

Matthew 5:4

Todd Fletcher [00:00:03] "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Thus reads the words of the Lord, you may be seated.

Todd Fletcher [00:00:59] So as we come to this passage, again the whole Beatitudes are kind of upside down, aren't they? They're the very opposite of what our world would think is the correct way to live. As I mentioned before, Romans would have been appalled at hearing this sermon because it's the very opposite of what the Roman virtues were. Roman virtues were about pride and independence, self-reliance, all these types of things. But you see, Jesus's kingdom is totally flipped on its head. One of the books that we need to wrestle with in our lives is Ecclesiastes. If you will turn to Ecclesiastes 7, verse 2. I think Solomon really describes and exemplifies what it looks like to gain the whole, everything the world has to offer and recognize that it is truly vanity of vanities, that it's just chasing after the wind, that you can gain the whole world and lose your soul.

Todd Fletcher [00:01:49] And no matter how successful you may be when you die, you die naked, you die with nothing, right? We come naked into the world and we go naked out of the world. That's what Job says, is he loses all these worldly possessions and recognizes that really, that's nothing in light of God and God's power. So in Ecclesiastes 7, we're going to come back to this chapter multiple times today. But Ecclesiastes seven, let's look at verse 2. This is a strange verse, a verse that I think exemplifies something that our culture really needs to look at, needs to pray over. It needs to meditate on. But let's read verse two, Ecclesiastes 7, verse 2, "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart." So again, "it's better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting." Now, would we say that that is generally the case for us, that we prefer to go to a funeral than we do a wedding? That we prefer to cry with those with others than to laugh again? This is kind of upside down isn't it? Better to be in the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting. And I think this sets the stage for what we're going to learn from Jesus today, that blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. You know, I did some research this week on the popularity of funeral attendants. You know, it's interesting, as funerals have fallen on hard times, people avoid death at all costs it seems today. Many people today have never even seen a dead body.

Todd Fletcher [00:03:28] We get to the place where we are living sterile lives again, avoiding death at all costs. And even when loved ones are dying, oftentimes they are dying alone because people today do not like to deal with death. Again, funerals have fallen on hard times. As I was reading about it people tend to just want to get through death as quickly as possible. My wife was talking to a nurse not too long ago and she asked her, what is it like to watch people die? What are what are you experiencing with family members and friends who are coming to see people die? And the nurse said,

honestly, what has changed is it used to be a time to cherish a person's life and now, especially since COVID, people just want to get through death as quickly as possible. It's almost as if we write people off when they are given, you know, less time to live. And rather than enjoying that time with them, we try to just get through it as past as quickly as possible. And we want to get to feasting rather than mourning. So we see this as something that we need today. Jesus words are important, "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." So is there true blessing in mourning? You know, it's interesting because soft times make for soft people, don't they? Hard times make for hearty people. And we are in soft times today. We are in times where we don't even really know what it means to struggle in the sense of to work for our food, to work with our hands and grow crops. To try to find water, to try to work through the things that throughout history most humans have had to struggle with and labor under the sun.

Todd Fletcher [00:05:02] Now we struggle today, but in very different ways. We are a very affluent people, especially here in America. We are in soft times. This is why we're wrestling with things that people in the past could never have imagined wrestling with, such as gender identity, right. Back when you were in times like World War I and World War II, my grandfather was in World War II vet, I think he would be astonished at what the conversation is today. Because again, soft times make for soft people. Listen to this picture of hard times, "so when hardships of life come to God's people, they may find Him strength to endure and to grow. It is not what happens to a person, but how he or she reacts to it that counts. A valuable violin, they are not made out of soft spines that is known only warm showers and gentle breezes. The best violins we'll see that they're made out of hard times." He goes on to say, "they are made out of wood that has endured cold and storms and many winters. Such wood as character in it. Christian characters not formed by lying on flowery beds of ease, but is the product of treading rough highways in life." You see what Jesus promises us and what He promises as citizens is hardship. The hardship is good for us. Hardship teaches us how to have strong spines, how to walk in the midst of the sun, in the midst of the heat. And if we all lived in an ease, if we all lived in fields of flowers, we would be a very weak people, wouldn't we? We'd be a people that don't have any character because character is forged in the fire.

