Blessed Mourners

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0:00] Well, if we could, this evening, if we could turn to the Gospel according to Matthew and Matthew chapter 5. Matthew chapter 5, as I said, we're continuing our study in the Beatitudes.

We began last Wednesday evening. Matthew chapter 5, and if we read again, if we read from the beginning.
Seeing the crowds, Jesus 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.
And then our verse for consideration this evening. Verse 4, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Do you know, over the years, some Bible translators, they have attempted to translate this second Beatitude as happy are the unhappy.
[1:13] Happy are the unhappy. Which, of course, highlights that the second Beatitude, it presents to us what we would maybe call a puzzling paradox.

Because how can we know happiness when we are unhappy? How can we know joy in the midst of sorrow? How can we know comfort when we're distressed?
How can we know blessing when we are faced with the curse of sin and death? My friend, the second Beatitude of Jesus, it presents to us this puzzling paradox, where happy are the unhappy.
Happy are the unhappy. Now, as we said last week when we began our study of the Beatitudes, we said that these opening verses in the Sermon on the Mount, they set before us nine Beatitudes, or they're nine statements of blessing, or nine benedictions of blessedness.
And as we saw, the first Beatitude, the first benediction of blessedness, was bookended with royal language. It was bookended with the language of the King, because Jesus is the King in the Kingdom of Heaven.
[2:26] And we saw that in verse 3, where Jesus said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. And as we learned from the opening Beatitude of King Jesus, we learned that the only way for sinners to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and the only way for sinners to experience and enjoy all the blessings and benefits of the Kingdom of Heaven, is when we come before King Jesus, humbly acknowledging that without Him, we are spiritually broke and spiritually bankrupt.

We are completely deprived and completely destitute of all the blessings and benefits of salvation.
Therefore, as Jesus teaches us through the word blessed, we're to come before King Jesus.
We're to come on bended knee, and we're to come surrendering and submitting our lives with our head bowed and our hand outstretched before King Jesus, so that we will receive from the gracious, merciful, and loving hand of King Jesus, what we do not deserve.
And when we do that, He blesses us. He blesses us, because blessing only comes from the gracious, merciful, and loving hand of King Jesus.
And as we said, that's what this repeated royal word means. It's repeated all the way through the Beatitudes, the word blessed. And the word blessed, as we said, it means to kneel.
[3:58] It means to kneel in order to receive from the gracious hand of the King what we do not deserve. And so in the first Beatitude, Jesus taught us about blessed poverty.

He taught us about blessed poverty. But this evening, Jesus teaches us about blessed mourning.
Blessed mourning. And He says to us, happy are the unhappy.
Happy are the unhappy. And happy are the unhappy because they mourn over sin and they mourn over someone. And they are out headings this evening.

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They mourn over sin and they mourn over someone. Happy are the unhappy, He says. Because first of all, they mourn over sin.
They mourn over sin. Jesus says in verse 4, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Now those who first mourned in this world and those who first mourned over their sin were our first parents, Adam and Eve.
[5:09] As you know, they were the apex of God's creation. They were the climax and culmination of God's creative process. They were created last because they were the climax and culmination.

They were made in the image and likeness of God. They were formed and fashioned from the dust of the ground. And they possessed, as our catechism teaches us, they possessed perfect knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.
And prior to the curse of the fall, Adam and Eve, they had only ever known blessing and blessedness. They had only ever known the blessing of God upon their lives.
They'd only ever known the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of God. But when they fell from that perfect estate wherein they were created, sin entered.
Sin entered, and it was both original sin and actual sin. And sin entered through the disobedience of our first parents.
[6:13] Our catechism reminds us that all mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God and are under His wrath and curse and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

And it was in that moment that Adam and Eve, they received the fruit of their labor. Because, as we read in Genesis 3, they had knowledge. They had knowledge of good and evil.
But the first thing they knew about themselves was that they were naked. The first thing they knew is that they were open and laid bare before a holy God.
And when they knew that they were naked before God, we're told that they also gained knowledge of their sin and their shame. That's why they tried to cover themselves.
They tried to cover their nakedness and hide themselves from the holiness of God. But God asked them. He asked them questions. First question God asked them, where are you?
[7:19] The next question God asked them, what have you done? And of course, with such a destructive and devastating outcome for their sin, Adam and Eve, they would have mourned over their fallen estate of sin and misery.

