

## **Now You're Getting It: Mourning**

Matthew 5:4

Eight days ago, not so very far from where we sit today, we experienced an event that rocked our nation.

We all know what happened, so there's really no need to rehash it in detail. But we watched as a former president was nearly assassinated, two individuals were critically injured, and one person tragically lost his life while protecting his family.

We have watched in morbid curiosity at the life of a young shooter that was so quickly driven to hatred at such a level that he would show such disregard for human life.

Through all of this – the loss of life, the injuries, and the evil actions of this one individual – we have collectively been mourning the events that unfolded in Butler, Pennsylvania last Saturday.

I can't speak for anyone but myself, but what I will tell you is that from my own perspective, the mourning process hasn't been fun. There have been feelings of anger, of grief, of despair, of fear.

We have all been through times where we experience all that it means to mourn. We have all lost loved ones. We know what that feels like.

We all know the current state of our world and we despair while wondering if it will ever improve.

Mourning isn't fun.

And yet, the second of the Beatitudes is about mourning.

Allow me to read to you our passage from Matthew chapter 5, verse 4:

*<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.*

Now, if we remember back to last week, we established that the Beatitudes will all start off by telling us we are blessed. We learned that this word "blessed" means something deeper than what we think of when we hear it today.

What we came away with was this word "blessed" tells us we're finally starting to understand the type of people Jesus is trying to make us into. It's God saying to us, "Now you're getting it!"

This week is a perfect example why the Beatitudes are not a checklist of things we're supposed to do. Jesus is not saying to us, "If you want to follow me, I need you to be sad about it the rest of your life!" That's not what's happening here.

So that's what today is about. Today we strive to understand why we are finally getting it when we become a people who mourn.

But we need to start by establishing why we mourn – why mourning is a part of our world. To talk about why we mourn, we first have to talk about sin.

Remember that the fall of man in the Creation narrative is what ushered in the current state of this world. When sin was allowed to reign, we then would know what it means to suffer, to labor, and to die.

God's intention for His creation was that it would live in harmony with Him, but we chose differently. We chose to live in a world where sin and death would reign.

The reason we mourn is a direct result of our sin.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that when we mourn, we are sinning. That would be in direct opposition to what Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:4.

I'm also not saying that mourning is a direct punishment for sin.

But what I am saying is that mourning is a consequence of living in a world that knows sin. And the more we strive to put distance between us and our sin, the clearer we are able to see all the problems of sin.

To put that another way, the more we start to act like Christ, the more we mourn the way our world is and even the way we are.

The closer we get to Christ, the more we see our own sin for what it is. We plainly see it's something we have to die to. We see how our own sin affects our world, how it affects the people around us, and most of all how it affects our relationship with God.

We come to mourn the fact that we are sinners. We mourn the fact that we have distanced ourselves from God.

The closer we get to get to Christ, the more we see the sin of the world for what it is. And when we see the sin of the world, we will have a heartfelt desire to steer everyone and anyone we possibly can away from sin.

We will mourn the sin of the world, and we will feel that need to tell them about the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

And of course, we also mourn death. We mourn death because the sin of one man ushered death into this world.

Mourning is a part of this world because of sin, because of our propensity toward sin.

I've been dancing around 1 Corinthians a little bit here, so let me just give you the verses that are on my mind. From the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> verses of the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter:

*<sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

The story of sin, the origin of everything we mourn, was only the beginning of the story. The rest of the story is about our salvation!

That is the comfort we are promised!

Mourning can feel like a bad ending to a good story.

But yet, mourning itself is not bad. In fact, there are times when it's necessary. And Jesus tells us we are getting it when we have the capacity to mourn, because that's when we are able to experience comfort.

But we only get that comfort when we are open to receiving it. We cannot receive what we don't think we have a need for.

If we don't mourn our sin – if we don't think we've done anything wrong – what use is salvation for us?

If we don't mourn the sin of the world, what use is a message of Good News?

If we don't mourn death, what use is a resurrection?

If we only depend on ourselves, something this world will encourage us to do, we're going to find out pretty quickly where we fall short.

There's a Peanuts comic strip where Lucy is, well, being Lucy.

In the first frame she says to Charlie Brown, "I have just examined my character and I find it to be without flaw."

Next she says, "What I am going to do is hold a ceremony and give myself a medal."

Then she adds, "and then I'm going to give a wonderful speech."

She's not done yet: "I am going to receive myself and congratulate myself in the receiving line."

Finally, in the last frame, she says, "You know, when you're a saint you have to do everything for yourself."

That is, indeed, true. When you think yourself a saint, you're going to be on your own.

If all we think we need is ourselves, our own strength, our own goodness, why would we ever expect to receive anything more than that?

And when things around us inevitably go wrong, why would we expect to receive anything from anyone else?

Instead, when we live in humility, when we realize that we are all sinners in need of mercy and grace, that is exactly when we open ourselves to receiving the comfort we so desperately need.

And then, once we have ourselves felt the comfort only our Savior can provide, then we know exactly what we have to share with others. We know exactly what we have received, the comfort we have been given, and how could we ever want to keep that to ourselves?

In fact, that's really the point of this.

That comfort we receive is certainly to our benefit, but it can also be to the benefit of all God's children.

That is why the ability to mourn is the trait of someone who is getting it – of someone who understands what Jesus is making us into.

When we open ourselves to being a people who mourn, when we realize our own helplessness and sin, when we realize just how much we need a Savior, we open ourselves to receiving comfort.

And then we have something huge we can share with everyone. We are able to share that comfort with others.

What starts as our benefit in the middle of our pain enables us to benefit others in the middle of their pain.

I would call that blessed, indeed.

Mourning isn't fun. We all know that.

And so it's good that Jesus doesn't call us to be in mourning. It's not a command that we're supposed to follow.

Instead, Jesus is spelling out the type of people we become when we truly follow him.

We become a people who recognize our own sin, who recognize the sin of the world. And recognizing that sin causes us pain as it causes our Creator pain. It brings us ever-closer to Him.

When we're able to recognize that separation between God's design and the reality of our world, we open ourselves to receiving the comfort of the salvation of Jesus Christ.

We receive the comfort of knowing he has come to solve the problem of sin – the root of what has caused our pain.

That true and full and profound comfort is something we can never keep to ourselves. And when others are experiencing pain, we will have the comfort we have been given to share with those around us.

We may not think it a blessing to have to go through periods of mourning. But we can indeed know that when we mourn, we are blessed.

Because when we mourn, we will be comforted.

When we mourn, we are finally getting it.

And all of God's people said...