

A BEATITUDE FOR GRIEF

Something I realized after being informed about the death of Matt Miles was that this week's sermon was already scheduled to be the second beatitude:

Matthew 5:4

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

This is a beatitude for grief.

This is what we need to hear this morning.
After a rough week of grief and anger, confusion, and hurt

Psalms 6:6-7

I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
My eyes waste away because of grief;
they grow weak because of all my foes.

"Foes" = šārār: Enemies, distress or trouble

A Vision of Jesus

If you were making a list of blessed people — people you'd envy, people whose lives you'd want — "those who mourn" wouldn't make the cut.

We don't put grieving people on magazine covers. We don't ask them for life advice. When someone is mourning, our instinct is to get them *out* of it — fix it, medicate it, distract from it, and rush them toward "moving on."

Mourning looks like the opposite of blessing.

And yet here is Jesus, in the very first paragraph of his very first recorded sermon, looking at ordinary, hurting people and saying: *You. The ones with the tears. You are blessed.*

Our church is mourning, our church has tears and is grieving because of the loss of Matt. We are hurting and are in pain, but Jesus says "You are blessed." I want to understand this.

This is not a throwaway line. It's the second beatitude, and it builds directly on the first. Last week Pastor Tina taught us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" — those who know they have nothing to offer God. Now he says: blessed are those who feel the weight of that. Poverty of spirit isn't just a theological position; it produces grief. When you see yourself and your world clearly, you mourn.

And Jesus says that mourning is not a problem to escape. It's a doorway.

Let's ask three questions this morning: What is this mourning? Why would it be blessed? And what does the comfort look like?

What Kind of Mourning?

The Greek word here for mourning — *pentheo* — is a strong word. It's not wistfulness. It's not a passing sadness. It's the word used for mourning the dead. This is grief that bends you over, that you can't perform your way out of.

Now, does Jesus mean *all* grief — any loss, any sorrow? I think the answer is yes, broadly — Jesus is not narrowing this to one category of pain.

Scripture doesn't shame us for grieving broken bodies, broken marriages, broken dreams, buried parents and children. Lamentations is an entire book that is nothing but mourning stretched over five chapters.

Jesus himself wept at Lazarus's tomb, knowing full well he was about to raise him. Grief is not a lack of faith. It is often the shape faith takes when it collides with a broken world.

But given where this beatitude sits — right after "poor in spirit," right before "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" — there's a specific mourning Jesus has centrally in view: grief over sin. Our own sin. The brokenness of the world as *we're implicated in it*, not just as we suffer from it.

Think about the prophets. Isaiah doesn't just grieve that Israel is *in trouble* — he grieves, "Woe is me, I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips."

Nehemiah hears news of Jerusalem's walls and sits down and weeps — for days — before he does a single practical thing about it. That's the mourning Jesus is describing: an honest, undefended look at what's actually true about us and our world, that doesn't look away, and doesn't numb itself.

So this beatitude has two mourners standing side by side: the one crushed by loss, and the one grieved by sin. Jesus does not rank them. He blesses both, because both refuse the great modern temptation — which is to not feel the wound at all.

The Beauty of Lament (Paul Ian Clarke)

Lament is a very ancient practice of expressing sorrow. We have lost the cultural practice of lament.

Long ago, people knew how to get sorrow out of their system. The first thing you did was make sure your community knew about it. No stigma attached. You just wept, shouted, ranted, and everyone knew it was okay. In fact, they embraced it.

Most importantly, you didn't just scream into the void; you cried out to the one who started this whole life business in the first place. Basically, you ranted at God. That sounds wrong today.

Laments were songs, poems, and public outpourings of honesty. And that's the keyword: honesty.

Out of 150 psalms, fifty-nine are laments. That's nearly half the book dedicated not to praise or happier times, but to pain.

In the ancient world, this was sacred writing. It was not blasphemy or weakness but an essential part of worship.

Contrast that with today's culture. We live in a world that has almost forgotten how to lament. We know how to rage, post, call out, cancel, and condemn. But lament is different from outrage. Lament doesn't point fingers; it opens hands. It doesn't seek to destroy; it seeks to heal.

Scroll through social media after a tragedy, and you'll see how quickly sadness turns to judgment. The comments are full of blame and finger-pointing. We dissect, debate, and demand accountability, all valid in their place, but we rarely stop long enough to grieve. Lament says, "This is unbearable, God, help us." Our culture says, "Whose fault is this, and can someone please get fired?"

Lament doesn't rush to fix or even explain. It gives space to the silence between cries. It says to God, "This isn't fair. It hurts. I can't see you right now, but I'm talking to you anyway." God can handle our raw honesty.

In my own experience that honesty eventually finds God's presence and peace. Not answers, just presence. Lament isn't a detour from faith; it's faith refusing to die in the darkness.

Somewhere along the line, many of us were taught that faith means being composed, keeping your chin up, and smiling, "God's got this." But faith is far grittier and real. The Psalms give permission to shout at heaven. To accuse. To cry. To question. What we learn is that God is not threatened by it. In fact, he's the only one big enough to take it. He actually seems to invite it. He meets us there, not in polished prayers, but between our most unfiltered cries.

