

This morning, we are in week 6 of a sermon series that I have entitled Revival. My hope in this series is to lead us into a deeper experience of God, that God would give us greater spiritual life and vitality both individually and collectively, that we would experience more of His love and power, and that through us, He would bring His salvation and redemption to our world.

Earlier in this series, I mentioned what Richard Lovelace calls the **two precursors of revival: an increased awareness of the holiness of God, and an increased awareness of the depth of our sin.** By sin I mean our rebellion against God, our inability to measure up to His holy standard, our brokenness. You want to see revival in your life and in the church? Pray for those two things.

Last week I began to dive deeper into the second aspect, and we looked at Jesus' opening words in his Sermon on the Mount, the section known as the Beatitudes, where he said "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The word "blessed" means that God's favor and approval are upon you. **Blessed are those who recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt, that they are completely dependent upon God for everything good.** It is the promise that it is those who come to God empty who will be filled with His Holy Spirit, with the life of Jesus. That is where revival happens.

Today, I want to look at the second line of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:4: **"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."** At first glance, it sounds like Jesus is referring to those who are grieving the death of a loved one or some other earthly tragedy. But there is more going on here, and it is absolutely connected to an increased awareness of the depth of our sin and therefore to revival. Let me explain.

First and foremost, Jesus is speaking in the Beatitudes of the spiritual life. Each Beatitude builds on the one before it. Blessed are those who mourn follows logically after blessed are the poor in spirit. We begin by coming empty before God, recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy and our absolute dependence upon God for anything good. **But if we truly reflect upon our spiritual poverty before a holy God in all its implications, we find that this is not just a cold, hard fact, but a cause for mourning, for consternation, for contrition.** And so, the first thing that this verse means is that God's favor and approval are on those who mourn their sin.

What does it look like to mourn our sin, our spiritual poverty? What would it look like to be brought to tears by your sin? Have you ever truly come to grips with the

emotional weight of sin in your own life, or, the ramifications of your sin in your relationship with others or with God?

There is a great book of Puritan prayers called the Valley of Vision. Listen to a portion of a prayer from this book:

“Searcher of hearts,  
 It is a good day to me when thou givest me  
 A glimpse of myself;  
 Sin is my greatest evil,  
 But thou art my greatest good;  
 I have cause to loathe myself,  
 And not to seek self-honour,  
 For no one desires to commend his own dunghill  
 My country, family, church  
 Fare worse because of my sins”

That last line has haunted me this week as I prepared this sermon. Read it carefully. He is not saying “My country, family, church fare worse because of me” like George Bailey in “It’s a Wonderful Life” saying “Everyone would be better off if I had never been born.” This is not some cry for pity and sympathy, as if we are looking for people to tell us that we’re a good person. No, this is an honest admission that our sin has terrible consequences, not just for us but for those around us.

I began serving this church as pastor in 2006 at the age of 30. I did such a stellar job that after only a couple of years, we made the decision to hire an outside mediator to come in because I had made such a mess of things as the pastor with regards to the leadership. My sins – particularly my struggle to deal well with conflict and my poor communication – threatened to destroy this church and my family. People left the church wounded because of my poor leadership. And while we made it through that time by the grace of God, that last line still holds true: **my country, family, church fare worse because of my sins**. You all have no idea how many times my wife has had to pick herself up off the mat and out of her sacrificial love for God, for me and for this church, continue to serve, never looking for recognition or honor. **Sometimes I look back at my journal from that time so I won’t forget**. My country, family, church fare worse because of my sins.

Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who understand the depth of their sin, who see the destruction it has caused in their own life and in the lives of

others, and who do not just acknowledge it but grieve it, who are moved to tears by it, and who ultimately are brought to repentance and reconciliation as they vow to be different and come empty to God in order to be filled with His Spirit and power. I regularly do marriage counseling, and one the most important goals in marriage counseling is to encourage spouses to resist the urge to get defensive or to argue back, but to truly listen when their spouse tells them how something they have done has hurt them. As uncomfortable as it might make you, as much as it might hurt, do not look away. Do not rationalize, do not minimize, do not blame-shift or explain it away, but listen humbly until you understand the depth of how your sin has affected the one you love. Why? So that everyone might know that everything is your fault? No. So that there might be repentance and reconciliation and peace. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Sin has consequences, not just for ourselves but for others, and often for generations. A self-centered decision to disobey God and choose what feels right to us can set into motion a chain reaction of terrible pain and brokenness. Think about David in 2 Samuel 11:

*2 Samuel 11:1 - In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing.*

David, the king, was supposed to be out with his army on the battleground, but he decided sinfully to stay home instead. He gets out of bed in the evening. He sees a woman bathing. And he sends for her, sleeps with her, and impregnates her. Just think about the chain of events that was put into motion by David's sinful decision not to be with his army, where he was supposed to be. He commits adultery with Bathsheba, has her husband killed, and in the process loses God's favor and undoubtedly some of his own integrity of leadership. Soon his family is falling apart: **rape, incest, murder, suicide, betrayal, insurrection, war, and exile**. Within two generation the kingdom of Israel is split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Do you think David would have gone back and made a different choice if he could have?

