

MATTHEW 5:4 - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GOOD GRIEF - (SERMON MP3)

There are some who think of themselves as good Christians yet have not learned the art of holy mourning. They have tears to shed for many things, yet none to spare for their sins. What are some of the common hindrances of mourning? Why do you think you struggle to mourn? Reflect upon the list below and describe how they could be practical roadblocks to mourning in our culture today.

- *Presumption of mercy*
 - *Procrastination*
 - *A misconception about the smallness of sin*
 - *A love of sin*
 - *A seared conscience and resultant numbness*

Some people resist poverty of spirit and resultant mourning because they fear that it will produce an unhealthy self-esteem problem. They think that mourning will cause them to be paralyzed by a sense of guilt, unworthiness or uselessness. "Such a low self-esteem would be debilitating and harmful," they say. So what is God's solution? Does he say, "*Stop putting yourself down. You are somebody. You are great. You are not that bad.*"? No. God says, "*Mourn over your sin. Plunge headlong down the trail of honest abasement. But fix your eyes on Me.*"

John Piper puts it succinctly, “*God’s way of freeing and mobilizing people who see themselves as worms is not to tell them that they are butterflies, but rather to say, ‘I will help you. I am your redeemer.’*” The biblical answer to the paralysis of low self-esteem is not high self-esteem; it is sovereign grace. (Isaiah 41:13) “Fear not, you worm Jacob... I will help you, says the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.”

- Read James 4:6-10 and reflect upon the way that grace lifts the spiritually bankrupt mourner. Have you accepted the depth of your sinfulness and mourned over it? Have you fixed your gaze on Christ so that grace rescues you?
 - Give an example of a time where you mourned over sin, and God comforted you. What was the mourning like? What was the comfort like? Explain how you were rescued from the despair of your own failure. Can you cite some verses that focus on God and lift the forgiven sinner to his feet of service once again?

Take some time to read Psalm 130. The psalmist is overwhelmed by his sense of sin (v. 3). It is not just the fear of being discovered, but the knowledge that he has offended God that fills him with shame and grief. As the passage unfolds, the psalmist learns that there is forgiveness with God (v. 4). It is the sight of God that made him mourn, but the same sight brings him comfort.

- Explain how holiness and grace can act as both a motivation for mourning and comfort.

The promise of Matthew 5:4 is that mourners will be comforted. According to (Luke 2:25; Isaiah 53:3; John 11:35) how is Jesus qualified as a competent comforter?

- ❖ One day God will bring comfort to its fullest consummation. Explain how (Revelation 21:4) fits into God's promise to comfort mourners.

- ❖ How do the stories of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24) and the Thief on the Cross (Luke 23:32-43) illustrate Christ's consolation toward penitent sinners?

How can you cultivate spiritual mourning that brings ultimate comfort from God? How can you appropriate God's grace in such a way that you have a proper heart towards sin? Read the suggestions below and select a few for this week. Record how the exercise made you feel, and how you ran to Christ's comfort at the conclusion of each.

- ❖ Read through the Bible's accounts of human sin and let them shame you as a member of the race.

- ❖ Make a list of all your sins and face the horror of the true you. Let the words trample your ego.

- ❖ Personalize the penitential Psalms (Psalm 6:1-2; 32:3-5; 38:4; 51:3-5; 130; 143).

- ❖ Study what the scripture say about hell and mourn over the souls spiritually perishing.

- ❖ Visit a cemetery and plan your funeral. Let death caused by sin pierce you.

- ❖ Contemplate this corrupt world – the erosion of truth and integrity, blasphemy, etc., (Psalm 119:136; Jeremiah 13:17).

- ❖ Meditate on Christ's suffering for you (Isaiah 53).

Reflect upon and respond to the following quote by D.A. Carson, "The Christian is to be the truest realist. He reasons that death is there, and must be faced. God is there, and will be known by all as Savior or Judge. Sin is there, and it is unspeakably ugly in the light of God's purity. Eternity is there, and every living human being is rushing toward it. God's revelation is there, and the alternatives it presents will come to pass: life or death, pardon or condemnation, heaven or hell. These are realities which will not go away. The man who lives in the light of them, and rightly assesses himself and his world in the light of them, cannot but mourn. He mourns for the sins and blasphemies of his nation. He mourns for the erosion of the very concept of truth. He mourns over the greed, the cynicism, the lack of integrity. He mourns that there are so few mourners."