

“BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN”

Matthew 5:4

Intro: Today’s message is the third in a series that I plan to give, the Lord willing, on the Sermon on the Mount. I know that there are Christians who believe that this message is for a later day when the Lord has established His kingdom upon the earth, but it is my conviction that there is truth in these three chapters of Matthew’s Gospel, chapters 5, 6, and 7, that we as Christians desperately need today.

There is nothing in our Lord’s message here in these three chapters that would indicate that it was only for a later day. He spoke to His disciples here, as He always did, with the intention that they were to make an immediate application of these truths to their own lives.

Besides, in this message the Lord spoke of enemies, of false prophets, of lustful thoughts, and problems like divorce. Do these seem to be consistent with the time when our Lord will rule with a rod of iron, and where peace will prevail? I am sure that they don’t. So let us approach these chapters expecting to find truth which can help us today as we seek to live lives that will be pleasing to the Lord, lives which, by the grace of God, will be useful under the blessing of the Lord to turn others to our Savior.

I won’t take the time again today to go over the outline which I have suggested for these three chapters, but I will be referring to that outline as we go along so we can hopefully see the progress in the truth that our Lord made as He moved from the beginning to the end. And so I will mention that in the first sixteen verses of Matthew 5 we have, *The Character of a Christian (Matt. 5:1-16)*. And the appeal that our Lord made to His disciples at the conclusion of this section is found in verse 16. (Read.) Contrary to what we are hearing today, *character is important! It is extremely important! Without a godly life there will be no light for a world in darkness.* I am sure that there are many professing Christians who accept this idea. However, such teaching is clearly contrary to Scripture, and we need to dismiss it immediately as total heresy.

Last week we looked at the first Beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” To be “poor in spirit” is a term that is spiritual. It tells us that one of the identifying characteristics of a Christian is *humility*. And that is brought out by the last statement of the verse: “For their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” There are several verses in Matthew’s Gospel which speak of entering the kingdom of heaven as

referring to salvation. Let me read these to you.

In Matt 5:20 we read these words of our Lord:

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And then in Matt. 7:21, these words:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Going from there to Matt. 18:3, we have these words from our Lord.

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In Matt. 19:23-24 we have a case where “the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are used to show that they can be used interchangeably:

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

And then I want to read one verse from John’s Gospel where the Lord spoke along this same line, but used “the kingdom of God”

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again (John 3:5-7).

So to say of certain people that “their’s is the kingdom of heaven,” is to say that they are genuinely saved. So a person who shows by his life that he or she is not fit to be saved, but is greatly humbled by the thought that he or she is saved, is one characteristic that you will always find in a true Christian. We are not worthy to be saved. We are spiritually bankrupt (so to speak) in ourselves. If it had not been for the grace of God and the love of God, we would still be in our sins.. We deserve hell, not heaven. We deserve to be held accountable for our sins, but we are humbled to know that Jesus Christ took our penalty upon Himself when He died on the Cross.

Look for this sense of your own unworthiness in your own heart. And expect to see this same characteristic in the lives of all others who claim to be the people of God.

Now the reason that we should truly be humbled because of our salvation, is brought out in the second Beatitude. (Read Matt. 5:4.)

Here we have:

I. A PARADOX: “Blessed are they that mourn.”

A paradox can be defined as a statement which seems to be contradictory, and yet is true. And it concerns the two words “blessed” and “mourn.”

We learned last week that “blessed” means *happy*, and so it appears that our Lord was saying that the people who mourn are the happy people. For people in general mourning is associated with sadness, not gladness. So if you are sad, how can you possibly be described as being happy. Do you see the problem that people have with this verse? What is the answer?

Well, it follows from what we learned about the first Beatitude. The Lord was not speaking in the first Beatitude about financial poverty, but about being “poor in spirit,” *spiritual poverty, poverty of heart, humility*. The first Beatitude teaches us that the truly happy people are the people of God who know that they have absolutely no reason to be proud. Instead, they have every reason to be humble.

Now what is the major reason for our humility? And please remember that I am speaking, as our Lord was, to those who claim to be the people of God. The major reason for our humility is that we are sinners.

I mentioned to you last week that Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his book on the Sermon on the Mount was lamenting the fact that the professing church today is not what it ought to be. And he said that forty years ago. During those forty years, conditions in the church have continued to decline. We seem to be moving more and more in the world’s direction, emphasizing entertainment and having a good time, instead of being distinctively different from the world. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones pointed out that the church today has lost its sense of sin, personal sin, and the awfulness of sin in any form. People often profess to be saved who have no consciousness of their own terrible sinfulness. And those who profess to be Christians often are lacking in any understanding of the sinfulness of sin. And this is a great change from the way the church has been in the

past.

Recently here at Trinity we have had a strong dose of exposure to verses of Scripture which have to do with man's moral depravity, his total depravity! We have had this in the opening chapters of the book of Romans which we are studying in our Sunday School at the present time. And quite providentially, at the same time, without any idea on our part that these two would be before us together, we are learning verses on Total Depravity. Let me mention a few of the verses we have been considering to re-establish in our minds how great a problem sin is.

