

Blessed Are The Mourners

The Sermon on the Mount starts with the ten Beatitudes. The beatitudes describe the maturing, spiritual life of those who really follow Jesus. Yet, it is the Holy Spirit working in a Christian who causes the characteristics of the beatitudes to evolve and become a reality in the Christian's life. The first beatitude that Jesus spoke was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (NASB) In our last study we discovered that the Greek word which is translated as "poor" referred to a beggar or someone who literally had nothing at all. The word described a man called Lazarus who was happy just to be able to eat crumbs from the table of a rich man. He had absolutely nothing. But Jesus used the word in a spiritual sense to tell us that His followers must come to Him as spiritual beggars. We must realize that we are spiritual beggars. We have nothing! We must come to God with eagerness to receive whatever He is willing to give us in a spiritual sense. We must come begging! Jesus started His sermon with a strong statement. If you want to enter the kingdom of God, then you must come as a spiritual beggar. Only spiritual beggars enter the kingdom of God.

2ND BEATITUDE. Jesus' second beatitude was,

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
(NASB) Matt. 5:4

Immediately after reading the words, it is obvious to us that Jesus did not literally mean that mourners are happy people. It is also obvious that almost everyone stops mourning and grieving after awhile. Jesus was not referring to the obvious such as mourning over the death of a loved one.

Just before Christmas of 1998, my father died of Lou Gehrig's disease. He was diagnosed one year before his death with a most aggressive form of the disease, Bulbar ALS. His first symptom was difficulty in speaking. As the disease progressed, he had difficulty swallowing and eating. Eventually he lost

the ability to speak or eat. In the summer of 1998, he started "eating" through a tube in his stomach, and eventually the disease began to paralyze his lungs. The things that he suffered were painful and at times embarrassing for him. It was a slow death. Finally, he went home to be with God just before Christmas. We rejoiced and mourned. We rejoiced because he had the best Christmas of the entire family. We mourned because we lost a loved one. But eventually our mourning ceased.

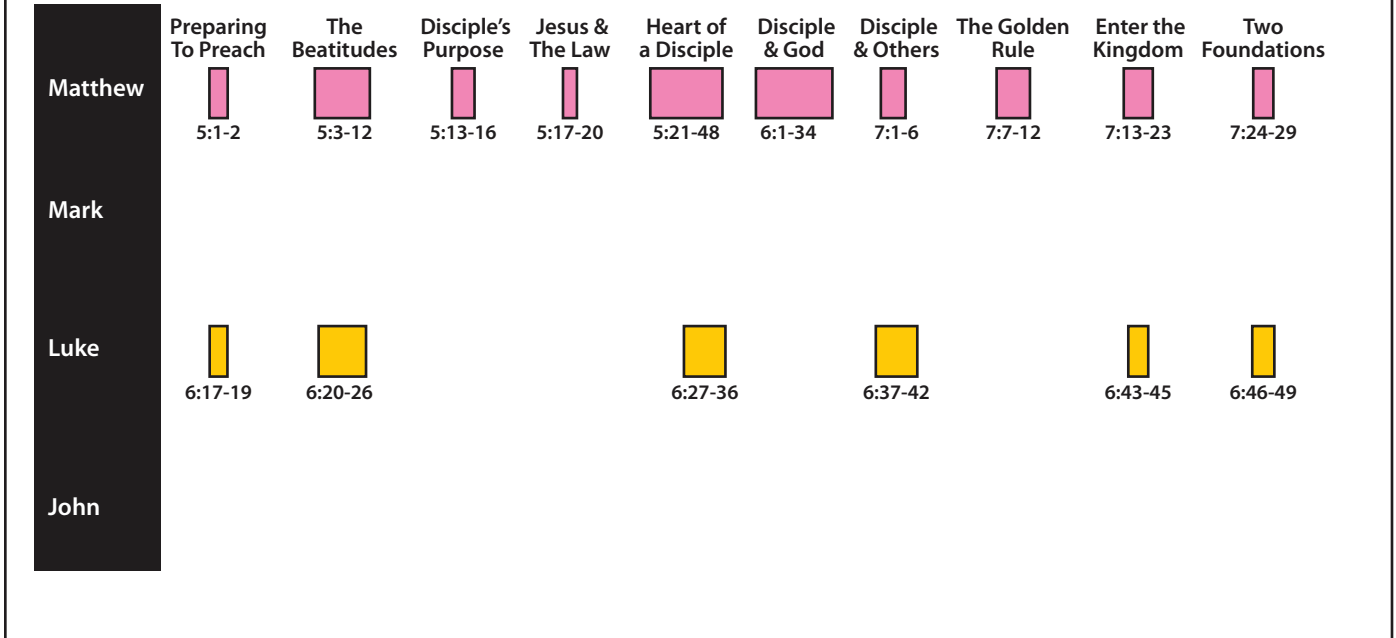
WHAT JESUS DID NOT MEAN? Mourning eventually stops in most cases, and those who continue to mourn have

other issues to deal with in their life. Jesus was not talking about someone who is always unhappy and upset with lives. He was not referring to those who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Mark 16:10 tells us the disciples mourned and wept over Jesus'



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death. Jesus mourned the death of Lazarus (John 11:35), and King David grieved the death of Absalom (2 Sam. 18:19-19:4).