Todd Fletcher [00:06:40] Remember the crucible, is meant for purity. And when God takes us through the crucible of life, we grow in those moments. And so when we're in the horns of dilemma, when we're struggling with the troubles and trials of this world, we shouldn't seek to just get through it as quickly as possible, we should seek to mourn. We should seek to have sorrow and to be sad and to grow in that sadness, to grow in that morning. Again, soft times make soft people, but hard times make hardy people. And the church is meant to be a hearty people. So as we look at this verse again, verse 4, "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." So there's three points today. The first point is this, this is the second Beatitude. As I mentioned last week, each Beatitude leads to the next, it's a logical order. You can't get to the second without going through the first. And as we work through all the Beatitudes, we recognize they are as if they are a ladder into the Kingdom of Heaven in the sense that this is what it looks like to be a citizen of heaven. Now we know we're not saved by climbing the ladder. We know we're saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. But as a saved child, as a regenerate Christian this is what it looks like to be a child of God. Jesus is setting the standard, this is the gateway, this is the narrow way for the Christian to walk on. So He says, "blessed are those who mourn" so the first point is this is the second Beatitude.

Todd Fletcher [00:08:02] The second point we're going to look at sorrow. We're going to define sorrow. We're going to look at exactly what this means to mourn and to have

sorrow. And then the third point is comfort. What is the comfort that God promises to those who mourn? And this is what we'll see here in the Beatitudes. So, again, the main takeaway is this, that the only true and lasting comfort that we can have in this life as sinners is when we have sorrow and we mourn over sin and its effects. We're going to see how that connects. What you see in the first Beatitude absolutely leads into the second Beatitude, and it's the first Beatitude that should cause us to mourn and to have sorrow. And we'll get into that here in just a second. So looking at this second Beatitude, let's turn to Luke chapter 6 verse 25. As I've mentioned before, Jesus's Sermon on the Mount is illustrated throughout all the gospels. In fact, we're going to turn to James a couple of times today, too, and recognize that the half brother of Jesus, James, his whole book is believed to be a sermon, expository sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. So there's many parallels between James and the Sermon on the Mount. In Luke chapter 6, verse 25, we read again something very interesting. This is kind of the parallel account in Luke to Matthew, and he says this in verse 25, "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep." You know, Jesus was a man acquainted with what? Sorrow. You know, there is never once one recorded record in the New Testament of Jesus laughing. Isn't that interesting? There's plenty of records in reference to Him being sorrowful, and Him mourning, and Him weeping.

Todd Fletcher [00:09:54] Now, not to say Jesus never laughed, that's not what I'm saying. Means we need to recognize that Jesus was first and foremost a man acquainted with sorrow, a man that came to die, a man that looked around at a world full of sin and was heartbroken to see His creatures fallen, His creatures in love with their sin. I was thinking today as I was driving up, looking at the mountains about how beautiful God's creation is. But then I thought about the wickedness that I've even seen just this morning on the news, as I just briefly opened the news app and read what was going on in the world and thinking about how sorrowful that must make God every day to see this beautiful creation that He's given us, all the pleasures of life and how so quickly we turn against Him and we love our sin, and we raise our hand to God in disobedience. So here we see in this Beatitude, this is how Christians should live, is we should be those who mourn. And we'll see more specifically over sin and its effects. Because every hardship, every trial in this world is the result of what? Sin, the byproduct of Adam and Eve. The byproduct of what Adam and Eve wrought in the garden. So let's just do a little bit of recap before we go on. Remember, this is the second Beatitude. So let's look back to Matthew and let's look at the first Beatitude. Matthew 5, verse 3, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now, this is the first Beatitude for a very important reason because you can't get to the second unless you've dealt with the first.