If you're exhausted from holding it together, doing a brilliant job of showing the world your highlight reel, but collapsing when the door closes, tell God about it. Don't filter your language or moderate what you say. Let it come from your heart. Shout, weep, plead, and realize you're joining a sacred chorus that has been crying out for millennia.

We need lament back in public life.

Imagine if, instead of racing to judgment, we paused for lament.

If, after a tragedy, our first collective act wasn't to blame, but to grieve.

That honesty is what made the Psalms timeless, and it's what could make us more human again.

Why Is This Mourning Blessed?

Here's the hard question. Not "is grief real" — we all know it's real. The question is why Jesus would call it *blessed*. Not "endured." Not "eventually redeemed." Blessed. Now.

I think there are two reasons.

First, mourning is what honesty produces. You cannot see the truth about a fallen world — your own heart included — and feel nothing. Numbness is not strength; it's often just distance from reality. So when Jesus blesses the mourner, he's blessing the one who has stopped pretending. There's a strange dignity in that. It's the first step out of denial.

Second — and this is the deeper reason — mourning is blessed because of who it's aimed at. This isn't stoic advice to "feel your feelings" for their own sake. The mourning Jesus blesses is mourning that turns somewhere. It doesn't just sit in the wound; it brings the wound to God. Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

The mourning of the beatitudes is not despair — despair has given up on comfort ever arriving. And some of you, I fear have slipped into despair. I am keenly aware of all the trauma this church has endured over the years. But it becomes a problem when we catastrophize these events and compound their individual trauma into a monster ball of despair.

That is not the mourning Christ calls us to; it is a mourning that still hopes. It grieves *toward* Christ. The Apostle Paul implores us "not to grieve like those who have no hope." (1Thessalonians 4:13). We have hope in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That's what separates this from mere sadness. Paul makes exactly this distinction in 2 Corinthians 7:10 — there is a grief that leads to death, and a grief that leads to life, and the difference is not the intensity of the tears. It's the direction they're facing. Godly sorrow keeps walking toward God even while it weeps. That's the mourning Jesus calls blessed.

The Comfort That Is Promised

Jesus doesn't just bless the mourning — he promises comfort. And notice the tense: "will be comforted." Future, but certain. Not "might be." Not "could be, if you handle your grief correctly." *Will* be.

Who is doing the comforting? Look at Isaiah 61 — Jesus was sent "to comfort all who mourn... to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning." Jesus is not simply describing a spiritual principle from a distance. He is the comfort. He is the one who "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows," (Isaiah 53:4)

And that comfort is not only future. Yes, Revelation 21 promises a day when God himself will wipe away every tear, when death and mourning and crying and pain will be no more — that is the final, complete comfort, and it is coming. But there is comfort now too: the nearness of God to the brokenhearted. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1 — we are comforted "so that we may be able to comfort those... with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

So the comfort is both — a present nearness and a future certainty. And it's only available to the ones who let themselves mourn in the first place.

Conclusion

So here's where this leaves us. We are in mourning — Jesus does not tell you to get over it faster. He does not rank your grief against someone else's. He calls you blessed, right in the middle of it, because your grief means you're still looking honestly at what's true, and because that honest grief is exactly the kind of soil comfort grows in.

And if it's your own sin you're grieving — if you've been avoiding an honest look at your own heart because it's easier not to — Jesus says that grief, too, is not a dead end. It's the road toward the one who came, in his own words, to bind up the brokenhearted.

Blessed are those who mourn. Not because mourning is pleasant. But because it is where the comfort of Christ meets us.

Small Group Discussion Questions

Jesus calls mourners "blessed" — a word usually reserved for the fortunate or flourishing. Why would he attach blessing to grief rather than to its absence? What does this suggest about how God views sorrow, compared to how we're often taught to view it (as something to hide, rush past, or "get over")?

The Greek word here (*pentheō*) is intense — it's used elsewhere for mourning the dead. Some read this mourning as limited to grief over sin; others see it as encompassing all deep sorrow — loss, injustice, brokenness in the world. Which reading fits best in context, and does it have to be either/or? How does your answer shape the way you comfort someone who is grieving a death versus grieving their own sin?

Roughly a third of the Psalms are laments — raw, sometimes accusatory prayers of grief. How does the biblical tradition of lament (Psalm 13, Psalm 88, Lamentations) inform what it looks like to "mourn" in a way that is blessed rather than merely miserable? Why might voicing grief to God be an act of faith rather than a lapse in it?

"They will be comforted" is a divine passive — God is the implied comforter. Where in Scripture do we see God actually enact this promise (2 Corinthians 1:3–4, Revelation 21:4, John 11)? Is the comfort Jesus promises mainly future and eschatological, present and experiential, or both — and how does that affect how you'd counsel someone grieving right now?

Romans 12:15 calls believers to "weep with those who weep." How does Matthew 5:4 push against a church culture that avoids grief or rushes people toward "moving on"? What would it look like — practically, in your own church or small group — to create space for lament rather than just resolution?