

Ministers of Comfort and Recipe for Rest

by Dick Woodward

As followers of Christ, we are appointed to comfort and console others with the same comfort we've experienced in Christ, and to learn to trust in God's comfort in times of sorrow.

Duration: 28:44

Scripture: Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 5:3-5, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:21

Topics: "Rest"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the first two beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing our own limitations and relying on God's power. The speaker explains that in order to be effective in helping others, we must align ourselves with God and understand where our role ends and His begins. He then delves into the invitation of Jesus to come and learn from Him, highlighting the light burden that Jesus carries despite the weight of the world's sins. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the significance of attitudes like being poor in spirit, mourning, and being meek in finding true blessings from God.

Transcript

Welcome to another lesson in the Sermon on the Mount. In today's lesson, our teacher will explain how important it is for the first disciples, and for Jesus' disciples today, to understand our job as followers to be comforters. People all around us are full of problems and needs, and we are appointed to comfort and console those people with the same comfort that we ourselves have experienced in Christ.

Today I want to look at the second beautiful attitude, mourning. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. What does that mean? Again, as in the case of the first attitude, there are several possibilities, and it may be not, either, or, but both, and.

It may not be this one or that one in terms of interpretation and application, but it may mean many things. First of all, it may mean this. Jesus is saying, look down the mountain.

You see all those people down there? Well, those people are hurting. Those people have a lot of problems. Now, do you honestly think that you can go down there and be a part of their solution, a part of their answer, help them cope with these overwhelming problems? Some of them are tragic problems.

Do you really think you can be a minister of comfort to them and never hurt yourself? The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 that he went through some very difficult times in Asia. He said in the first part of verse 9 that many times they told themselves, this is the end. You ever been in a place like that where you just wanted to give up? Well, that's what Paul is saying.

We're ready to give up. This is just too much. But Paul finishes verse 9 by saying something like this.

But we had this experience of coming to the end of ourselves that we might learn to trust not in ourselves, but trust in God who raises the dead. Then he says, at that point, the comfort we experienced is only from our relationship to God. That comfort became the source of our solution and our answer.

And now when we run into people who are hurting people with problems, no matter what the problems are, we are qualified. We are able to help them because we can point them to the comfort we found when we were hurting no matter what their tribulation or trial might be. All these attitudes should be seen in the context in which the Sermon on the Mount was given.

This sermon tells us to look down the mountain, see those people at the bottom of the mountain, and if you're going to be their solution and part of their answer, you got to learn the first beautiful attitude, which is blessed are the poor in spirit. Then you need to know this. I cannot, but God can.

Otherwise, you might do things your way. And even if that seems to be a good thing, it will not be God's way. God's way is the only way, the only solution, and the only answer.

Seen in that perspective, this second attitude could be that you cannot help hurting people if you have never been or felt hurt yourself. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Then after they mourn and are comforted, they can help other hurting people because they can tell them where the comfort is.

The comfort is really found in God. Another possibility of what Jesus may have meant is this. Is it possible to mourn and grieve while you are learning that you cannot, but God can? How does God teach us the first beautiful attitude, I cannot, but God can? Probably through failure, a lot of failure.

Sometimes that failure brings us to the point of grieving, to the point of mourning. The Beatitudes can be grouped and understood in couplets. They go together in pairs.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, and blessed are they that mourn. They're like a couplet. It's a pair of beautiful attitudes, and they come together.

Some suggest that what this means is that while you are learning to be poor in spirit, all that failure that is going to teach you that you cannot, but God can, there may be a lot of grieving and mourning in connection with that experience of learning that you are poor in spirit. At least that's how it was for Peter. He went out in the darkness and wept bitterly.

That's grief. That's mourning. The same thing happened with Moses.

Remember, when he went to the backside of the desert for 40 years, he was probably a man who was grieving and mourning over how miserably he had failed when he tried in his own strength to deliver the children of Israel by killing an Egyptian official. Here's still another thought about what this might mean. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said in Ecclesiastes 7, It is better to go to the house of mourning than go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad continence the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider, surely God has appointed the one as well as the other. Consider the work of God. The day of prosperity is to be enjoyed.

The day of adversity, if you consider the work of God, you should consider that God probably made the one as well as the other. In other words, there is something good about mourning. Solomon says there in Ecclesiastes 7, that when you go to a funeral and you look at that person who has departed this life, his tent, his physical body is still here, but he is gone.

One of the things that makes that a sobering experience is that you and I know the same thing is going to happen to us someday, and what Solomon seems to be saying is that our value system can be more in alignment with the value system of God when you are at a funeral than when you are at a party. So it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting because when you go to the house of mourning, which is a funeral, you will realize that this is the end of all men. Each and every person who lives, or will live, will die.

So as one of the living, we would do well to take this to heart. It is good for us to think about that one day when our life will end. Are you living life as you should? The scripture says in so many places that the eternal is a greater value than the temporal.

Paul tells us that in 2 Corinthians chapters 4 and 5. Because eternal matters are of greater value than temporal matters, then the spiritual part of a human being is of greater worth than the physical part of a human being. The inner part of a human being is of greater worth than the outer part. The inward man, as Paul explains it, is of greater worth or value than the outward man is.

