



Links Players

Comfort For Those Who Mourn

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4, NIV)

As I watched the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am earlier this year, I recalled a vivid memory of an event that took place on the eve of the 2000 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach.

A year after Payne Stewart won his second U.S. Open title at Pinehurst, more than forty touring pros gathered near the 18th green at Pebble Beach to honor Stewart, who had died in a plane crash eight months earlier.

As the sun burned off the early-morning fog, two groups of 21 pros hit golf balls into the ocean in a “21-Tee” salute to Payne. Many of his friends fought back tears and consoled one another. They were mourning the loss of their friend and fellow competitor.

In the New Testament, there are at least nine different Greek words used to describe “mourning.” Each denotes a different meaning, ranging from internal sorrow to audible, public lamentation.

In this Beatitude, Matthew uses the Greek word “pentheo,” the strongest word for mourning, to describe a deep, outward grief so severe that it cannot be hidden.

In this passage, the word conveys more than mild sadness and describes a deep sorrow over both personal sin and the brokenness of the world.

Scripture records instances in which Jesus mourned. In John 11:17-44, we read the story of how Jesus comforted Mary and Martha when he traveled to Bethany after Lazarus's death.

When Jesus saw the grief and mourning of those around him, he was deeply moved. In one of the shortest verses in Scripture, John records: “Jesus wept.”

On another occasion, as Jesus approached Jerusalem, Luke tells us that Jesus wept over the city because the people had rejected him and because he foresaw its coming destruction (Luke 19:41).

In addition to mourning the loss of a loved one and mourning over a nation, there is a third type of grief. We must wrestle with the grief that comes from our realization and understanding of the depth of our sin and depravity, and the consequences that flow from them.

In the first Beatitude, Jesus refers to the “poor in spirit”—those who are spiritually bankrupt. From recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy comes our mourning, our grief, and our crying out because of our sin and the need for repentance and forgiveness.

When we mourn in this manner, Jesus offers us the blessing of comfort. God is there to walk alongside us, offering his peace and strength (Psalm 23:4 and Isaiah 41:10).

He has sent the Holy Spirit to be, among other things, our “Comforter,” who will provide inner peace and hope (John 14:26 KJV). This comfort also entails the hope of eternal life, where all sorrow will be wiped away (Revelation 21:4).

While it might seem paradoxical to associate a blessing with mourning, God is there to provide us with comfort and a path forward out of the darkness in which we find ourselves when we truly admit our sins.

Our world sees happiness, success, easy living, and laughter as blessings. Jesus turns that worldview upside down and tells us that the true blessing is God’s forgiveness, grace, presence, and mercy amid our grief.

Whether our mourning is over the loss of loved ones, over the state of affairs in our nation, or over our admission of our unforgiven sins, we ought to view it as a means to come closer to God. If we do, we will experience comfort, transformation, restoration, and joy.

PRAYER - Heavenly Father, thank you for blessing us when we mourn our spiritual bankruptcy and seek your forgiveness for our sins.

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