



-- Read Luke 6:20-26

-- Pray

To begin this morning, listen to the heart cry of David in Psalm 55, where we hear him enunciating the great depths of pain that the human heart often experiences in the many frustrations and sorrows of life. In verses 6-8, he cries out, *“Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest—I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.”* These words are a passionate petition from a man desperate to escape the disillusionment and distress of this world.

And this Psalm does not describe David’s thoughts alone. No, it is left for us in the fifty-fifth Psalm, in part, because it echoes a universal desire of fallen humanity. Inherent in David’s plea for flight is our collective cry for release—that we too might have wings to soar high above the turmoil, the toil, and the terror of this life. We hear in David’s words a cry uttered by all who would yearn for comfort and rest in this world where stinging pain and bitter disappointment seem to lurk around every corner. By and large, we naturally ache to get away... to look away... to run away... and to hide away in that evasive place where sorrow is silent, where pain is not present, where tears are no more. We covet that place of placid peace and perpetual pleasure that seems quite alien to hidden this world. If there are any desires ever-present in this world, surely this is among them.

The ubiquitous presence of this desire to flee from sorrow makes the unlikely statement of Jesus in our verse this morning seem all the more paradoxical. Ponder the scene for a moment... To a host of disciples, nearly all of whom believe that happiness is the exact opposite of tears, Jesus declares in Luke 6:21, *“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”* To a crowd pining for smiles, Jesus proclaims that the path to true happiness comes through sadness. It is those with tear-filled eyes who shall laugh in the end. In other words, Jesus is saying, *“Blessed are the broken, for they will be made whole.”* Or, in Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, He says, *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*

Needless to say, this assertion of Christ is as contrary to the entire foundation of human expectation as anything we find in Scripture, and that is saying a lot. Therefore, as we examine it together this morning, let us not hear it with such a level of comfort that we miss the fact that it is contrary to the whole effort of human life, especially in our culture today.

Think about it for a moment... Think about the great lunacy with which our world chases after excitement and amusement, entertainment and distraction. Consider our collective mania for the next high, and think about the mountains of money, energy, and enthusiasm that we expend in “living it up.” There is, of course, nothing wrong with amusements, in and of themselves. However, when we consider that our obsession with them is very often our attempt to avoid the blessed sadness to which Christ calls us, then we see how the world’s pursuit of pleasure is, in the same motion, actually driving it away from true joy.

-- How those bent on “saving the environment” will end up destroying it – The incandescent light bulb ban

In the same way, as our culture hunts for happiness by attempting to drown out every voice of sadness and brokenness, it is, by that very action, unwittingly rejecting the road to real joy, for the blessedness of which Christ speaks only comes through tears. As our Beatitude for today reveals, the only people who can be truly happy in the end are those who weep now.

No, of course, comes the question, “What does it mean to weep now?” Well, certainly, we can all agree that there is a lot of sorrow in life, and this grief is nothing new. It was every bit as evident in biblical times as it is today. Indeed, one insightful indication of the prevalence and variety of heartache in Jesus’ day is seen in the fact that there are no less than nine different Greek verbs used in the New Testament to describe sadness. Just like the Inuit Eskimos have about 12 distinct words for snow—since snow is so pervasive where they live—so, too, the Koine Greek language of Jesus day is laden with ways to describe sadness. Furthermore, if we will give human history an honest look, we will soon discover that it is really a story countless sorrows and a tale of many tears. Not only so, but we will also discover that this sorrow comes in all shapes and sizes.

Therefore, in order to understand what Jesus means when He says, “*Blessed are you who weep now,*” we must be very careful to define what kind of sorrow He does mean and what types of sorrow He is not talking about.

For example, Jesus is definitely not talking about the type of sinful sorrow that comes in the form of anguish over unfulfilled lust. // This unholy unhappiness happens whenever we mourn because we aren't getting what we think we want. In Scripture, these are the tears of such men as Amnon and Ahab, for example. You may remember from Amnon from 2 Samuel 13, where we find him weeping incessantly and mourning to the point that he became physically sick. Why such angst for Amnon? Because the lust of his heart was unfulfilled. And do you recall what he wanted so badly? He had an urgent obsession to defile his own sister sexually.

These is also the sinful sorrow of Ahab. Do you recall how badly he wanted Naboth's vineyard? He coveted it so much that, in 1 Kings 21:4, we read, "*So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.'* He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat." Do you hear that? Ahab had given himself over completely to despondency and despair all because he wanted what he didn't have. And as he starved his body, he fed his unholy hunger, it resulted in a woefully sinful sadness. Both Ahab and Amnon were consumed by a selfish, self-centered sorrow, and they destroyed any hope of real happiness by indulging in the depressing sorrow of the person who has become the center of his own world.