Todd Fletcher [00:11:25] Now this word blessed, we spent some time on this last week, but blessed is also translated as Happy. Happy, blessed, happy are those who are poor in spirit. Again, sounds upside down, doesn't it? Happy are the poor in Spirit. Now again we define blessed is, not as Webster's Dictionary defines it, remember Merriam-Webster defines blessed or happy as fortunate, lucky. Now that's the world's definition of happy. You just happened to be very lucky. Therefore, you've received good circumstances and you have luck's favor. Now, who in this room wants to bank on luck for favor, for happiness, for blessedness? Again, luck is simply just something that is not even real, it doesn't even exist. What does happiness mean according to Scripture, blessedness mean according to Scripture? Means divine favor, not luck. Truly, the only happy person in this world is those who have the very blessed divine favor of Yahweh. You can lose everything in this world and if you have God's divine favor, nothing else matters. That's an amazing thing about the book of Job as everything is removed from his life, but he never loses the favor of God. Now Job even make some mistakes in his statements, right? We see that in

the end of Job. His friends make a lot of mistakes in the counsel that they give. But you see Job never loses the very divine favor of God. Even for those who struggle with dementia, those who struggle with whatever things that are happening, even in the church today with persecution, with mind manipulation, those in the persecuted church in China and all the terrible things that are happening to them, you know they will never lose God's divine favor no matter what is done to them, no matter what mistakes they make, even with mind manipulation.

Todd Fletcher [00:13:06] What an amazing thing to know that we can never lose the favor of God and what a blessed state that is. Isn't that amazing? And who are the poor? Again, this word is the most extreme word in the Greek for poor, it means a beggar who has nothing, who only has his hands out open to receive. Blessed are those who are poor, who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy. Notice the realm in which we're talking about poor in spirit. Not poor in materials, not poor in wealth, poor in spirit. These are those who recognize they have nothing to offer God, they are spiritually bankrupt. When they come to the cross, they come with empty hands. Hands that only can receive God's divine favor have nothing to offer God in return. Again, the only thing we bring to the cross is the very sin that required Jesus's death. And we need to recognize that because if we don't recognize our absolute hopelessness, our spiritual bankruptcy, we will never enter into the kingdom of Heaven. This is why it's so important that we get lost before we get found, right. When you preach the gospel to people, if you don't bring the bad news, if you don't bring the fact that the wrath of God is hanging over their head, then they'll never want to be saved. But once you recognize your lost and that you're spiritually bankrupt, then you want the kingdom of heaven, then you want the gospel, the good news. So again, now the third part is the kingdom of heaven, this is the riches that Jesus promises those who are poor in spirit, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is the riches of Christ that's only available to those who recognize they have nothing to offer God.

Todd Fletcher [00:14:48] Now, is that an important statement, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?" Look at verse 10. This forms an inclusio, this is the way we see the bookmarking of Jesus as He's teaching. He repeats that again in verse 10, "blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," there's that phrase again. So everything in between is promised to those who are to receive the kingdom of heaven and everything in between, this is the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are only available to those on the narrow way. If you are on the broad way and if you are living a life of opulence and pleasure seeking and hedonism. If you're living a life for this world and you're living a life where you're not suffering for Christ, you're not standing for Christ, you're not committed to Christ, then you will receive your reward here and now, but you will not receive the riches of Christ because the beatitudes are the very character, it's the very portrait of a disciple. Now, none of us will live the beatitudes perfectly. None of us will reach this level of perfection until we see Christ face to face. We don't live perfectly as we say in this church, we live persistently. We seek to persistently pursue Christ every single day. And we won't be perfect until we see Him face to face. But we sure as well fight every day against the flesh, as Paul does in Romans 7. So that is a recap of last week's sermon. Now we can understand a little bit better the second beatitude, "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Now, sorrow is a universal experience of both the saved and the unsaved.