Jesus was not talking about mourning over financial loss such as that which will occur in the future when God destroys the economic structure of the world (Rev. 18:11-17). Jesus was not talking about mourning over suffering which occurs because we did wrong (1 Pet. 3:17). He was not referring to mourning that might occur because our sinful desires are frustrated. The scriptures tell us that Ammon mourned because he wanted to commit incest with his sister (2 Sam. 13:2), and Ahab grieved his loss of an inheritance (1 Kings 21:4). Jesus was not talking about mourning or grief in the ministry (Acts 20:31) or because God has been dishonored (Ps. 139:21). Nor was Jesus referring to the mourning that will occur around the world when God judges the world for rejecting Him (Rev. 16:10-21).

MEANING OF MOURN. Jesus was not talking about any physical cares, wants, passions, lusts, greed, or longings. He was talking about spiritual mourning. Jesus spoke of a mourning that does not go away with time unless the person

spiritually rejects God.

The Greek word that Jesus used for mourn in the second beatitude is PENTHEO.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

(NASB) Matt. 5:4

It is the strongest word that Jesus could have used for deep inner emotional grief, sorrow, and mourning. It is a mourning that consumes the person. PENTHEO is a verb and is a present active participle. This means that Jesus was referring to repeated action or an ongoing condition of mourning. He was not talking about a preoccupation with sin but a sorrow that occurs when we sin.


2 Corinthians 7:10 tells us that there are two types of sorrow or mourning.

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (NASB) 2 Cor 7:10

The Holy Spirit tells us there is a sorrow that is of this world and then there is a godly sorrow. The second type we have already described. It is a mourning over the denial of our physical cares, wants, passions, lusts, greed, or longings. Throughout our life there have been and will be times when we mourn or sorrow over negative events in our life unless we are hard hearted. There are some people who are like that. But this first type of mourning is not the type Jesus described - one that continues and never stops.

When Jesus described a person who was constantly mourning and mourning, He was referring to the first type of sorrow referred to in 2 Cor. 7:10. He was referring to a person who is mourning his or her sin. It is these individuals who will be comforted. The Greek word means "to encourage." Jesus was talking about an ongoing pattern of life. All true followers of Jesus came to Him because they were mourning their sin, and our mourning should not stop after we find Him.

Those who are poor in spirit will be mourning their sin. It

 hose who are poor in spirit will be mourning their sin. It is not possible to be mourning our sin unless we believe that we are spiritual beggars.

is not possible to be mourning our sin unless we believe that we are spiritual beggars. These two beatitudes characterize the true followers of Jesus. This is the heart of the beatitude. True followers never stop mourning over sin.

OUR PRESENT CONDITION. Billy Graham makes this observation,

The present age is definitely not an age of mourning. Instead, people deliberately turn away from anything unpleasant, determined to fill their lives with those things which will divert their minds from anything serious. In their preoccupation with momentary pleasures and diversions, people settle for shallow and empty substitutes for reality. Millions give more thought to what programs they will watch tonight on TNT, [DVD,] or what videotape they will rent for the weekend than they

do to the things of eternity. (Billy Graham. The Secret of Happiness. Word Publishing. 1955)

And he is correct. But Jesus was not talking about our culture but about the man or woman who is concerned about eternity.

Today, many folks do not want to hear that they are sinners and need to have their sins forgiven. A few years ago Newsweek wrote the following,

The notion of self esteem may put off anyone old enough to remember when "Christian" as an adjective was often followed by "humility." But American churches, which once did not shrink from calling their congregants wretches, have moved to a more congenial view of human nature . . . Chastising sinners is [now] considered counterproductive: it makes them feel worse about themselves." (quoted from Dan Burrell, Montana News Association)

But in the second beatitude Jesus told His audience that unless they saw themselves as spiritual beggars, they could not see the kingdom of God; and those who were mourning their sin would be encouraged.

CONCLUSION. Anyone who sees himself/herself as a spiritual beggar and who is mourning his or her sin can be comforted by God and only by God. We are first comforted when we believe in Jesus since we know that He forgives our sins,

Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. (NASB) Acts 10:43

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men . . . looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of

our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed . . . (NASB) Titus 2:11-14

Jesus forgives all of our sins, not just a few or only the old ones. He forgives all of them - even the present and future sins.

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying . . . “AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.” Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. (NASB) Heb. 10:14-18

He comforts us by assuring us that He has forgiven all of our sins. He forgives all of our past, present, and future sins.

Those are words of encouragement, words of comfort to anyone who is a spiritual beggar - to one who is mourning one's sins. This is true of every follower of Jesus.

But every Christian still has a spiritual Lou Gehrig's disease. Those who believe in Jesus were once terminally ill people or sinners who were going to eternal judgment but are now going to heaven. When we die we shed this body of sin and we will be given a new holy, heavenly body. Praise God. But while we are visiting this earth, we need to see ourselves as we really are - forgiven sinners who should be seeking to be holy. We need to come and admit that we still

have a spiritual Lou Gehrig's disease - SIN.

Every follower of Jesus will continue to sense their unholiness - they will continue to constantly mourn every time they sin just as Paul the apostle.

For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? (NASB) Rom. 7:19-20, 24

Even though Paul's sins were forgiven by God, he was still a spiritual beggar who continued to mourn each sin. As we admit our sins to God, we are comforted knowing that they have already been forgiven.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NASB) 1 John 1:9

We do not need to beg for forgiveness or see a priest. We need only to admit our sins and they are forgiven. Now that is comforting.

. . . and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” (NASB) Heb. 10:17