

SERMON NOTES

Sunday, September 21, 2024

Upside Down Blessings

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:4 (NIV)

Why do we MOURN:

- Loss – the loss of someone or something that they care about
- Sin – our sin and brokenness should break our hearts
- Isolation and hopelessness – mourning becomes more painful when we experience isolation and hopelessness, and we have an enemy who wants to make our mourning as painful as possible

How are we COMFORTED:

- Presence – God’s presence and the presence of others remove isolation
- Promises – God’s promises remove hopelessness
- ~~Isolation and hopelessness~~

MOURNING

Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. Psalm 31:9-10 (NIV)

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Joel 2:12-13 (NIV)

I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me. Psalm 142:4 (NLT)

Has the Lord rejected me forever? Will he never again be kind to me? Is his unfailing love gone forever? Have his promises permanently failed? Psalm 77:7-8 (NLT)

COMFORT



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We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (CSB)

“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.” Revelation 21:4 (NIV)

The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help... The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. Psalm 34:17, 18 (NLT)

Praise the Lord, all you who fear him! For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. Psalm 22:23, 24 (NIV)

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NLT)

Questions for thought and discussion:

1. Read David's description of mourning in Psalm 31:9-10. Circle or highlight the words that stand out to you. Why do those words stand out? How does grief affect both our body and soul?
2. Loss is something that we all experience in life and it can encompass a broad range of experiences. If you feel comfortable, share some examples of loss in your own life.
3. Read Joel 2:12-13. What words or phrases stand out to you and why? Why does God call us to mourn over our sinfulness and brokenness? Can you think of a time when hardheartedness kept you from mourning appropriately for your sin?
4. Joel describes God as “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love,” even in the face of our sinfulness. Write down the opposite of each of the traits mentioned by Joel. Compare those attributes with those listed by Joel. Which list feels more true to you and why?
5. Read Psalm 77:7-8 and 142:4. Pastor Jay said that our feelings always follow our thoughts. Circle or highlight the words that lead to feelings of isolation and hopelessness. What thoughts or beliefs is David wrestling with that lead to feelings of helplessness or isolation? Do you struggle with any similar thoughts?



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6. What makes isolation and hopelessness so destructive to us as human beings?
7. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Why do we as Christians grieve differently than the world?
8. Read Psalm 34:17-18. What attributes of God stand out to you? How does truly believing that God hears us, is close to us, and rescues us lead to comfort?
9. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. How have you experienced God's comfort in times of trouble? How has your loss prepared you to help others through loss?
10. What is empathy? Can you think of a time when someone really seemed to see you and understand you? How did it make you feel? What makes empathy such a superpower when it comes to bringing comfort to those who are hurting?