Todd Fletcher [00:16:27] Everyone in this world mourns, everyone in this world cries. Everyone in this world is sorrowful at some point in their life. But the reality is, is there's two ways to be sorrowful. There's a legitimate sorrow and there's an illegitimate sorrow. So

if you've ever known anyone that had illegitimate sorrow, they were just, woe is me, the whole world is against me. This is the Eeyore's of the world. And you ask them, well what happened to you, why are you so sad? And they say, I burnt my toast this morning and everything is falling apart. See, that's an illegitimate sorrow, right? It's an amazing thing. MacArthur has three types of sorrow or mourning that he addresses in his commentary, and I think they're worth bringing before us today. There is improper mourning, and this is mourning or sorrow where frustrated evil plans bring about sorrow. Things that you wanted to do that were evil, things that like Amnon and his sister remember, he wants...Let's turn there. Let's turn to second Samuel 13, verse 2, let's look at a man named Amnon. So second Samuel 13, I'll start in verse 1, this is an improper ungodly form of sorrow. "Now. Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. And Ammon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man. And he said to him, O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning?" See, this is ungodly sorrow.

Todd Fletcher [00:18:23] "Will you not tell me? Amnon said to him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. Jonadab said to him, lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill." Now we don't have time to read this whole story, but what happens is he eventually rapes his sister and then he casts her out after he has raped her. And the second evil is even worse than the first. But you see, here is someone who is ill, physically ill, over their desire to sin. And they are mourning and they are sad because they're not able to accomplish the sin that they would like to accomplish. That is an improper mourning. Proper mourning, Genesis 23:2 where Abraham is sorrowful over Sarah's death. That's proper mourning. When someone you love dies, it's proper to mourn. It's proper to be sad. This is why I think it's important that our culture, in fact, mourns over those who die. We're so uncomfortable with sadness. We're uncomfortable with mourning that we don't even want to recognize death for what it is. That's why I encourage people who are struggling with loss, it's okay to be sad. It's okay to mourn, it's okay to cry. This is just a reality in this life that death is an affront to God. And death is not a part of God's perfect design. Death is a byproduct of sin. And so when we see death in our lives, it's appropriate to mourn. Now, for the believer, death has no sting because we go from life to life, right,. Life to eternal life in the sense of when we die, we are immediately with Jesus, seeing Him face to face. There is no soul sleep, that's a heresy. When we die, we are with Him in paradise immediately.

Todd Fletcher [00:20:00] So that is a promotion. But death is hardest for the living, isn't it? For those who are left behind. Therefore, it's appropriate to mourn, that is proper mourning. But there's also a form of godly mourning. Let's turn to second Corinthians 7, verse 10. In second Corinthians 7, verse 10 we need to recognize the importance of godly mourning. Paul writes, "for godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret." Let me read that again, "for godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret." And this is why it's important that we allow people to feel the sorrow for their sin. Oftentimes, again, we're very uncomfortable with sorrow so when someone starts to cry and they start to mourn over their sin, oftentimes we try to smooth it all over really quickly so that they don't struggle, that they don't feel pain. But God's grief is actually important because it leads them to repentance, which leads to salvation with which there is no regret. And so when someone comes into my office mourning over their sin, I don't immediately try to soothe them. Sometimes I allow them to struggle and mourn through that moment because that's what's going to lead them to repentance and maybe even to be saved, right. So again, mourning is what brings us to our knees. Sorrow is what brings us to our knees before Jesus Christ. So it's important that we allow people to feel

that to work through that. It goes on to say, whereas worldly grief produces death. See, there is a worldly grief, but it doesn't lead to repentance. It doesn't lead to sorrow, sorrow over sin. Worldly grief simply produces death. So when we think about our suffering and we think about this beatitude, we recognize that first, you have to recognize your spiritual bankruptcy before you come to Jesus Christ and you enter into His kingdom.

