

Beatitudes 2: Blessed are those who Mourn

The lack of integrity I see in our world is shocking to me. As I was doing life this week I just felt like I was being hit by example after of example of people who either had done something wrong and felt they weren't wrong to begin with or people who were only willing to admit they had done something wrong after they were caught in the act and had no other option but to confess. Whether it was the great Ohio State Football Controversy, or my friend who wanted to discuss the reality of a moral failure by a pastor in his church, or the constant news coverage of the high profile murder in Iowa; nobody seems to be able to admit that we, the human race, just cannot seem to get our act together.

It's like we fear that failure makes us weak. If we appear weak than we appear flawed and if we appear flawed than no one will find us desirable, thus eliminating our chance or success. We don't want our culture that values self-reliance to perceive us as weak and incompetent. We all want to be at the top of the food chain so to speak and most of us are willing to do whatever we can to prove that we are right. As a young man, I remember times in my life were probably I fell into this category of people. I had to know everything and I always had to have the right answer, even if I had to no idea what I was talking about. I can't really identify why I thought this way, other than the fact that I was insecure and thought ignorance made me look weak. It was not until I had a man council me that my accepting ignorance and engaging in actual learning was actual sign of strength that I began to see the world differently. Little did I know it, but in this moment I was actually receiving some of the best advice I had ever been given and it's a conversation I still remember fondly and a piece of wisdom I use on a daily basis.

Ignorance Over Education

Now, I'm not here to tell you that confidence is unneeded and not also a helpful trait because it is. True and authentic confidence that has been forged in the fire of experience and education is an invaluable commodity. What I am asking is, "When did we as a culture elevate the perceived strength of self-reliance over the education that comes from failure?"

You know last week Pastor Richard got us started on our series on the beatitudes and he reminded us that as Christians we are seeking a different life and happiness than the rest of the world. We subscribe to a countercultural pattern for living, and that by grace, the Holy Spirit creates within us the ability to reach for holy possibilities. Hip Christians today like to call this the upside down kingdom, the idea being that what Jesus values is often the opposite of what the world values. With this opposite perspective in mind, Christians are strategically placed to alter this type of thinking. Daily, we are given an opportunity to show that the greatest opportunities lie not in embracing ignorance and self-reliance but in making a choice to educate ourselves even in the midst of failure. By accepting the fact that we are broken people who will make mistakes, but also believing that every mistake has the opportunity for growth, we open the door to a new way of thinking. A world were instead of idolizing self-reliance and false strength to shield our ignorance, we embrace failure and the authentic strength that's comes with hard earned education, grace, and experience. Does this situation I am describing to you sound familiar? It should, because it's the gospel, it's the good news, it's the proclamation of a new kingdom and it's exactly what Jesus was talking about when he began to preach on the mountain that fateful day.

On that day, Jesus did not just issue declarations on morality or good ideas, they are in fact the core values by which Jesus planned to establish his kingdom. Another way to think about it is like this, the beatitudes don't get you in to God's Kingdom, and the beatitudes are God's Kingdom. It's only by embracing that reality that we will begin to understand the importance of our message today. **Education through failure** will get you a lot farther than the ignorance of **self-reliance**.

Godly Grief

It is probably easy for you to look at this as a long diatribe were someone is pontificating a belief and you are sitting in your pew thinking, what in the World does this have to do with the "beatitudes?" What do education; failure, Self-reliance and ignorance have to do with following Jesus? Well, let's take a look at our beatitude for today.

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

- **Matthew 5:4**

Today just got even more confusing; how does mourning and comfort have anything to do with failure or self-reliance? Let's take closer look. Upon examination, we see a face value statement, one that makes sense and actually seems to fit in the story were it appears. However, to take this statement at face value ignores one important fact: Context. Let's look at this verse in context with the one that comes before and after it.

***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."***

-**Matthew 5:3-5**

Last week, Pastor Richard expounded for us the idea of being Poor in Spirit and from what I can remember he described it as "recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy before God." Recognizing our sin condition and realizing that we have nothing to offer God that is going to cover the debt that sin creates in our life. Our effort will never be "good enough" and it is only through recognizing our own poverty and embracing Jesus that we will inherit the Kingdom of heaven.

Next week, I'll be joining you in service again to expound on the idea of being meek and how having a humble attitude towards God is what allows us to experience blessings here on earth. When we humble ourselves before God and relinquish control over our lives he does his best work in us. We are blessed when we allow God to work in our life instead of always trying to create success ourselves.

Can we see the theme here? Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted is sandwiched between blessed are those who realize they have nothing to offer God and blessed are those who live in humility and trust God. It's almost like its painting a road map for us. I realize I have sin and that I am wholly incapable of being self-sufficient before God, I mourn that reality and then submit myself to the will of God because I have figured out that when I try to do things my way, the outcome is almost never good. Then I recognize the great work that God is doing in our world, I find comfort in sacrifice of Jesus and I inherit the great plan God has for my life.