Sin has consequences in your life and in the lives of others, often for generations. But if that wasn't enough cause for mourning, know that it was your sin that caused Jesus to die on the cross. We are responsible for Jesus' death. His death on the cross is not just an unemotional act, as if God paid the fine for your parking

ticket. This was love, agony, betrayal, passion, heartache, grace all wrapped up in one unfathomable act done for you, to rescue you, to pay the penalty you should have paid, to die in your place. Have you ever mourned for what your sin did to Jesus?

At this point, let me pause and ask what we are doing here this morning? Maybe you say, hey, I came to church to be encouraged, to get a pick me up as I headed into the week. I didn't need someone telling me what a screw-up I am. That's not what I'm doing. Jesus didn't say, "mourn, so that you might know how terrible a person you are." He said, "blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." And I believe that Jesus is telling us that there is a way to comfort and peace and salvation, but you are going to have to travel through mourning in order to get there. Just like Matthew 5:3 tells us that there is a way to the kingdom of heaven, but you have to travel through poverty of spirit to get there. And so I am asking you this morning to stare your sin in the face, in all of its depth and pain and heartache. Don't look away. Don't minimize it or rationalize it or blame shift or explain it away. It may feel like death, but you have to go through death to find resurrection.

Look your sin full in the face this morning and do not look away. It was your anger, your greed, your lust that has harmed the ones you love. It was your abuse, your affair, that damaged your spouse, that wounded your children. It was your abortion that caused the death of that unborn child. It is your cruel words and actions that hurt your siblings, your friends. It is your disobedience of God that has kept others from knowing Him more. Do not minimize it this morning. Do not rationalize it, blame-shift, or explain it away. Feel the full weight of what you have done, the evil you have inflicted on others, the abuse, the neglect, the betrayal, the hurt, until it breaks your heart. This is more than confession; this is a sober-minded, gut-wrenching comprehension of what your sin has done to yourself, to others, to Jesus. Trust Jesus when He says that blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

**I believe that mourning our sin is the main emphasis of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:4. But there is more to mourn than just our sin.** I believe that blessed are those who mourn the brokenness of our world as well. Mourning over the division, the disease, the destruction, and yes, the death of the ones you love. Lamenting the pain, the heartache, the hopelessness, the suicide, the war. Life is hard, and instead of pretending otherwise or turning our eyes away, Jesus tells us that blessed are those who look this suffering full in the face and mourn it. When was the last time you mourned over the homeless in Haiti, over starving children in Africa, over

children sold into slavery, over those without clean water? When was the last time you wept over sexual abuse victims, over prisoners of war, over the widow, the orphan?

Even Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus as he saw the suffering and heartache of his friends. Jesus was characterized by mourning:

***Isaiah 53:3** - He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

***Luke 19:41-42** - As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it <sup>42</sup> and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-- but now it is hidden from your eyes.*

Blessed are those who mourn the brokenness of this world, for they will be comforted. Do you not see that our world tries to convince you to do the opposite, to chase after entertainment, to laugh your life away, to escape from the horrors of this world by watching Netflix and YouTube and sports, to enjoy the spectacle of the Winter Olympics while ignoring the enslavement and genocide of the Uyghur people in the same country, to enjoy your iPhone and wear your Nikes without thinking about the working condition of the people who made them. In Luke's version of the Beatitudes, Jesus says this:

***Luke 6:25** - Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.*

Is he saying not to laugh? No, I don't think so; but he is saying that God is against those who spend their lives chasing after entertainment and merriment in this world and turn a blind eye to the suffering and pain of this world. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who do not hide their face from suffering, who look it in the face and weep over it. As Jeremiah said:

***Jeremiah 9:1** - **Oh, that my head** were a spring of water and **my** eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of **my** people.*

Dare I say that some of you need to weep more. Mourn more. Lament more. Some of you have developed an ungodly apathy towards those who suffer in this world, choosing instead to pursue entertainment and frivolity. If this is you, maybe you need to be exposed to the heartache of the world more. Maybe you need to sit with someone who has lost a loved one. Someone with mental illness that won't go

away. Maybe you need to share a meal with a homeless person, or someone with a disabled child, or visit an Al-Anon meeting and hear from those whose lives have been turned upside-down by an alcoholic family member. Maybe you would benefit from visiting a third world country and learning what life is like outside the suburbs, outside the USA. Maybe your lack of tears is a sign that you have been shielding your eyes to the suffering of the world.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are those who look their sin in the face and feel the terrible weight of how they have hurt others and sent the Son of God to the cross. Blessed are those who look the suffering of the world in the face, who do not turn away, but see the horror.