Todd Fletcher [00:22:01] And this is the very first step of salvation, is recognizing that you need to be saved, right? If you don't recognize you need to be saved what you're going to do with Jesus is add Him into your portfolio, right. You've got your 401K, you've got your IRA, and you've got Jesus. And these are all just "in case" situations. I've got my 401K in case I lose my job, or I need to retire. And I've got Jesus just in case something bad happens to me, and I stand before the pearly gates and and Saint Peter is standing there with his book out, like as the world thinks about heaven, right. And how are you going to let me, well I have Jesus in my back pocket, I've got my insurance with me. That's how the world often thinks of Jesus. But again, this is not what, you have to come to the end of yourself before you'll accept Jesus, right. So when we talk to people about the gospel, the first thing we got to do is get them lost. We got to get them to recognize they are lost, that they need Jesus, they need a Savior. And that's what the first beatitude is about. But for those who finally recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt, what's the next step? To mourn over their sin and here we have the second beatitude. Piper, whom I love, he says this, "don't waste your suffering." He's got a whole book on "Don't Waste Your Life." And these are just quotes, when Piper was given a cancer diagnosis and how he responded to that, he says, "the aim of God in our cancer is to knock the props out from under our hearts so that we rely utterly on Him. Cancer does not win if you die. It wins if you fail to cherish Christ. If you do not believe God designed your cancer for you, you will waste it."

Todd Fletcher [00:23:45] You see Piper in this book, "Don't Waste Your Life," he says, don't waste your suffering. Those are some of the greatest gifts that God gives us when we suffer because that knocks the props out from under our lives. Those false supports that are holding us up, when in reality we should be completely dependent upon God. See cancer can be a blessing from the Lord because it gets you to think about eternal things. One of the greatest judgments or disciplines that God can give a person in this world is success, because success can harden the heart to what really matters. Remember, it's impossible for rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Just like a camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle and the disciples respond, if it's impossible then how can anyone be saved? Well with God all things are possible. You have to recognize that you're spiritually bankrupt before you can ever enter into the kingdom of heaven. Again, don't waste your suffering because God is using that to bring you to your knees. It's okay to pray for people, God break their legs. Because I'd rather see their heart saved, their heart regenerate then enter into to heaven and not to hell. You remember Jesus says things like It's better to rip out your eye. It's better to cut off your hand than enter into hell. See, Jesus says it's important to take extreme measures to ensure that you're saved and to not fall into the sin that this world is so prone to applaud and enjoy. So when we talk about this first and second beatitude we see this, that humility leads us to embrace sorrow.

Todd Fletcher [00:25:19] Brokenness leads us to embrace mourning and sorrow. And don't waste that. Just like if you have received a cancer diagnosis in this room or you've lost a loved one to cancer, which I know many people in this room have, the response that we should have to suffering is to see what God will do in the midst of that suffering and to look for His hand to prop us up and to carry us. So now let's look at sorrow more specifically. Again, look at verse 4, "blessed are those who mourn." So what is this word mourn mean? Ecclesiastes 7:4 says this, "the heart of the wise is in the house of

mourning." So where are wise people? They go to houses where there's sorrow and mourning. "But the heart of the fools is in the house of mirth." So the fools are those partying and the wise are those mourning with those who mourn, their crying with those who cry. See wisdom is learned, according to Solomon, in struggle. Where is wisdom to be found? It's found in the house of mourning. Does this start to make sense? Are you going to find wisdom in the house of mirth, the house of feasting, the house of luxury, the house of pleasure? Is that where wisdom is found? Or is that where folly is found? That's where Folly is found. Where is wisdom found? She is found in the house of mourning. Let's turn to James chapter 1. And again, James, if you want a side study while we're in Matthew, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, I'd encourage you to read the book of James. James is believed, as I've said by many, to be essentially a teaching on Jesus's teaching on the Sermon on the Mount.

Todd Fletcher [00:27:04] James chapter 1, starting verse 2, so right at the very beginning of his teaching, he deals with the issue of suffering. James 1 starting in verse 2, "count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." So how is it that you reach maturity perfect and complete, lacking nothing? Well it begins with trials and hardships. You see, that's why we should count it, we should consider it joy when we meet trials of various kinds because God is working inside of you. Here's two important quote, "the trouble free life is likely to be a shallow life." A trouble free life leads to a shallow life. And also "all sunshine makes the desert." If your life is all sunshine, you will be a spiritual desert. Because God uses hardship to grow us. And that's why when we are encountering hardships, the proper response is thank God. Because I'm about to grow, God is going to grow me. And He gives us a reprieve, doesn't He? He gives us seasons of rest before the next trial because He doesn't break us, right. It's an important thing, God doesn't break a bruised reed, He doesn't smother a smoldering wick. God is so faithful with us. He's faithful to walk with us through life. But trials are a blessing when we recognize whose hand is behind them. So let me ask you a question, as I did last week, are you poor? And do you mourn? Do you express grief and sorrow in this life? And to define sorrow is this, its deep distress, sadness or regret for the loss of someone or something, it's an unhappy or an unpleasant state.

