

## THE ATTITUDE OF LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN A BROKEN WORLD # 2 Peter Burton

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" Matt 5:4*

You could legitimately translate this phrase as "happy are those who are sad." 2 key words: "Blessed" (*makarios*) and "mourn" (*pentheo*) - the strongest word in Greek for "passionate lament." Jesus is intentionally using provocative language here.

A German street artist named Edgar Mueller creates stunning artwork but it only looks clear from one perspective ([https://live.staticflickr.com/4149/4987770646\\_ac80ed8160\\_c.jpg](https://live.staticflickr.com/4149/4987770646_ac80ed8160_c.jpg)). Likewise, the Beatitudes can only be understood from the right perspective. A common mistake is to see them as Idealist: Are they: High ideals that Jesus is urging us to live up to? Entry requirements for the Kingdom of God? Or a checklist of a good Christian? Seeing them like this produces legalism, which leads to guilt and inadequacy if we fall short; or pride and self-righteousness if we feel a measure of success.

**Wisdom Teaching vs Prophetic Teaching**

Our previous series was on Wisdom literature, which focused on our actions of making good decisions. By comparison, the Beatitudes are Prophetic as they concentrate on God's action in us. Consider Isaiah 61v1-3 where mourning becomes joy and despair becomes praise. In Luke 4v14-21 we see Jesus in the synagogue reading from this passage. It sets out his ministry and mission.

Set against this Isaiah backdrop, and Jesus' proclamation that the Kingdom of heaven has come near, we begin to see that the Beatitudes are not about high ideals, but about **God's gracious deliverance and our joyous participation in His work.**

Applying this to the second Beatitude, Jesus is not saying '*blessed are those who mourn, because mourning somehow makes them virtuous and they will get the reward that virtuous people deserve.*' That would be an idealist approach. Jesus is saying '*blessed are those who mourn, because God is gracious and He is acting to deliver us from our sorrows.*' This is the prophetic approach. We are blessed not by doing something right, but by experiencing God's reign in our midst, and in thus learning about the virtues we should embody.

***Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted***

There are three obvious ways to interpret this phrase: 1. Bereavement; 2. Feeling sorrow over the sin of the world, and 3. Feeling sorrow over one's own sin. Thinking of the sorrow we feel over our own sin, and the sin around us, we can link the first 2 Beatitudes together: confession (poor in spirit) leads to contrition (mourning). We're both victims of sin and perpetrators. To be human is to both experience pain, and to inflict it. Consider Ps 51, esp v1-3. We need humility (Matt 7v5) not judging others and ignoring our own situation. Our response: **The Kingdom way is to neither deny nor indulge our sin - but to mourn it.**

*'No man is an island, entire of itself...the death of any man diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind. Therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.'* John Donne - Meditation XVII

We could also say "the sin of any man diminishes me too" but we can become susceptible to compassion fatigue - we simply cannot process the scale of pain that we hear about. Our response: **The Kingdom way is to neither ignore nor trivialise sin in the world - but to mourn it.** We do not have to carry it all but pay attention to what things the Lord might be placing on your heart to pray for, for a season.

As Kingdom people our mourning is different. The promise: *for they will be comforted.* Part A doesn't make sense without Part B. There is hope in our grief. Both Isaiah and Revelation promise the Lord wiping away the tears from every face, and death and mourning coming to an end (Rev 21:4, Is 25:8). Mourning over sin and death is not something we will do forever. "Comfort" (*parakeleo*) - to comfort, encourage, draw alongside - root of the title given to describe the Holy Spirit *paraclete*. Holy Spirit brings us comfort now.

- How can our pain and grief become a route to allow Jesus to bring us comfort?
- If we're avoiding dealing with sin in our life how can we progress to a healthier way?
- How can we manage "compassion fatigue"?
- What can we learn from John 16v33?

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