In second Corinthians Chapter seven Paul writes,

“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore we are comforted”

- **2 Corinthians 7:10-13**

While God does comfort those who mourn this passage isn't actually about that, this passage is about helping us to understand how we should respond to the sin in our life. We mourn it, because it is separating us from God. Sin should drive us to grief and that grief leads us to seek the comfort of God. You see when we **mourn** the sin that contaminates our life, we are blessed because God provides **comfort** to us through Jesus. One of my favorite authors, Glenn Packham, also has a quote here I think can help us understand just a tad bit more on this subject, “Jesus was announcing the coming of Gods comfort, people weren't being blessed for mourning, they were blessed for because comfort was coming.” Comfort was coming and its name was Jesus. Sin should inspire a type of Godly grief, we grieve the impact of the evil we have allowed into our life, and we grieve our separation from God, our creator. Then all of sudden a door opens for us and on the side of that door we find comfort in the grace and unconditional love that God offers us in a personal relationship with Jesus. As result we no longer mourn or grieve sin, we simply find comfort that moves us into a place of humility and reverence. We recognize that our price has been paid and that we no longer need to mourn sin that no longer holds any control over our life. We find ultimate comfort because we are restored to our intended place in the order of creation. We are once again welcomed into God's kingdom and we will never again be separated from his love. There is comfort, but that comfort only comes with grief.

From Weakness to Strength

Today, God has left you with a challenge. The challenge to move from weakness to strength. The challenge to take a good, long, and hard, look at your life and to determine where you stand in God's Kingdom and in relationship with your creator. Ask yourself, What sin do you need to **mourn**? Where do you need Gods **comfort**? How can you lead **others** to do the same? You see that what's beautiful about God kingdom. The story isn't finished, there is still more room at his table, you just have to fish or cut bait so to speak. You can either step up to the plate or walk out here and keep living your life the way you want. You have a chance to educate yourself and learn from your failures or leave here in ignorance believing that self – reliance is enough. You have the chance to move from a place of weakness to a place of strength, but it all starts with you. If your sitting here today and you have decided it's time for you to embrace failure and learn rather than walk in ignorance, trusting only yourself than I've got three things for you. Not formula to save your life, but a few steps to get you started.

1. **Embrace the Gospel Narrative** – the Gospel narrative is this: God loves you and wants to have a relationship with you. However this nasty little problem called sin has been in the way and keeps you separated from him. However, at any time all you have to is confess your sin and believe in your heart that Jesus is lord, that he died for your sins and you will be saved. A price had to be paid, god paid it, and now you have the freedom to choose to follow him or you can continue to walk in ignorance and self-sufficiency. It's just a choice, but it is a choice only you can make.

2. **Confess and Receive Accountability** –You cannot be forgiven, you cannot be comforted, until you have made the decision to confess. Once you embrace the gospel narrative you are also saying that you recognize your need for confession and accountability. What this means is that you don't get to come say a prayer, confess all your sins, and wrap it all up with a bow one time and call it good. We need to enter into a continual process of confession and accountability, you keep coming back to mourn the sin in your life and God continuously gives you comfort as purge the evil in your heart and grow closer and closer to him. You also need to recognize that your sinful choices may have worldly consequences and you need to be accountable to those. You have all hurt people; you have all done things you wish we would not have. You have to own it and allow God to use his restorative process in our life. It all starts with admitting your failure and realizing you cannot fix the problem yourself. Again moving from Ignorant self-reliance to educated failure.

3. **Actions Speak** – This is the last step for a reason, it is representative and gives power to the other too. Anyone who tries hard enough can up the façade of healthy lifestyle. They can do all the right things, say all the right things, and be in all the right places but if those things are not authentic, eventually the truth comes out. God has a way of exposing the truth in every situation, so if your actions seem right but your heart isn't, prepare to be exposed. This is also where the education part of our message comes into play today. This is where your education provides the proof in the pudding. When you embrace the gospel, confess and receive accountability, your actions represent all that you have learned from failure and the change that has taken place in your heart. They show those closest to you that you no longer rely on yourself, but have found the true agent of change, Jesus. Kingdom centered action with authentic motivation speaks . . . loudly.

A New Reality

How would our world be different if we had the strength to **mourn** our sin and failure; then receive grace and **comfort** even at the cost of looking weak?_What would our church look like if instead of being a put together place for put together people, we were a broken place where people come and experience the **transforming power, comfort,** and **freedom** of the gospel? What if we began to become a people who valued the education that comes with failure rather than valuing the ignorance that comes with self-reliance? I'll tell you what would happen, people would start to have a better understanding of who Jesus was, why he can impact there life, and how they can actually find comfort in the gospel rather than just being told they can. Jesus wants come provide comfort for the world and he wants to use us and our authentic testimony to help do it. Are you ready to reject the ignorance of self-reliance and embrace the education of failure? My friends I promise you that can make all the difference in

someone's life, you just need to be ready to play your part. Embrace your sin, find comfort in the arms of God and tell the whole world about the difference Jesus has made in your life.