Todd Fletcher [00:29:04] And what would we be sorrowful most above anything? And it's the fact that we've sinned against God, that we've broken God's holy law. This word mourn also means to express sadness as the result of some condition or circumstance. Again, this is a deep word, a heartfelt word. It's this word, sorrow is used in nine different Greek words in the New Testament. And this specific word means the most deep and heartfelt. It's it's inside you, it's a sorrow that just breaks your heart. If you've ever been in unconsolable you know what I'm talking about. When you just can't stop crying, every time you look up, all of a sudden you think of that memory. You think of that person. You think of the hardship that you're in and you're broken yet again. Let's turn to James chapter 4, verses 8 through 10. What do you do when you're broken? What do you do when you recognize your sin, that you've offended a holy God? That His wrath hangs over your head, what's the only response? James 4:8, "draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you." You see the commands there? Draw near to God, cleanse your hands you sinners, be wretched, mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. What a sermon that'll

preach won't it? That draws the masses. Welcome, you wretched, mourn and weep this morning, turn that laughter into mourning that joy into gloom, Amen!

Todd Fletcher [00:30:47] Alright that is the message of Jesus, that's the message of his half brother James. Humble yourselves before the Lord, that's the key to the Christian life. To fight to the bottom. Isn't that interesting. This world fights to get up top, the Christians should fight to the bottom. I'm going to out serve you. I'm going to be more humble than you. Now, that in itself is a hard statement, right? But we should pursue humility. We should essentially do as Paul did, where he fought. He lived so as to not be disqualified. He beat his body into submission. Every time pride raised up in Paul's life, he beat it back down. He had a thorn in the flesh given to him by God, which was meant to what? Keep him humble. It's an amazing thing. God wants us to be at the bottom because blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the poor in spirit. So we ought to mourn over our sin, are you mourning over your sin this morning? Let's turn to Luke 15. There is a parable of a son who we know as the prodigal son. It's interesting. We're not going to read through the whole parable just for time's sake. But the parable goes through 11, so Luke 15, 11 through 32. And essentially the son squanders, he one, demands his inheritance then he squanders his inheritance on reckless living, which is verse 13. And then in verse 17, things starts to turn around for him. "But when he came to himself, he said, how many of my fathers hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!" Remember, he's eating with the pigs. "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."

Todd Fletcher [00:32:44] Verse 20, "his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." Verse 21, "and the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." You see, that's where you have to get to in your sin. I am no longer worthy. I am not worthy to be called a child of God. Verse 24, "this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they begin to celebrate." Isn't that an amazing thing? This prodigal son wastes it all on reckless living. He destroys his inheritance. He recognizes that he is not worthy of anything that his father could give him. And then his father rejoices because his son, who was lost, is now found. But it's mourning, it's sorrow over sin that brings this prodigal back home. David often mourns over his. And let's turn to Psalm 32. If you've ever read the Psalms and realized that they're rather emotional, they're full of sorrow, they're full of joy, they're full of gladness. It's an amazing book because of all the emotions that are seen in the Psalms. Psalm 32, verses 3 through 5. Psalm 32, verses 3 through 5, "for when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, I did not cover my iniquity; I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

Todd Fletcher [00:34:36] You see its mourning, its sorrow in David's life that brings him to this place where he confesses his sins to God. This is godly morning. D.A. Carson says this, "it is not enough to acknowledge personal spiritual bankruptcy, which is the first beatitude with a cold heart. You could say I'm spiritually bankrupt, so what? You could not care about your poverty." So he goes on to say, "weeping for sins can be deeply poignant and can cover a global as well as a personal view of sin and our participation in it.: You see the next beatitude is essential to your walk with the Lord. It's not enough to recognize your spiritual bankruptcy, you have to also weep over your spiritual bankruptcy, mourn over your sin. And not only your sin, but the sin of the world. I'm sure most of us in this room have been mournful and sorrowful over the news that we see on a regular basis.