We need not look far at all to see the devastating consequences that this selfish breed of sadness is reaping in our culture.

- People everywhere miserable because they desperately want something that they do not even need.
- The countless children we all see bellowing until they get their way.
- The all-too-common lifestyle of self-centered self-pity

In addition to lust unfulfilled, Jesus is also not talking about the sinful sorrow that results from unresolved guilt. Now, the larger world around us is really at a loss when it comes to unresolved guilt, because, apart from Christ, they simply have no means of releasing it. However, we also know that full atonement of every sin is available for everyone through faith in Jesus Christ. And as those who have been redeemed in Christ, we have been given this invitation of Scripture:

Hebrews 10:22: "*Let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.*"

The point is simply this: Christians will still encounter guilt in this life. However, it is sinful to linger in it because, in Christ, we have been given access to the throne of grace through the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, while it is absolutely necessary for us to deal with our guilt, it is sinful for us to dwell upon it incessantly in light of the forgiveness God has made possible through Christ. God's people suffer from a sinful sadness whenever we refuse to let go of the very guilt that Christ died to redeem.

Well, those are two of the most common categories of sinful sorrow—lust unfulfilled and guilt unresolved—and they are broad enough to cover the majority of unholy unhappiness that we see in our world. Although, with that said, we could surely list many more categories if we desired. However, to move forward this morning, it is vital for us to recognize that not all sorrow is sinful. On the contrary, in the words of Charlie Brown, there is such a thing as “good grief.” Moreover, according to our Lord, true blessedness will not come apart from it.

Therefore, what is this blessed sorrow? That is, what is the weeping of which Jesus speaks? Well, a good introduction to it can be made by considering the proper sorrow of life in general. By proper sorrow in life here, I mean a rational and expected sorrow that comes quite beneficially in response to simply living among the consequences inherent to this fallen world. It consists of the weeping, grieving, and mourning come as a part of human life in general. Whenever this common sorrow continually bears in mind the hope that we have in Christ, it can be a very helpful gift from God. The proper sorrow of life, then, is usually a good and godly emotion.

Let explain what I mean... When something tragic or profoundly painful occurs in our lives or in our families, God has designed the tears and emotions of sadness and grief to be a mechanism by which we might begin to release that pain and start the process of emotional healing. Conversely, when we internalize our anguish and bottle it up inside, our sadness tends to poison and even paralyze all of our emotions. Proper mourning and grieving serves to release that emotional poison. It is a very natural and healthy process to mourn over things that grieve God as well. By venting our grief, God has granted us the means to release the emotional pain that might otherwise remain ongoing.

There are many examples of proper sorrow in Scripture. The Psalms, for example, are filled with declarations of sorrow based upon a whole host of distressing circumstances, such as the loneliness of Psalm 42, the guilt of Psalm

51, and the betrayal of Psalm 109. In addition, the Old Testament Prophetic books are often filled with anguish over the judgment that that God's people were continually bringing upon themselves. Listen, for instance, to Jeremiah 9:1, where Jeremiah cries out to God, saying, "*Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.*" In this verse we hear a grief so profound that Jeremiah simply could not weep enough to get it all out. We hear him wishing that his whole head were a fountain of waters so that he might fully release the tears of his great sadness.

The New Testament speaks of proper sorrow as well. In 2 Timothy 1:3-4, we catch glimpses of the weeping that came upon Timothy in response his discouragement over life's defeats. In Mark 9, we read about the tears of earnest love shed from the heart of a father on behalf of his dearly loved and demon possessed son. And in Luke chapter seven, we encounter the account of a sinful woman so devoted to Christ Jesus that she falls before Him and washes His feet with her abundant tears. In addition, John 20:11 tells of the weeping done by Mary as she stood outside tomb after the crucifixion.

Most notably, Jesus Christ Himself was no stranger to tears. For example, in Matthew 23:37, He wept over the city of Jerusalem, and in John 11:35, our Lord wept when He arrived at the grave of His friend Lazarus and witnessed the agonizing toll that death had taken upon the people that He loved.

There are, of course, many more examples of blessed grieving in Scripture. However, all of them share this in common: Whether the tears shed were tears of loneliness or of discouragement, of compassion or of concern, of worship or of devotion, of loss or of love, they are all a gift from God, given to release the pent-up sorrow of the heart. As Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 states, *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die...a time to weep... a time to mourn.* // There is a time and a beneficial place for proper sorrow.

