

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

Matthew 5:4

Jesus's Secret to a Happy Life – Week 2

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Every person is on a happiness quest. We all want to be happy, and we are trying to find it. We all want to live the fullest, most meaningful, most fulfilling life possible.
2. Yet many people are not happy. Over twenty percent of people in the United States struggle with depression or anxiety.
3. Maybe the reason for that is that people are searching for happiness in the wrong places. We all think that the secret to happiness is the Ps -- pleasure, possessions, position, power, prestige, and people-pleasing. But history and personal experience tell us the things of this world don't satisfy. Some of the most unhappy people have all the Ps in the world.
4. The good news is that Jesus knows that you are on a happiness quest, and He talked a lot about it. In fact, Jesus' most famous sermon is called the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), and in the introduction of that sermon He explains the secret to happiness. This section of Jesus' sermon is called the beatitudes, and we are in a sermon series right now studying it. The word "beatitude" comes from the Latin word "beatis," which means blessed or happy.
5. Let's read the beatitudes.

6. Matthew 5:3-10

- 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn,

for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the humble,
for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of
righteousness,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

7. The big idea of the beatitudes is this: Happiness is not found in the things of this world, but in a right relationship with God. In the beatitudes Jesus isn't just explaining how to find happiness, but how to not find happiness. Happiness isn't found seeking through the Ps – pleasure, possessions, power, prestige, people-pleasing, etc. You can have all those things and still be miserable. Happiness is found in a right relationship with God. And the beatitudes describe the qualities of a person who is in a right relationship with God.
8. Last week we looked at the first beatitude in Mt 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” To be poor in spirit is to acknowledge your spiritual poverty. The poor in spirit believe four things: 1) I am a sinner. 2) I don't deserve to go to heaven. 3) I can't earn heaven (I'm helpless to save myself). 4) Jesus can and will save me. They are happy

because they have the kingdom of heaven, or eternal life. They have salvation.

9. Today we are going to look at the second beatitude.

10. **Matthew 5:4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

II. THE PATTERN

1. Remember that every beatitude follows the same pattern.

There's a promise, a condition, and an explanation. In other words, each Beatitude says (1) you will be happy, (2) if you do this, (3) for this reason. So the pattern in the second beatitude is as follows:

i. The promise: "Blessed are." Remember the word "blessed" means happy. The promise is that God wants you to be happy, you can be happy, you will be happy if you take this prescription.

ii. The condition: "Those who mourn." You will be happy if you mourn. We have to find out what Jesus meant by that.

iii. The reason: "for they will be comforted." You will be happy if you mourn because you will be comforted. We need to find out what that means too.

2. So, what did Jesus mean? It sounds like Jesus is saying, "Happy are the sad."

3. To get to the meaning of this beatitude, I want to ask four questions.

III. FOUR QUESTIONS FOR COMPREHENSION

1. **What kind of mourning is Jesus talking about?**

i. The Greek word for "mourn" is *pentheo*. It means "grief or sorrow that is usually expressed by tears."ⁱ

ii. What kind of mourning is Jesus talking about in this verse? In this verse Jesus is talking about a specific kind of mourning. Let's call it "gospel mourning."

iii. **Gospel mourning is being deeply sorry for your sins.**

iv. This same Greek word for mourning in the beatitudes is also used to describe mourning for sin in a couple of other verses.

1. **1 Corinthians 5:2** And you are arrogant! Shouldn't you be filled with grief (*pentheo*) and remove from your congregation the one who did this?

a. The church in Corinth was tolerating gross sexual misconduct among its members, and Paul told them not only should they not be tolerating it, it should fill them with grief; they should be mourning over the sin in their church.

2. **James 4:8-10** James 4:8-10 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn (*pentheo*) and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

a. Here James is explaining how to draw close to God, and the key, he says, is to mourn for your sin.

v. The first beatitude – poverty of spirit – is acknowledging your sin. This second beatitude is being sorry for your sin. We see these two side by side in the book of Isaiah.