We're just inundated by sin and the love of sin. People that hate God and love Satan. This world is on fire for Satan right now, if you haven't noticed. And that should bring a deep sorrow in your own heart over the brokenness of this world. And that is appropriate to cry and to mourn and to weep over the state of our neighbors, over the state of our country, over the state of our churches. But we need to recognize that sorrow is an appropriate response to spiritual bankruptcy. It's the only appropriate response to spiritual bankruptcy. So when we cry, crying is a good thing. But there's another promise, look at verse 4 again, "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Here's the promise to those who are brokenhearted. Those who mourn and weep over their sins is they will be comforted.

Todd Fletcher [00:36:24] Now, where is comfort found? Is comfort found at the bottom of a Ben and Jerry's carton. Is comfort found on Netflix or Prime? Is comfort found even with family and friends, work, entertainment. Where is comfort found? And I know all of us in this room struggle to go to the true source of comfort on a regular basis because it's so much easier to go to those things in this world that are available to us that require less of us. If we're stuck in our sin, it's easy to go to Ben and Jerry's ice cream rather than to the Holy Scriptures. That's where it's important that we recognize and that even on the days when we don't want to read Scripture, those are the days that we really need to read Scripture. Because our heart is hardened to God's word. True comfort is only found with the Comforter, who is God. This is a divine passive. This means that comfort is only found by God in God. God is the one who provides the comfort that you need when you mourn and you weep over your sin. This word comfort means to soothe in times of affliction or distress to be soothed. RC Sproul said this reminds him of his mother as he would scrape his knee and he'd run inside and his mother would wipe away his tears and soothe him. That's the picture here is God comforts us, He soothes us in the midst of hardships in the midst of trial. This word means to urge or implore or exhort. It's interesting. It means to instill courage in someone, to lift them up, to give them cheer, to give them hope. God lifts us back up as we get on our knees, as we're broken before Him. God cheers us, He exhorts us. He comforts us. He brings courage into our lives.

Todd Fletcher [00:38:12] Revelation 21:4 talks about the fact that in the new heavens and new earth, what will God do with the tears that were upon our cheeks? He'll wipe them away. What an amazing experience that will be, won't it? When all the weight and sorrow and brokenness of this world, we're standing before Yahweh our Father and He takes His hand and He wipes away our tears. What an amazing picture. That is the hope of our salvation. Jesus gives us the Comforter. It's interesting, in the Greek, this word comfort is *parakaleo*, which is very close to *parakalos*, which is used in John 14:26 and 27, in a reference to the *paraklete* who is the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit to comfort us. The Holy Spirit dwells within every believer and will never be removed, not even into eternity. The Holy Spirit will dwell with us forever and ever. He is a down payment that God will never revoke. Sproul said this, I mentioned his mother, he says, "in theology we make an important distinction between two types of repentance when we're talking about comfort. We need to recognize that comfort is tied to repentance. One type is called *attrition*, which may be defined as repentance that is motivated by fear or punishment. It is the kind of repentance your children expresses when their hands are caught in a cookie jar and they say, please don't punish me, I won't do it again," which usually is a lie for my children, they'll do it again. "That is different from authentic repentance, which is defined by what we call *contrition*. Real repentance over sin is generated by a profound sorrow from the soul and which we are heartily sorry for our sins."