For example: Gen. 15:6. This verse states what God saw when He looked upon the earth in the period just before the great Flood which we are told about in the book of Genesis:

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

Notice the words "great" and "every" and "only." You talk about Total Depravity that was it.

But listen now to the way our Lord described those days of Noah, and followed His description of those days with the days of Lot, Abraham's nephew. I am reading from Luke 17:26-30:

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

What were the people doing? Well, they were doing a lot of things that the Lord did not mention when He spoke these words, but mainly they had no time for God. They were eating and drinking, having a good time, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, planting crops and building homes and barns. But it was all without God. God was given no place in their lives. They lived as though God did not exist, and that He didn't care what they did. But notice those words at the beginning of Gen. 6:5, "And God saw..."

That is America today, isn't it? We don't have time for the Lord as a nation. We legalize that which is abominable in His sight. We think we are getting away with whatever we want to do. And all the time there is not a single thing that escapes the eye of God. Solomon wrote almost 3,000 years ago, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov 15:3). And those words are still true today.

Listen to another passage: Rom. 14:1-3:

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

(Comment.) This has been God's portrait of human life from the beginning, and it is no different today.

But let me point out that this description was true of all of us until the Lord saved us from our sins. But what a tremendous day it was when the Lord opened our eyes so that we could see our sin, and we realized what Isaiah had to say about all human beings by nature:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities (Isa. 64:6-7).

Now, when we learn what sin is, and how our sins have grieved the Lord, and put us in danger of eternal judgment, what will our attitude be? And here is the point of our second Beatitude: ***We will mourn!*** But this is what so often is missing when people are supposedly saved. They are not grieved over their sins. There is no repentance. It seems that comparatively few say what the publican said in the temple, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" See Luke 18:13.

People today often go to church because they want to "feel good about themselves." People who don't know the Lord need to feel "bad" about themselves. But they don't like to hear about sin. They would like to get that word out of the English language, and all other languages. But let me say today on the authority of Jesus Christ Himself, that if you are *mourning* before God because of the many, many ways you have displeased Him,

then you are on the way to knowing what true happiness is for the first time in your life. And Christians, if we have to sneak away to the world for our joy, perhaps we are playing around with sin in our lives, we have ceased to mourn over our sins, and so the joy of the Lord has been taken out of our hearts.

The people who are the most to be pitied in all the world are the people who do not mourn over their sins. And another thing that will be true of us when we mourn over our own sins, is that we will begin to mourn over the sins of others. Our Lord did. And the Apostle Paul did. It is easy to get disgusted with others because of their sins, but when we have learned to mourn and to regret and to repent for our own sins, then it will make us feel differently about people who are content to live their lives without God.

But let me tell you another thing will happen when we learn to mourn over our sins. *We will mourn, we will be grieved, because of the price our Lord Jesus Christ paid on Calvary's Cross to deliver us from our sins.*

Do you know what it is to weep over your sins? Have you every told the Lord that you are sorry that you ever did anything that displeased Him? It is said that when Handel was composing The Messiah, and came to the place where he was setting the words of Isaiah 53 to music, that when he came to the words, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities," that he put his head down on his desk and wept as though his heart would break. Have you ever done that? "Blessed are they that mourn." This is the kind of mourning that the Lord was speaking about.

But is this the end of the Beatitude? No, it isn't. The Lord saved the best for the last. The first part of the verse sounds like a paradox; the last part is:

II. A PROMISE: "For they shall be comforted."

Our comfort is not to be found in our tears. Nor is it found in our desire to make it up to God for all of the sinning we have done. And it surely is not in any promise we might make to God that we will try to do better. Augustus Toplady eliminated all of these in his great hymn, Rock of Ages, in these words, and then points us to the only comfort there is:

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,

Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

We are comforted by the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

What can wash away my sins?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

If Jesus Christ is not your Savior, I earnestly hope that coming to church today has not made you feel good, but bad, unless during this service you have placed your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. If that is the case, then praise Him because He has given you the faith to believe. And only the Lord can make us grieve over our sins as He gently draws us to Himself.

For those of us who know the Lord, let me ask: Have you, have I, gotten careless in our lives about sin? Are we continually asking the Lord to lead us in what we do, and in what we say, and even in what we think? Are we condoning some sin which has taken away our joy in the Lord? Have we been neglecting the reading of the Word, and prayer? Have we excused ourselves because of our busy-ness” from taking proper care of our fellowship with the Lord? If so, then turn back to the Lord right where you are, ask Him to make you like our Lord Jesus Christ Who loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.

Concl: We come to the Lord’s Table this morning. It is here that we need to search our own hearts, and then repenting and confessing our sins, be comforted that “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all of our sin. The Lord wants all of us to be happy, not with the world’s false happiness, but that which is true and so satisfying. That happiness can be ours if we grieve over our sins, and seek our comfort from Christ.