

When I first began preparing this sermon, I realized that I could not preach Matthew 5:4 honestly without being willing to be honest myself.

Jesus says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” For a long time, I thought mourning was something that happened after a funeral or during a major tragedy. But the older I get, the more I realize that mourning takes many forms. Sometimes we mourn a loved one. Sometimes we mourn a broken relationship. Sometimes we mourn a dream that never came true. And sometimes we mourn the battles that take place inside our own minds and hearts.

There was a time in my life when I realized I needed help. I needed a therapist. I needed someone who could help me process what was going on beneath the surface. Like many people, I initially thought I should be able to handle it on my own. After all, I'm a Christian. I'm a pastor. I'm supposed to have answers.

But I discovered that pastors are human too.

Over the years, I have been prescribed different medications as part of my own mental health journey. I have taken Lexapro. I have taken Wellbutrin. I have taken Celexa. I have taken Abilify. Today, I take Lamictal. Those medications are part of my story, not because they solved every problem, but because they became one of the tools God used in caring for me.

The reason I share that is because I know I am not the only person in this room who has struggled. One in five adults experience mental illness each year. That means many of us either have struggled ourselves or love someone who has.

Yet mental health is often surrounded by silence and shame, especially in the church.

The good news is that Jesus does not shame people who struggle. He does not tell mourners to get over it. He does not tell the brokenhearted to try harder. Instead, He makes a promise:

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

This morning, I want us to see that Jesus offers hope for those who are grieving, struggling, anxious, depressed, exhausted, and overwhelmed. Because the gospel is not just for our sins. The gospel is also for our sorrows. And the Savior who speaks these words knows exactly what it means to suffer—and exactly how to comfort those who do.

## *Blessed are Those Who Admit They are Not Okay*

When most people hear the word *blessed*, they do not think about grief, sorrow, or emotional pain. We tend to associate blessing with success, health, prosperity, and happiness. We think of blessing as the promotion we received, the family vacation we enjoyed, the diagnosis that came back clear, or the season of life when everything seems to be going well. Yet Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount by turning our assumptions upside down. In Matthew 5:4 He says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Of all the people Jesus could have called blessed, He chooses those who are grieving. Those who are hurting. Those whose hearts are heavy. Those who know what it means to carry sorrow.

That statement would have been just as surprising in the first century as it is today. In Jesus’ day, mourning was not hidden away. Grief was public and visible. In fact, it was common practice for families to hire professional mourners for funerals. Historical sources tell us that even poor families were expected to hire flute players and professional wailing women who would lead the community in expressing grief. Their role was to make sure mourning was seen and heard. Tears were not considered embarrassing. Sorrow was not something to suppress. People understood that loss should be acknowledged and lamented. The notes on this passage point out that professional mourners and musicians were often present at funerals, creating an atmosphere where grief could be openly expressed.

Our culture often does the opposite. We are uncomfortable with mourning. We want quick fixes, simple answers, and immediate solutions. We tell people to move on, stay positive, and focus on the bright side. We often treat sadness as something to overcome as quickly as possible rather than something to process honestly. Social media has only amplified this tendency. We are constantly surrounded by carefully curated images of people who appear to have everything together. As a result, many people feel pressure to hide their struggles and present a version of themselves that seems strong, successful, and happy.

Unfortunately, that tendency can find its way into the church. Sometimes Christians feel like church is the one place where they cannot admit they are struggling. Someone asks, “How are you doing?” and we instinctively reply, “I’m fine,” even when we are not. We smile when our hearts are breaking. We say everything is okay when we are battling anxiety, depression, loneliness, grief, or exhaustion. Yet Jesus’ words remind us that the kingdom of God is built on honesty, not performance. The people Jesus blesses are not the people who pretend they have it all together. They are the people who are willing to acknowledge their need.

The Scriptures are relentlessly honest about human suffering. The Bible does not present a collection of flawless heroes who never struggled. Instead, it gives us real people wrestling with real pain. David cries out, “Why are you cast down, O my soul?” Elijah, after

experiencing one of the greatest victories of his ministry, became so overwhelmed that he asked God to let him die. Jeremiah became known as the weeping prophet because of his profound sorrow over the condition of God's people. Job sat in ashes after losing his family, his wealth, and his health. Even Jesus Himself stood at the tomb of Lazarus and wept.

Grief, sadness, and emotional struggles are not signs of spiritual failure. They are part of living in a fallen world. Human beings are both physical and spiritual creatures. Because sin has affected all of creation, suffering impacts every dimension of our lives. Sometimes emotional struggles have physical causes. Sometimes they have spiritual causes. Often, they involve a complex combination of both. The Bible does not force us into simplistic explanations. Instead, it acknowledges the reality of our pain while pointing us toward the God who meets us in it.