Todd Fletcher [00:40:10] You see, if you're just afraid of God slapping your hand. I don't, I'm not even sure that you're on the right path. When people say, how much can I get away with Pastor? That's just the wrong question, isn't it? How much sin can I do before God gets really angry at me? That's the wrong question. And that reveals a very dangerous heart. The thing should be for us we should want to please our Father and live in obedience because of what Jesus has done for us in gratitude and humility. You see when we mourn we want to have contrite hearts. Hearts that are broken before God, that's where true comfort comes in. And we know that, again, the ultimate comfort that we will receive is not only in this life, it's in the eternal state where we will be in perfect fellowship with God. We will never sin again, we will never see death again. We will never see the byproducts of the fall again, we will live in perfect unity with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. That is the ultimate comfort that we look for. MacArthur says this, "happiness or blessedness does not come in mourning itself. Happiness comes with what God does in response to it, with the forgiveness that such mourning brings. God's mourning brings God's forgiveness, which brings God's happiness. Mourning is not merely a psychological or emotional experience that makes people feel better. It is a communion with the living and true loving God who responds to the mourner with objective realities of divine forgiveness." See true comfort only comes by God the Father in forgiveness of our sins. That's why Jesus says blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Todd Fletcher [00:42:11] Because when you repent and you're broken over your sins, God promises to lift you up. What an amazing beatitude this is. So as we close, there's a few things, remember wisdom is found in the house of mourning, not in the house of feasting. If you avoid sorrow and mourning and funerals, I pray that you would repent and start mourning with those who mourn. That you would start attending funerals. I make all my kids go to all the funerals that I officiate. Because I want them to experience what death is like. You know, there's no better congregation to preach to than a funeral. Because what are they thinking about? They're all thinking about death in a world that avoids death at all costs. One man said, "joy is best sown in broken ground." Joy is best sown in broken ground. When you have hard ground, it's hard to get any seeds into it. But when you have broken ground seeds, can germinate and produce life. So hard times equal hearty people. Philippians 4:7 says this, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Here is the outcome of those who mourn is the peace of God will surpass all your understanding. After you leave the house of a mourner and you walk into this world, God's peace will fill your life and you'll recognize that this life is a shadow of what is to come. So just to recap, spiritual humility leads us to embrace godly sorrow. Spiritual bankruptcy leads us to mourn over our sin. Godly sorrow produces maturity that leads to godly wisdom. And finally, godly sorrow leads to godly comfort, which is only found in Christ. So if you're looking for comfort this morning and you've rejected Christ, you will never find comfort for your souls.

Todd Fletcher [00:44:25] But if you're brokenhearted over your sin, and if you've come to Christ with nothing in your hands, only the sin that required the death of the Son. And you believe in His atoning sacrifice on the cross and you embrace Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you will find comfort. And if you've never done that, if you've never bowed the knee to King Jesus, today's the day of salvation because you're not promised tomorrow. None of us are. So what do we do with all this? Well, blessed are those who mourn. I want you to cry. I want you to be sad. I want you to be brokenhearted over your sin. I want you to identify with the man of sorrows. Read Isaiah 53 and see that Jesus was acquainted with sorrow, that was His friend. Sadness and sorrow. And you will be comforted, that's the promise of Jesus Himself. So just to end with a interesting quote by Martin Luther, "be thou comforted little dog thou to in the resurrection shall have a little golden tail." And a more

serious quote by John Owen, of course, "the vigor and power and comfort of our spiritual life depends on our mortification of the deeds of the flesh." So the level of comfort that we experience in this life is dependent on our level of repentance and our level of dependency on Christ.

Todd Fletcher [00:45:53] Let's pray. So, Father God we just thank you again for the second beatitude, we look forward to the remaining beatitudes. Lord Jesus is such an amazing Teacher, He's the upside down Teacher. He says everything we would not expect Him to say. He takes all the wisdom of this world and throws it on its head. Lord, I pray that we would be a people who mourn, especially over our sin, that we would mourn over the effects of sin in our world, and that we would look to Your comfort, that You would knock out all the props in our life, everything that is a false security, everything that is a false support in our life, I pray You would knock those out. And that we would only trust in You, that we'd only trust in Your Son and His sacrifice and the Spirit that You've given us, who is our only source of comfort. So, Father, we pray this in Your Son's holy and precious name. Amen.