- vi. **Isaiah 57:15 (NIV)** For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.
- vii. Two different terms are used in this passage – lowly in spirit, and contrite. To be lowly in spirit is poverty of spirit – it is acknowledging your sinfulness. Contrition is being sorry for your sin; that’s the same as gospel mourning.
- viii. So, Jesus is talking about gospel mourning – being deeply sorry for your sin.
- ix. In other words, Jesus isn’t talking about all mourning. There are three kinds of mourning that Jesus isn’t talking about:
 - 1. Material mourning. This is when you mourn for outward things like loss, failure, rejection, etc. This is not wrong, but it’s not the kind of mourning Jesus is talking about. Gospel mourning is spiritual.
 - 2. Sinful mourning. This is when you mourn because you can’t fulfill your sinful desires. David’s son Amnon mourned because he couldn’t have his sister, Tamar (2 Sam 13:2). King Ahab mourned because he wanted his neighbor’s property, but his neighbor wouldn’t sell it to him (1 Ki 21:4). In both cases, their mourning led to even greater sins. Amnon raped his sister, and King Ahab murdered his neighbor and stole his property. Gospel mourning is not mourning because you can’t fulfill your sinful desires, but because you have sinned.

3. Hopeless mourning. This is when you mourn for your sin, but you don't believe that you can be forgiven. This is what happened to Judas. Judas's biggest mistake was not betraying Christ; we all do that. We are all terrible sinners. Judas's biggest mistake was that he didn't think Christ could forgive him, so his mourning led to suicide. Gospel mourning is mourning for sin, but it is accompanied by faith in Christ's atonement for forgiveness.
- x. **William Barclay** says that main thought of this Beatitude is: "Blessed is the man who is desperately sorry for his own sin and his own unworthiness."ⁱⁱ
 - xi. Gospel mourning is sometimes called brokenness, or a broken and contrite heart. This is what David experienced after he sinned against Bathsheba, and then returned to God.
 - xii. **Psalm 51:17** The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart, God.
 - xiii. It's important to know that gospel mourning is not a slight sadness. It is intense sorrow. In the Bible there are nine different Greek words that express the idea of grief. The word Jesus used in this beatitude, *pentheo*, is the most severe.
 - xiv. **Jerry Bridges** "In this Beatitude, mourning is not just a touch of sadness but deep heartfelt grief, accompanied by tears, over one's sin."ⁱⁱⁱ
 - xv. Do you remember the story of Joseph, Jacob's son? His brother's hated him because he was his father's favorite, so they sold him into slavery and told their father that

he was killed by a wild animal. The Bible says that Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son for many days (Gen 37:34). The Greek word used for mourn there is *pentheo* (in the Septuagint).

- xvi. Or do you remember when Christ died? Mk 16:10 says His followers were mourning and weeping. The word used for mourning there is *pentheo*.
- xvii. In other words, gospel mourning is so intense that it's on the same level as mourning for the dead. Imagine how you would feel if someone you really loved died; imagine the sense of sorrow you would experience; imagine how much you would cry. I remember when Lydia's mother died in 2017. It was completely unexpected; she seemed to be in good health. I still remember that evening when we told the kids. All eight of us just sat in the living room and just wept together. That's the kind of mourning Jesus is talking about.
- xviii. **William Barclay** "The Greek word for 'to mourn', used here, is the strongest word for mourning in the Greek language. It is the word which is used for mourning for the dead, for the passionate lament for one who was loved... It is defined as the kind of grief which takes such a hold on a man that it cannot be hid. It is not only the sorrow which brings an ache to the heart; it is the sorrow which brings the unrestrainable tears to the eyes."^{iv}
- xix. Another way to understand gospel mourning is to think about its opposite – hard-heartedness.