And lastly, I believe that blessed are those who mourn also means **blessed are those who mourn over those who have rejected Christ**, who are heading to an eternal separation from God in Hell, who do not gloss over it as if it is no big deal. When was the last time you allowed that to really strike you, to affect you? It certainly affected Jesus, and Paul, and David.

***Philippians 3:18** - For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*

***Psalm 119:136** - Streams of **tears** flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.*

If hell is real, and if those who reject God's offer of salvation through Christ are heading there, then we have great reason to mourn. As Leonard Ravenhill said, "About a million persons in the world die each week without Christ. Is this nothing to you?" Blessed are those who do not look away, who look this hard truth in the face, who meditate on it, who feel the weight of it, who are brought to tears over it. They will be comforted.

So, I've been trying to make the case that I believe Jesus is making here, that God's favor and approval are upon those who mourn. Those who mourn their sin, those who mourn the brokenness and suffering of this world, and those who mourn those who are separated from God.

So now let's stop and ask the why question. Why would anyone do this? Why not just build yourself up about how great you are? Why not show yourself compassion – hey, nobody's perfect, you're trying the best that you can. Why not just focus on the positive and ignore the negative? Consider what Paul wrote:



**2 Corinthians 7:8-10** - *Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it-- I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while-- <sup>9</sup> yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. <sup>10</sup> Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

According to Paul, there is a worldly sorrow that leads to death, but there is godly sorrow that leads to repentance and salvation and leaves no regret. Worldly sorrow is just despair over our brokenness and the brokenness of this world, but there is no solution. No forgiveness, no grace, no hope, no comfort. But Godly sorrow, a sorrow that comes from truly seeing the depth of our sin and the reality of what it has done to our lives, to the lives of others, and most importantly to God, **leads us to repent, to change, to resolve not to be different, to be the man or woman God has called us to be**, and ultimately to find God's comfort and salvation. Think of how this prophecy about Jesus found in Isaiah puts it:

**Isaiah 61:1-3** - *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*

Those who mourn will be comforted, first and foremost because their sin, guilt and shame will be taken away by Jesus.

**1 John 1:8-9** - *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Where else can you find complete forgiveness and grace and healing for all you have ever done wrong, for all the ways you have hurt others? Jesus died for your sins. He took the punishment you deserved. Blessed are those who mourn, who feel the full weight of their sin and bring it to Jesus. You will be comforted. You will experience grace. You will truly come to know the depth of how loved you are, how every single sin has been paid for. You will see Jesus nailed to the cross, taking the punishment you deserve, and you will know that He died for YOU.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** - *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**John 3:16** - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

And those who mourn the brokenness of the world will be comforted, knowing that one day He will right all that is wrong in this world

**Revelation 21:3-4** - *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

Blessed are those who mourn, for they WILL be comforted.

**Romans 8:16-18** - *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. <sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. I hope you have heard me clearly, that this verse is not telling us to put on a pious appearance of mourning, to make our face long and walk around with a dreary countenance. Jesus is speaking of a mourning that comes from a true and sober comprehension of the depth of our sin and how it has affected those we love and the God who deserves so much more. It is a mourning that comes from seeing this world's brokenness. It is a mourning that is a precursor to revival. We mourn because we must pass through death in order to find resurrection. We must endure the night of weeping in order to experience the joy that comes in the morning.

**Psalms 126:5-6** - *Those who sow in **tears** will reap with songs of joy. <sup>6</sup> He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

We mourn our sin because it is precisely in our sorrow that God meets us with the wonder of the cross and the extravagance of His grace.



***Romans 7:24-25 - What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord!***

And we mourn the brokenness of this world and the lostness of those who don't know Christ because it is through this mourning that we will experience the amazing glory of eternal life and be filled with a true passion to tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ.

I'm not looking for you to tell me "good sermon" this morning. If this is a good sermon, you will spend some serious time looking full in the face at your sin, at the brokenness of the world, at the eternal fate of those who do not know Jesus, until you are brought to tears, to repentance, to the feet of Jesus to be filled with His Spirit, and to action.

Let me close with another portion of a prayer from the Valley of Vision:

Grant me never to lose sight of  
The exceeding sinfulness of sin  
The exceeding righteousness of salvation,  
The exceeding glory of Christ,  
The exceeding beauty of holiness,  
The exceeding wonder of grace.