Now a lot of people come to this beatitude and think that this general sorrow of life is what it is all about. In other words, many readers and commentators might rephrase this Beatitude as "Blessed are you if you are just sorrowful in general, and anybody who has sorrow is going to get comforted." Poets have camped on that idea. Robert Browning Hamilton wrote:

I walked a mile with Pleasure, she chatted all the way.  
But left me none the wiser for all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow and nary a word said she,  
But oh the things I learned from her when Sorrow walked with me.

There is truth in that poem, for there is much good to be found in the proper sorrows of life. However—and please hear this—there is a lot more going on in this Beatitude than just that. There is infinitely more to it than the general sorrows of life. To be sure, this general sorrow can enrich us, for it can be both helpful necessary and helpful emotion. However, these helpful types of sorrow only point to the ultimate type of sorrow that Christ is talking about in this Beatitude—that which is forever blessed by God.

Remember that the Beatitudes are primarily about salvation, not ethics. Therefore, Jesus when Jesus says “*Blessed are you who weep now*,” He is revealing an attitude far more profound than a generic kind of mourning and sorrow which might happen to bring about some type of comfort from somewhere or other. No, our Lord is talking about a much greater and much more vital type of sorrow here. He is revealing the most supremely blessed sorrow to which all other useful sorrow ultimately points. He is talking about the kind of sorrow that Paul calls godly sorrow in 2 Corinthians 7:9-11:

*2 Corinthians 7:9-11 – Now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. <sup>10</sup> Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. <sup>11</sup> See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.*

What, then, is godly sorrow? Well, first of all, Paul assures us that it is not the sorrow of the world, which, he tells us in verse ten, leads only to death. Please hear this: We can moan and howl all we want about our myriads of problems. We can cry our eyes out about our loneliness, discouragement, disenchantment, and loss... and we can weep relentlessly out of earnest love. We can grieve and wail over our unfulfilled lusts and obstinately cling to the very guilt Christ came to redeem. However, when all is said and done, no amount of worldly sorrow will ever bring us life; it leads only to death.

Godly sorrow, on the other hand, produces something quite different from death. It produces repentance, and, as we read in verse 11, that repentance is the

path to great blessings, comfort, and life. Thus, the issue here is not merely mourning over human circumstances. Since the product of godly sorrow is repentance, then the object of that most blessed sorrow can only be sin. In short, then, godly sorrow is brokenness over sin that leads to repentance.

And that is the call of Christ in this Beatitude: It is a call to repentance. The point, dear friends, is not that we would be sorry because we are lonely or discouraged or disappointed or concerned, or even because somebody died. And those who are blessed are not weeping because they haven't gotten what they want or because you feel so guilty. Jesus is saying that the blessed are those who are sorry because they are sinners. That's the point. Godly sorrow is linked to repentance, and repentance is a vital link from sin to salvation.

This was the very grief that David sang from his heart in Psalm 32, where, in verses two through five, he says:

*“Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him... When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”*

Clearly, David was in deep agony. In fact, so great was his grief—so heavy was the conviction he felt over his sin—that his whole body and all his strength were failing. Because he had refused to repent of his sin, the resulting guilt was literally drying him up and his body was wasting away. And—wait for it—in verse five comes the glory of God and the blessedness promised by Jesus unto those who weep now. It says, *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*” David simply had to release his deep sadness over his sin. And when he finally did, he rejoiced in the pure freedom of forgiveness that comes from God alone.

And the transcendent freedom of forgiveness is the ultimate result of the godly sorrow of which Jesus speaks. This is the blessedness of those who weep now—they will laugh. They will rejoice in God's abundantly merciful reply to their true repentance. That is the laughing Jesus is talking about here. That is the comfort that He says will come to those who mourn. It's the comfort that can only come from forgiveness.

This divine forgiveness is where the progression of the Beatitudes we have studied in Luke six have brought us this morning. You see, whenever a sinner sincerely comes to the place of the complete spiritual poverty that we studied in verse 20... and whenever that spiritually bankrupt person hungers desperately for the righteousness that they lack... and whenever that hungry sinner arrives at the place of weeping over sin and then comes before God in repentance and remorse, and then asks for His mercy and grace, he/she will rejoice in the sublime forgiveness of God that comes through Jesus Christ alone.

### Application

- Are you genuinely weep in your heart over your sin?
  - Do you yearn to turn from it and seek the forgiveness of God and the blessing that He brings?
  
- Do you know the matchless joy of forgiveness?
  - Do you have a happy heart even though you mourn over your sin?
  
- If not, God invites you to weep over your sin now, so that you might receive the eternal joy of forgiveness.
  - This is our Lord's invitation to true and lasting happiness. Will you receive it this morning?