1. The nation of Israel is described as having a heart of stone because they refused to listen to the prophets (Ezek 3:7; 36:26).
 2. Pharaoh had a hard heart because he refused to obey God (Ex 7:13).
 3. The disciples had a hard heart because they refused to believe the witnesses that Jesus was risen (Mk 16:14).
 4. A person with a hard heart is like a rock. A rock is insensitive and inflexible. A person with a hard heart is insensitive – they not sorry for their sin. And they are inflexible – they refuse to change and submit to God’s will.
- xx. One of the best examples of gospel mourning in the Bible is Peter after he denied Christ. Before Christ died Peter said he would never deny Christ; in fact, he would die for Christ. But Jesus told him that that very night he would betray Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. Sure enough, after Jesus was arrested, Peter denied being Christ’s disciple three times. After the third time, he heard the rooster crow and remembered Christ’s words, and it says that “he went outside and wept bitterly (Mt 26:75).”
- xxi. We can see **four marks of gospel mourning** in Peter’s story:
1. Sorrow for sin. He wasn’t apathetic or complacent or uncaring about it. He regretted it.
 2. Deep sorrow. He wept bitterly. This was not mere sadness. This was deep remorse. This was *pentheo*.

3. Faith in God's forgiveness. Unlike Judas, Peter didn't think that his sin was greater than God's love and mercy and grace and forgiveness. After the crucifixion, Peter continued to meet with other believers. And after the resurrection, he was reconciled to Christ. He believed in the mercy and grace of God.
4. A changed life. Peter changed from a cowardly Christ-denier to a fearless preacher and eventually a martyr. True gospel mourning leads to a changed life.

xxii. What did Jesus mean by mourning? He was talking about gospel mourning, or being deeply sorry for your sins.

2. Why do mourners mourn?

- i. Why are mourners so sorry for their sins?
- ii. The answer is that they see the sinfulness of sin. They see clearly what their sin is, and what it does – both to themselves and to others.
- iii. What makes sin so terrible? There are **three reasons sin is so terrible** (see Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes*):
 1. It is an act of hostility and enmity. When you sin, you act like God's enemy. You may not mean to offend God, but when you sin you are interfering with God's purpose and plan for your life and for the world. For example, if you commit adultery, you may not mean to offend God; you were just satisfying your lust. But by committing adultery you are interfering with God's plan and purpose for you and your partner and sin, as well as both of your

families. When you sin, you are rebelling against God. You are fighting against Him. You are interfering with and hindering resisting His agenda. Your sin makes you an enemy of God. This is why sin is an act of hostility. It offends God. This is why the Bible says that God hates sin (Deut 12:31), and that sin grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30).

2. It is the highest form of ingratitude. Rm 12:1 says that the right response to the mercies of God is total dedication. But sin is the total opposite. Sin is taking one of God's gifts and using it to offend Him. There's a good example of this in the Old Testament. When God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, He caused the people of Egypt to give them their silver and gold. The Israelites left Egypt wealthy! What do they do with the gold that God gave them? While Moses was up on the mountain getting the Ten Commandments, the people used the gold and made an idol – a golden calf – and worshiped it. That's ingratitude. **Thomas Watson** said, "The sinner takes the jewels of God's mercies and makes use of them to sin." Sinning is taking God's blessings and using them to offend and hurt God.
3. It deprives you of the things you need most. When you sin you lose God's presence and blessing. Sin leads to suffering. It hurts your health; it hurts your relationships; it hurts your finances; but worst of all, it hurts your relationship with God (Is 59:2). Sin separates you from God. If you are not a Christian, your sins will separate you from God for all eternity.

If you are a Christian, your sin causes you to lose fellowship with God, and there's nothing worse than that.

- iv. This is why mourners mourn. They see the sinfulness of their sin. The danger of sin. The horror of sin.

3. How does mourning lead to happiness?

- i. **Matthew 5:4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- ii. Mourning leads to happiness because "they will be comforted." How so?
- iii. The reason that gospel mourning leads to happiness is that it leads to repentance, and repentance is necessary for salvation.
- iv. Repentance – the decision to turn from sin and surrender to Christ as Lord -- is essential in Christianity.
 - 1. It was the subject of Christ's first sermon (Mk 4:17).
 - 2. It was the first command that Christ ever gave (Mk 4:17).
 - 3. Jesus said the reason that He came to earth was to call sinners to repentance (Lk 5:32).
- v. Why is repentance so important? Because it is necessary for eternal life.
- vi. **Luke 13:5** No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.
- vii. To receive salvation, the Bible says you must do two things: You must trust in Jesus, and you must repent. It's really one thing – penitent faith. In other words, we are saved by faith, but it is penitent faith. It is the faith that trusts Christ not only as Savior, but as King.