They would have mourned over their disobedience to God and their determination to go their own way and to do their own thing. They would have mourned that they listened to the serpent instead of listening and loving and looking to the God who loved them and created them.
And yet, you know, what we read in Genesis 3 and the account of the fall is that that chapter, it begins with the problem of sin.
But it actually ends with the promise of the Savior. The chapter begins with the punishment and curse of death. But the chapter ends with the promise and blessing of eternal life.
Where it could be said even of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, happy are the unhappy for they shall be comforted. Happy are the unhappy for they shall be comforted.
[8:30] Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. And they were comforted. Adam and Eve were comforted. They were consoled by the promise of God's Word.

Because as we read in Genesis 3, verse 15, we're given what theologians call the Proto-Evangelium, which is the first gospel.
The Proto-Evangelium. The first gospel. And the first gospel message that was preached and proclaimed by God in the Garden of Eden, it was a sermon preached to the serpent.
It was a sermon preached to the serpent, preached to Satan, where God said, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring.
And he will crush your head, but you will only bruise his heel. My friend, even though Adam and Eve encountered and experienced the punishment of curse and curse of death, they also encountered and enjoyed the promise and blessing of life.
[9:42] Because when they gained knowledge of their sin and shame, when they knew that they were naked and laid bare before a holy God, they mourned over the problem of their sin.

And yet, in their mourning, that's what we see in Genesis 3, in their mourning they were comforted and they were consoled by the promise of a Savior. A Savior who would come and crush the head of the serpent.

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And you know, this is what Jesus meant when he said in the Sermon on the Mount, Happy are the unhappy, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. But as you know, my friend, this is what it was like, is it not? This is what it was like when we first came to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.
Because when God began working in your life and my life by His Spirit, when He effectually called you in the Gospel, the first thing He did, like He did with Adam and Eve, was convince you of your sin and misery.
[10:49] That's the first thing He did. Like Adam and Eve, the first thing the Lord did was convince you that you were naked and laid bare before a holy God. He convinced you of your sin and shame.

He convinced you of your disobedience and your determination to go your own way and do your own thing. He convinced you of your sin and misery. And in your sin and misery, you mourned. You mourned over the mistakes in your life and the mess of your soul. And I don't know what it was like for you, but in my experience, Psalm 51 became so personal to me, so real to me, where I was praying and confessing, saying with David in Psalm 51, create a clean heart, Lord renew, a right spirit me within.
Maybe for you, you were like the publican who couldn't even lift his head but just beat his breast saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner. God be merciful to me, a sinner.
But as you know, my friend, when God began working in your life by His Spirit, and when He effectually called you in the gospel, He not only convinced you of your sin and misery, He comforted you.
[12:09] And He comforted you by enlightening your mind in the knowledge of Christ. He didn't leave you in your sin and misery. He didn't leave you just convinced that you were unsavable.

No, He comforted you by enlightening your mind in the knowledge of Christ. He comforted you by reminding and reassuring you with the same gospel promise that He gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
He promised you that there was one who was wounded for your transgression and bruised for your iniquity and that the chastisement of your peace was upon Him and that with His stripes you are healed.
My friend, when God began working in your life by His Spirit, He effectually called you in the gospel. He convinced you of your sin and misery but He also comforted you with the promise.
And you know, it was a great comfort to be reminded that here in His love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sin.
[13:18] He sent His Son to be us. The Jews longed to see the atoning sacrifice for our sin. And we were given that wonderful promise. If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

All because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. And my friend, you know, in your contrition and your confession, was there not comfort and consolation.
Why was that? Because happy are the unhappy for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they who mourn over sin for they shall be comforted.
But as you know, my friend, our contrition and our confession of sin, it's not just a one-time act. It's not something we did 30 or 40 years ago.
Because, you know, our mourning is not to be momentary. It's not even to be minimal. Our mourning is to be, what you could say, methodical. It's to be meticulous.
[14:33] Because as Christians, we are called to confess all our sins. We're called to confess particular sins, private sins, public sins, even painful sins, sins of commission, sins of omission.

