? Do you laugh at what you did in the past when what you did was wrapped up in sin? Do you laugh when you hear about someone else doing or saying something evil? Do you laugh at jokes that are ungodly?*

We need to be careful, because it is so easy. Sin is pleasurable and Proverbs 2 verse 14 says that some *‘delight in the perverseness of evil’* or as 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 12 says *‘rejoice in iniquity’*. Now one could say that it is only the unbeliever, the sinner, but let us get real now, let us really get challenged and ask ourselves honestly, do we do that? I'm not against having a laugh, a bit of craic at all, that is not the issue. But, the issue is, *are we out of balance, have we lost sight of the weight of sin? Do we make excuses?...* How often have we said *‘well*



*that's how things are today, or well I wouldn't be into that myself but... ah sure, it's not a big deal...*, well it was only a little sin... but sure I couldn't tell the truth, it would have hurt them if I really told them '.. The list goes on... I know, I've done it myself...

There are things that hinder our mourning of sin, things that begin to harden the heart towards it. Firstly is - the love of sin, which if we are practising a sinful thing, it often stops us from being repentant, we may be somewhat sorry, but we will go back to it.

Secondly - Conceit. We've heard it a hundred times from unbelievers, *'well I'm not that bad, I'm grand.'* But remember no matter how big or small your sin is, Jesus died for it.

Thirdly - Despair. You do something and think, God can't forgive me this, not again. But that dismisses if not undervalues God's power and the finished work on the cross. Regardless of how bad you think you are, God's grace and forgiveness is able to not only reach you but also change you, if that is what you want.

Fourthly - Presumption. Presuming that everything is o.k. because of God's grace, but that is cheaping God's grace. Yes, Jesus died for all your sins, Yes, God is Gracious and merciful, Yes, the Holy Spirit is at work, and will help you, but here is what people miss out when they presume... Philippians 2 verse 12 and 13-

***Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***

This isn't about a works based faith, but because of faith we can work it out. Many think that the Holy Spirit will do all the work, and they do not take responsibility for their actions, nor the time required to do a temperature check on their relationship with God.

Procrastination can also hinder mourning:, *'I'll get my act together one day. I'll start tomorrow morning'*. But remember what James 4 verse 14 says -

***"whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."***



Another thing that can hinder people from mourning is actually laughter. They want to just have a laugh. Life is serious enough. They don't deal with the reality of sin in life, never mind the reality of sin in their own life. *Does this apply to believers?* Absolutely. They don't like when people get 'legalistic' which is often what they say, when they hear someone talking about sin. It's uncomfortable. They think, if they don't say, - *'Let's talk about love, let's talk about all the nice promises of God and all the things that God can give'*, instead of bowing their heads and hearts and being honest before God. Be sober before God. He is Holy. 1 Peter 1 verse 16 says - *'because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*

If you have any of these hindrances, or any other, take them to the cross, look at them in the light of Christ and what he has done for you, we need to face our sin. If you are unsure about sin, study it in Scripture. This is for the believer. Remember in Psalm 51. David speaks about sin in a very clear manner and the seriousness of it. In verse 3 he said 'My sin is ever before me'. Even the prophet Isaiah as we looked at last time said in Chapter 6, 'O woe is me, for I am an unclean man. I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips. Paul said 'I'm a chief of sinners'.

John MacArther said *'Sin tramples on God's laws. Sin slights his love. It grieves His spirit. It spurns His blessedness. Sin affects us drastically. It makes us naked. It makes us impure. It robs our robe and our crown. It spoils our glory. It leaves us in filthy rags and filthy garments. Made in God's image, we become like beasts that perish.'*

To be aware that you are spiritually poor is one thing; it is quite another thing to grieve and mourn over sin. One might easily confess but to be of a contrite heart, to see the seriousness of the situation is another thing entirely. We need to pray for a heart that is contrite, asking God to help us understand sin in the way He sees it and mourn for our sin.

There are godly tears to be shed and for many, we who are believers, have forgotten to weep. Remember Jesus wept over the sins of others, over the bitter consequences in judgment and death, over the city that would not receive Him. We seem to complain more about what is happening in the world than weeping over the evil that is in it. When you read through the Bible you will see how godly men wept over the reaction of people to the Law of



God, Turn to Psalm 119:136 and let's just read what the psalmist says about how he reacted to sin, that's Psalm 119 verse 136 and it says –

*Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because men do not keep Your law.*

Ezekiel heard what God had to say about his faithful people who God described as those who wept, turn to Ezekiel 9:4. And it says –

*“and the Lord said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”*

It's an interesting chapter, because here we see how God was going to pour out His wrath and judgement on the people because of sin, beginning from within His sanctuary. It didn't begin from out there in the world, no, judgement begins with the household of God.