- viii. And the Bible says that gospel mourning is what leads to repentance.
- ix. **2 Corinthians 7:10** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death.
- x. Repentance is necessary for eternal life, and the person who repents is the one who mourns for sin.
- xi. The comfort spoken of here is the comfort of God's forgiveness. It is the comfort of salvation. Of reconciliation with God. Of the gift of eternal life.
- xii. In other words, the person who mourns is the person who rep
- xiii. The first two beatitudes are intimately connected. Being poor in spirit is recognizing your sinfulness and helpless to save yourself. It is intellectual. Gospel mourning is the emotional side of the coin. It is being sorry for your sin. Both are essential for forgiveness and salvation.
- xiv. **Kent Hughes** "Spiritual mourning is necessary for salvation. No one is truly a Christian who has not mourned over his or her sins. You cannot be forgiven if you are not sorry for your sins."^v
- xv. And repentance isn't merely necessary for eternal life; it is also necessary for a Christian to be restored to right relationship with God anytime you sin. You must repent to be restored to fellowship with God. And Jesus is saying that true repentance flows from a heart that mourns for sin.

4. How can I apply this to my life?

- i. There are two major applications to this beatitude:

- ii. First, if you are already a Christian, then you must mourn for sin.
 1. Many Christians are stuck in sin; they have sinful addictions that they can't seem to break. The cure is to mourn for your sin. True repentance is the result of gospel mourning. Only until you truly weep over your sins are you ready to repent. Until you hate your sin, until it breaks your heart, until it crushes your spirit, you will not repent.
 2. Mourning for sin is a sign of spiritual health. Some people think that if you are filled with the Spirit then you should be happy all the time. But that's not so; you shouldn't be joyful when you sin. You should mourn.
 3. **Kent Hughes** "True Christianity manifests itself in what we cry over and what we laugh about. So often we laugh at the things that we should weep over and weep over the things we should laugh at. In our heart of hearts, what do we weep about? What do we laugh about?"^{vi}
 4. Unhealthy Christians take pleasure in sin. Unhealthy Christians laugh at sin. Healthy, mature Christians mourn over their sin.
 5. Christian, when was the last time you wept over your sin?
 6. Consider the sinfulness of sin:
 - a. God hates sin.
 - b. It grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit.
 - c. It separates you from God and causes you to lose His blessing and anointing in your life.

- d. It invokes God's discipline in your life.
 - e. It is so costly that if not for the cross of Christ, you would have to spend eternity in hell.
 - f. It hurts the people that you love.
 - g. It destroys your health, finances, and relationships.
 - h. It robs you of your time, your potential, your future.
 - i. It leads to shame and regret.
7. If you are a Christian, then you should mourn for your sins.
- iii. Second, if you are not yet a Christian, then you must mourn for your sin.
1. If you want to go to heaven, then you need poverty of spirit – you need to acknowledge your sinfulness and helplessness to save yourself; but you also need gospel mourning. You need to be sorry for your sin. You need to weep over your sin. You need to see the sinfulness of sin.
 2. Only then will be willing to repent, and unless you repent, you cannot be saved.
 3. Today, will you mourn for your sins and repent, and trust in Jesus Christ? If you will, God stands ready to forgive you, and give you eternal life, and give you power to overcome sin.

ⁱ R.T. Kendall, The Sermon on the Mount, 29.

ⁱⁱ William Barclay, Matthew, Daily Study Bible.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jerry Bridges, The Blessing of Humility, 18.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Kent Hughes, Sermon on the Mount, Logos.

^{vi} Ibid.