We're to confess sin because when we come to God in contrition and confession of sin, it's then that we experience and we enjoy consolation and comfort.
When we come to God in contrition and confession of sin, it's then that we experience and enjoy consolation and comfort.
And, you know, was that not Paul's experience as a Christian? Do you remember what Paul wrote in Romans 7? He's confessing his sin. He's talking about the burden of sin in his life in Romans 7 and he says, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?
And then you go a few verses on into the beginning of Romans 8. And there Paul is comforted. He's comforted and he's consoled by God's forgiveness that he declares there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

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[15:55] And, you know, as Jesus teaches us about blessed mourning, he says, happy are the unhappy because they mourn over sin.

Happy are the unhappy because they mourn over sin. But Jesus also says, happy are the unhappy because they mourn over someone.
Happy are the unhappy because they mourn over someone. Jesus says, blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.
You know, I think we're all familiar with the concept of mourning over the loss of someone we love. Because as homes and as families and even as a community and a congregation, death is never far from us.
And it's always a real reminder to us that death is an enemy. Death is the last enemy. Death is a powerful enemy. Because as you know, death, it severs our ties in this world and it separates us from those whom we love.
[17:02] And of course, death is a result of Genesis 3. It's the outcome of the fall. For as Paul reminds us, the wages of sin is death.

That's what the Lord promised Adam and Eve in the garden. You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die. My friend, the curse of the fall was the curse of sin and death.
And yet Jesus teaches us here that those who enter the kingdom of heaven by faith, they will experience the blessing of comfort when we encounter the curse of sin and death.
We will experience the blessing of comfort when we encounter the curse of sin and death. There will be blessings, says Jesus. There will be blessedness in our mourning because the king of the kingdom of heaven will comfort us in our sadness and sorrow.
There will be blessing and blessedness in our mourning because the king of the kingdom of heaven will comfort us in our sadness and sorrow. And you know, this is what sets Jesus apart from all the other religions and even those who don't have a religion at all.
[18:20] Because you know, when I see people experience and encounter the effects of sin, sickness, suffering, sadness, and sorrow in life, I don't know about you, but I often wonder, well, how do they keep going?

How do they cope? How do they cope without Jesus? And the truth is, they don't. They don't. Because as you know, so many people, they often bury themselves in work or they drown themselves in alcohol or they try in some way to numb this pain of sadness and sorrow.
But Jesus is reminding us here that the glory of the gospel is that in the midst of our mourning, Jesus promises blessing. In the midst of our mourning, Jesus promises blessing.
He promises comfort in the face of the curse. He promises grace to help in our time of need. And that's because Jesus is the king in the kingdom of heaven.
And Jesus, as you know, he came into this world to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. He came to bind up the brokenhearted and to heal their wounds.
[19:45] He came to defeat death and conquer the grave and bring life and immortality to light through the gospel. But you know what I love about our Jesus?

And I love calling him our Jesus. What I love about our Jesus is that when we encounter and when we experience the pain of sorrow and separation, he knows what we're going through.
He knows what we're going through. This is the amazing thing about him. He was touched, as Hebrews tells us, he was touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.
Jesus knew what it was to mourn over the loss of a loved one because you'll remember he wept at the grave of Lazarus. And you know, in John 11, it's the shortest verse in the Bible and yet for the Lord's people it's the most soothing verse.
It's the shortest verse but the most soothing verse to know that in the face of the curse of sin and death, Jesus wept. Jesus wept.
[20:55] Jesus mourned and wept at the grave of Lazarus because he saw the power and pain of sin and death. But on that occasion, you'll remember in John 11, on that occasion in the community of Bethany, their mourning was only momentary.

Their mourning was only momentary because their mourning was then turned into dancing where Jesus said to the grave of Lazarus, Lazarus, come forth.

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Jesus displayed and demonstrated his power over death with the resurrection of Lazarus. Their mourning was momentary in the community of Bethany.
But as those living in the community of Barvis and beyond, although our mourning will not be momentary, although our mourning will not be momentary, Jesus promises us here, he promises us blessing in our brokenness.
He promises us blessing in our brokenness. Because, you know, there's a sense in which you never stop mourning over the loss of a loved one.
[22:06] You never stop mourning because you never stop missing them. Yes, you can learn to live with that pain in your heart and that void in your life, but it's not momentary mourning.