1 Peter 4 verses 17 to 19 - *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”*

Paul in the New Testament wrote the following in Philippians 3:18, that's Philippians 3 verse 18, says:

*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*

Paul was no stranger to the serious problems that were and are in the church. If those who are called by that Name would live in obedience, what a difference it would make to the church. It is not only for the sins of others we should weep, but we have our own sins, *have they ever caused us any grief?* Was Ezra mistaken to pray and make confession as we read in Ezra 10:1 or Paul wrong to groan what he did in Romans 7:24 or to write to the sinful church in Corinth what we read in 1 Corinthians 5:12 and in 2 Corinthians 12:21.

We can and do make much of grace, and thereby make light of sin. There is not enough sorrow for sin among us and it has resulted in the abuse of grace. We should experience more godly grief as Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 7:8-12. David Brainerd was a missionary to the



American Indians, entered into his journal of 18<sup>th</sup> October 1740 reads, *“In my morning devotions my soul was exceedingly melted, and bitterly mourned over my exceeding sinfulness and vileness”*. You may ask, ‘well what was he up too, to be so mournful’, but is that really the right question here? Answer is no... We need to be like this over sin. Tears like these, are the things which God stores in his bottle as we read of in Psalm 56:8 -

*‘You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?’*

*What will happen when we comprehend the weight of our sin, and mourn over it?*

Jesus answers this question in verse 4 - we will be comforted. The emphatic pronoun *autoi* is used here, which means “blessed are they who continue to mourn for they alone shall be comforted.” It is only the mourners who know the comfort of God. It is only those who mourn for sin who know what it is to have their tears dried by the loving hand of Jesus Christ. They shall be comforted, *parakale* from which we get *paraclete*, the one called alongside to help, the one that Jesus referred to, the comforter. Isaiah 6 verse 1 and 2 spoke of the coming Messiah who will ‘comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion.’

The world has its own ways of dealing with sorrow, mourning, grief, and pain. Some of the main strategies is avoidance, numb it, mask it, deny it, defy it. People in the world want happiness, so they hide from their pain and the reality of it. But lying about it, doesn’t make it go away!

But Jesus says if you mourn about your sin, He will provide comfort. Such mourners, who bewail their own sinfulness, will be comforted by the only comfort which can relieve their distress, namely the free forgiveness of God. ‘*Consolation*’ according to the Old Testament prophets was to be one of the offices of the Messiah. He was to be ‘the Comforter’ who would ‘bind up the broken hearted’ see Isaiah 61:1 and 40:1. That is why godly men like Simeon were said to be looking and longing *‘for the consolation of Israel’* Luke 2:25. And Christ does pour oil into our wounds and speaks peace to our sore, scarred consciences.

The Bible tells us God is a comforter which we can read in Psalm 30 verse 5 -



*“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning”*

Psalm 50:15 -

*“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”*

Isaiah 55:6&7 -

*Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*

We see it over and over again, the comfort that God gives us. He helps us, he hears our cry, he assists us, he meets our needs, always there interceding for us, beseeching, admonishing, consoling, and sympathizing. He encourages us, strengthens us, forgives us, and restores us, and that adds up to comfort. Our mourning is met with comfort. Jesus said before He left earth that He would send the comforter. *Who is that?* The Holy Spirit, He is the Spirit of Comfort. God, the God of all comfort is there for us. God also uses other believers and their ministry to comfort us. In the final state of glory, Christ’s comfort will be complete, for only then will sin be no more and *‘God will wipe away every tear from their eyes’* as we read in Revelation 7:17.

When we are comforted, then we are blessed, then we can truly say we are happy. This is the link between mourning and happiness in the bible. Psalm 32 says Blessed is the man who mourns, because his transgressions are forgiven, his sins are covered. The rest of the world will live with guilt, with no relief, but for the children of God, we live knowing complete forgiveness and acceptance of the true and living God.

This seems so foreign to our way of thinking but we see the challenge that is found here in this beatitude. The way to true happiness must come in a radical shift in thinking. The problem is sin; we must see ourselves in proper light; we must see the world as it really is—and mourn sincerely. When we understand our sin and the sinful circumstances of this world, we can invite comfort, *how?* We go to Jesus. The presence of Jesus provides comfort and hope. We see the blessing if we let the Spirit of God do His work in our minds and hearts, we won’t become sin hardened or excusers, or minimisers of sin. We will understand and deeply



appreciate the Cross of Christ and the wonderful salvation and blessing God bestows on His redeemed. We don't need the Hollywood tears, the act of sorrow. We need the Holy Spirit anointing and moving in our hearts and minds so that we see the goodness, the grace and the mercy of a Holy God that would have anything at all to do with us. If you don't feel you have it, pray. Seek God today.

The poor in spirit submits to both King and throne. The Christian anticipates comfort. The comfort comes from Christ, the comfort provides relief, consolation, peace. Jesus said, *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27). The Christian knows there is a God who will right wrong; the Christian knows that God will wipe away our tears. We do all our mourning in this life; but as William MacDonald so eloquently wrote; *"for unbelievers, today's grief is only a foretaste of eternal sorrow"*. Our comfort is embedded in the assurance of our forgiveness and acceptance by God in Christ.

AMEN!

Amen.