That is especially important when we consider the mental health challenges facing our world today. Anxiety disorders affect tens of millions of people. Depression continues to be one of the leading causes of disability. Many people sitting in our pews every Sunday are carrying burdens that no one else can see. They may appear fine on the outside while fighting tremendous battles internally. Jesus' words speak directly into that reality. He does not shame those who mourn. He does not tell them to get over it. He does not condemn them for struggling. He calls them blessed.

Why? Because mourning requires honesty. You cannot be comforted until you admit that you need comfort. You cannot receive healing until you acknowledge the wound. You cannot experience grace until you stop pretending you do not need it. The first step toward healing is telling the truth. It is coming before God and saying, "Lord, I am hurting. Lord, I am struggling. Lord, I need You."

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus meets people there. He moves toward the brokenhearted. He draws near to those who are grieving. He welcomes those who are weary and burdened. The Savior who wept, who suffered, and who endured the cross understands our pain better than anyone else. So if you find yourself mourning today—whether because of loss, anxiety, depression, disappointment, or simply the weight of living in a broken world—hear the promise of Jesus. Blessed are those who mourn. Not because mourning itself is good, but because God's comfort is coming. The God who sees every tear has not abandoned you. He is nearer than you know, and He delights in meeting honest people with His healing grace.

## *Blessed are Those Who Seek Help*

The second half of Jesus' promise is just as important as the first. He says, "Blessed are those who mourn, **for they shall be comforted**" (Matthew 5:4). Notice that Jesus does not simply acknowledge the reality of mourning; He also promises comfort. That promise reveals something profound about the heart of God. God never intended for people to suffer alone. From the very beginning, God created us for relationship—with Him and with one another. In Genesis, before sin entered the world, God declared that it was not good for man to be alone. Throughout Scripture, we see a God who draws near to the hurting, surrounds them with His presence, and often ministers His comfort through the people He places around them.

One of the great dangers of grief, depression, anxiety, and emotional suffering is isolation. When people are hurting, they often withdraw. They stop answering calls. They avoid conversations. They convince themselves that no one understands or that no one wants to hear about their struggles. The lies of depression and anxiety can become powerful. The lie that says: "I am not good enough," "No one cares," "No one understands," and "God doesn't love me." When those thoughts take root, people often retreat deeper into loneliness, which only intensifies the pain they are already carrying.

This is why mental health is not merely a private issue; it is a community issue. One in twenty adults experiences a serious mental illness. Among young people, the numbers are equally sobering. Millions of adolescents struggle with anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions. Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among young adults. These statistics remind us that mental health struggles are not rare exceptions. They are present in our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplaces, our families, and our churches. Every congregation includes people who are carrying burdens that others cannot see.

The church has not always known how to respond well to these realities. In some Christian circles, there has been a tendency to reduce every mental health struggle to a purely spiritual problem. If someone is depressed, the answer is assumed to be more prayer. If someone is anxious, they simply need more faith. If someone is struggling emotionally, they must have some hidden sin they need to confess. While spiritual growth and prayer are vital, this approach can unintentionally place additional burdens on people who are already suffering. Some Christians interpret depression and anxiety through an anti-science framework, assuming these struggles are caused only by sin or spiritual weakness. Human beings are both physical and spiritual creatures and suffering often affects both dimensions of our lives.

We live in a fallen world, our bodies can experience illness, our brains can experience imbalances, and our souls can experience deep spiritual struggles. Sometimes depression has physiological causes. Sometimes it is connected to grief, trauma, loss, or prolonged

stress. Sometimes spiritual discouragement is part of the picture. Often multiple factors are present at the same time. The good news is that God cares about all of it. Christians can trust doctors, take medication when needed, seek counseling, and pray for healing at the same time. These are not competing realities; they can work together as part of God's provision for our well-being.

This is one reason I am so excited about what God is doing at First Presbyterian Church Edmond. As we reboot Stephen Ministry and launch a counseling center, we are making a statement about the kind of church we want to be. We want to be a church that reflects the heart of Jesus. We want to be a place where people do not have to hide their struggles. We want to be a place where grief is met with compassion, where anxiety is met with support, and where people can find practical help alongside spiritual encouragement.

In fact, one of the most practical pieces of advice is simply this: “Get help!” Seek support from the church. Seek counseling. Seek medical care when appropriate. Be in community with others. Those recommendations are not signs of weak faith. They are expressions of wisdom and humility. They are acknowledgments that God often works through the people and resources He places around us.