It's blessing in your brokenness. It's not momentary mourning. It's blessing in your brokenness. And as those who have entered the kingdom of heaven, as those who have come humbly before King Jesus and entered and received all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, what King Jesus promises you, he promises you blessing in your brokenness.
He promises you blessing in your brokenness. That's why Paul could write to the Corinthians in his second letter and say to them, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
You know, Paul says there in 2 Corinthians that as the Lord's people, we are blessed in our brokenness so that we will be a blessing to others in their brokenness. Paul says that we are blessed in our brokenness so that we will be a blessing to others in their brokenness.
My friend, the misery of the curse of sin and death is that it severs our ties and it separates us from family and friends. But you know, the message, although there is misery, the message of the kingdom of heaven is that nothing and no one can sever or separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
[23:56] You know, that's why Paul asked that thought-provoking question in Romans 8. He starts off with the confession that there is therefore now no condemnation. Then he finishes Romans 8 by asking, well, who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation? No, he says. Distress? No. Persecution? No. Famine? No. Nakedness? No. Peril? No. Sword? No. No. And all these things, he says, we're more than conquerors through him that loved us.
For I am persuaded, I am persuaded, he says, that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come neither height nor depth nor any other creature is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
You know, my friend, Jesus is king in the kingdom of heaven and the wonder of him is that he promises blessing in your brokenness. He promises blessing in your brokenness.
He promises you blessed mourning. Blessed mourning. He says to you, happy are they unhappy when they mourn over sin and even mourn over someone.
[25:18] Happy are they unhappy when they mourn over sin and they mourn over someone. But you know, the thing is, my friend, and with this I'll close, we do not mourn as those without hope.

We do not mourn as those without hope because as those who are in Christ our hope is sure and steadfast. It is the anchor of our soul.
As those who are in Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. And you know, one such blessing among many, one such blessing is the promised Holy Spirit.
We have the Spirit in us. Whether we're mourning over our sin or mourning over someone we love, it is the Holy Spirit, says Paul.
In Romans 8 again, he encourages us and he enables us to cry, Abba, Father. It's the Spirit who intercedes. It's the Holy Spirit, we're told, who intercedes for us.
[26:28] with groanings. Groanings that cannot be uttered. Even when we're mourning over sin or mourning over someone and we don't even have words to speak to God, it's the Spirit who intercedes with groanings that cannot be uttered.

And you know, is it any wonder to us that when Jesus spoke of his departure from this world, he said to his disciples that the promised Holy Spirit whom he would send in his place would be called the Comforter.

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That was the name he gave him. The Comforter. I will pray to the Father and he will give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever.
Jesus has given us the Comforter. He has promised us blessed mourning. He has said to us that he promises blessing in our brokenness.
Happy are the unhappy for they shall be comforted, says Jesus. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.
[27:40] May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray together. our Heavenly Father, we give thanks to thee for the wonder of thy word and the assurance that it gives to us, that it reminds us that we are able to experience blessing even in our brokenness.

And Lord, we do pray for those who are broken, broken because of sin, maybe sins of the past, sins that they maybe cling to so closely, but that thou, Lord, in thy grace and in thy mercy, that thou wouldst cleanse them and remove them from these sins.
But Lord, we ask also for those who are broken, broken in their mourning, broken because of the loss of loved ones, that thou, in thy grace and in thy mercy, that thou wouldst bind up their broken hearts and heal their wounds.
Lord, we thank thee and we praise thee for a wonderful Saviour and that we are able to say that he is my Jesus, that he is mine and I am his.
Lord, be near to us then we pray, guide us we ask and go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to sing again this time in Psalm 30.
[28:59] Psalm 30 in the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 239. And for those who are watching at home, after this psalm, the live stream will end.

Psalm 30, we're singing from the beginning, Lord, I will thee extol, for thou hast lifted me on high and over me thou to rejoice, made's not mine enemy. And we'll sing down to the verse marked five, for but a moment lasts his wrath, life in his favour lies, weeping may for a night endure and morn doth joy arise.
So we'll sing these verses of Psalm 30 to God's praise. Amen. Lord, For thou hurt, God, my God, Lord my God, I am dearest rest to thee.
With Lord Christ lifted up my voice, and thou hast given me.
O Lord my soul, I was brought up, and rescued from the grave.
[31:23] But I to them should not go down, I thou didst me say.

For he loved all his holy ones, sing praise unto the Lord.
Unpunitant hearts, when he this holiness reformed.
For the Lord, O man, last is what?
Life in his favor lies. Weep in me for a night, and you are born to join our eyes.

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