When Jesus says, “They shall be comforted,” He is reminding us that comfort is not something we create for ourselves. It is something we receive. God is the source of all comfort, and one of the primary ways He delivers that comfort is through His people. The church should be the safest place in the world to admit that you are struggling and the safest place in the world to find help. No one should have to walk through grief, depression, anxiety, or despair alone. The promise of Matthew 5:4 is that God sees those who mourn, and through His presence, His people, and His grace, He brings comfort to the brokenhearted.

### **Blessed Are Those Who Bring Their Mourning to Jesus**

The promise of Matthew 5:4 ultimately points us beyond ourselves, beyond our circumstances, and even beyond the help we receive from others. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The question is: where does that comfort ultimately come from? Certainly, God uses people. He uses friends, family members, pastors, Stephen Ministers, counselors, doctors, and support groups. Those are all gifts of His grace. But beneath all of those things is a deeper reality. Our ultimate comfort is not found in a program, a treatment plan, or even in another person. Our ultimate comfort is found in Jesus Christ.

One of the remarkable truths of Christianity is that we worship a Savior who understands suffering from the inside. Every other religion offers a teacher who explains suffering or a

philosophy that attempts to make sense of suffering. Christianity offers something unique. We have a God who entered suffering. We have a Savior who knows grief firsthand.

Isaiah called Him “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Jesus was not insulated from pain. He experienced rejection from His own people. He was betrayed by a close friend. He was abandoned by His disciples. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He described His soul as being overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. On the cross He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Think about what that means for those who struggle with grief, depression, anxiety, or despair. There is never a moment when we can say to Jesus, “You don't understand.” He does understand. He has walked through the valley of suffering. He has felt the weight of grief. He has endured loneliness, rejection, pain, and anguish. When we are at our lowest point, Jesus welcomes us because He has suffered and conquered death. He knows us deeply and invites us to find healing in Him.

This is one of the reasons the gospel is such good news for those who mourn. Jesus does not stand at a distance shouting advice. He enters our pain and walks with us through it.

But there is something even more powerful here. Jesus not only suffered; He suffered for us. At the cross, He took upon Himself the consequences of sin and brokenness. He entered the darkness so that we would never have to face it alone. He was forsaken so that we could be embraced by the Father. As the sermon notes beautifully state, God’s love is so deep that He suffered and was forsaken so we could go to Him in our own suffering and despair.

And yet the cross is not the end of the story.

Three days later, the tomb was empty.

Jesus rose from the dead.

That means that grief does not get the final word.

Depression does not get the final word.

Anxiety does not get the final word.

Death does not get the final word.

The resurrection changes everything.

Now, it is important to be honest here. The resurrection does not mean Christians never struggle. It does not mean believers are immune from depression, anxiety, grief, or mental illness. Jesus never promised that. In fact, He promised the opposite when He said, “In this world you will have trouble.” The Christian life is not an escape from suffering. It is the assurance that suffering will not have the last word.

The apostle Paul understood this. He wrote that believers are afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, struck down but not destroyed. Why? Because Christ is

present in the midst of suffering. Even when we cannot see Him, He is there. Even when we cannot feel Him, He is there. Even when our emotions tell us otherwise, He is there.

That is why our hope is bigger than medicine, bigger than counseling, and bigger than any earthly solution. Those things matter, and God uses them. But they are temporary gifts in a broken world. The resurrection points us toward something eternal. As the notes remind us, “Medicine is temporal. Resurrection is forever.”

One day, Christ will return.

One day, every tear will be wiped away.

One day, depression will be no more.

One day, anxiety will be no more.

One day, grief will be no more.

One day, every broken mind, body, and soul will be fully restored.

That is the comfort Jesus is talking about. It begins now through His presence and His people, but it will be completed when He makes all things new.

So let me close with this. Some of you came here this morning carrying a burden that no one else knows about. You are grieving. You are exhausted. You are anxious. You are discouraged. Maybe you have been pretending for a long time that everything is fine when it is not.

Hear the words of Jesus again:

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

Not because mourning is good.

Not because suffering is easy.

But because God draws near to the brokenhearted.

Because Christ understands your pain.

Because the church is called to walk alongside you.

Because help is available.

And because the empty tomb reminds us that your story is not over.

The God who raised Jesus from the dead is still bringing life out of places that feel dead. He is still healing. He is still restoring. He is still comforting those who mourn.

And one day, by His grace, every tear will be wiped away forever.

Amen.