That is why even when illness comes, it is possible that the outward man may be perishing, but the inward man is being renewed every day and being prepared for the eternal state. And it is possible to affect the quality of your eternity by the way you live your life here in time. There is so much teaching in the scriptures that would emphasize that kind of thinking in our minds.

And that is the way that Solomon seems to be talking about mourning. Maybe that is what Jesus meant when he said, Blessed are they that mourn, because they will be comforted. Because when you are in a state of mourning, your values are in alignment with God's values.

In that state of mind, you give far more place to think of the eternal as being of greater value than the temporal, and the invisible being of greater worth than the visible. The spiritual is of greater worth than the physical, first and foremost because the inward man is eternal. You are going to live somewhere in that eternal state forever.

You really do think like that when you are in that state of mourning, and maybe that is what Jesus meant. I have attended many funerals as a pastor, and I have often shared at those funerals from this second beatitude, Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. I have told hundreds of people this.

If you want to discover the blessing Jesus promised to us in our mourning, and the comfort he said that we could find through mourning, then let me suggest the following three steps. First of all, let your mourning

bring you to the place where you ask the right questions, perhaps for the first time in your life. Many people go through life and never ask the right questions.

Job is an example of this. Job, of course, had a mourning experience. He lost ten children.

He lost every possession that he had, and then he lost his health. Throughout Job's experience of mourning, Job allowed his mourning to bring him to the place where he asked the right questions. He asked great questions like this.

If a man die, shall he live again? A man dies. His spirit leaves him. He expires, and then where is he? If a man dies, shall he live again? God likes for us to ask questions like that.

Job got a great answer to that question when he had that messianic revelation, and he said in the midst of his sufferings, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, and even if worms destroy my body, I will see God. I will see him for myself. I will see him with my own eyes.

I am overwhelmed by that thought. Job chapter 19, verses 25 through 27. Job let his mourning bring him to the place where he asked the right questions.

The second step I have told a lot of people to take in their mourning experience is to let your mourning bring you to the place where you listen to God's answers to the right questions. Again, that's what Job did. He asked the right questions, and he listened to God's answers to the many of his right questions.

The third step I have suggested for hundreds of people at funerals is this. If you want to discover the comfort Jesus promised to those who mourn, and the blessing he promised to those who mourn, let your mourning bring you to the place where you believe God's answers to the right questions. And when you believe God's answers to the right questions, you will discover the blessing and the comfort because you will discover salvation.

And in salvation, there is blessing. It is possible that your mourning experience could be the greatest thing that ever happened to you in your entire life if your mourning experience brought you to the place where for the first time in your life, you actually ask the right questions, listen to God's answers, and then believe God's answers. It may be that this is what Jesus had in mind when he said, Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

You see, the values of Jesus are not the same as the values of this world. You might hear another friend sharing how he's been blessed on every side. His family is healthy.

They are now wealthy, and things couldn't be better. You might think he is really blessed. Jesus is committed to the fact that the eternal is of greater value than the temporal.

People have always said, Life is everything. Eternity is nothing. You only get to go around once.

So get it the first time around. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die. There have always been people who have said that.

There are people who still say that today. And then there are others who say once they find Christ, Oh, no, no, no. Eternity is everything.

Life is nothing. And they are wrong. This is what the scripture says.

The scripture says eternity is everything, and that is why life is everything. Because the important thing about your lifespan is that you can affect the quality of your eternity by the way you live this life. Anything that happens to you in life that helps you to see these values of God, anything that comes into your life that makes you discover the eternal state as the great value and salvation, that is a blessed experience.

Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when he said, Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. The first two beatitudes that he said we must have, if we are going to be part of his solution and part of his answer, go together as a pair. The beatitudes can be seen as couplets.

And the first couplet is made up of these two attitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Among other things, we summarize these first two beautiful attitudes by saying what they really mean. Blessed are the people who know that they cannot and that only God can. This is so true in our lives, is it not? This is especially true if you want to be part of the answer, part of the solution in the lives of other people.

God is the one who is really the prime mover in this solution and this answer that Jesus has for the lost people of this world. And it's only because we are in alignment with him, it's only because we are a channel of what he can do, that we have any hope of being part of his answer and part of his solution. In order to be the agent and the instrument of what he wants to do in the lives of other people, we have to separate our part from his part.

We have to know where our part ends and his part begins. And so we have to say that when we think of all the things he wants to be to other people through us, whether it is a matter of leading someone to Christ, seeing them experience the new birth, whether it is a matter of teaching them spiritual things or a matter of counseling them in spiritual matters, we have to be able to say that we have learned this spiritual secret taught by the first two Beatitudes. I cannot, but God can.

The next beautiful attitude that Jesus brings before us has to do with what we want. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. What is meekness? Meekness is perhaps the most misunderstood and misapplied of these eight beautiful attitudes.

Meekness, for instance, is not weakness. Many people think it is the meek and mild weak Jesus. That is what a lot of people think meekness is.

That's not what meekness is. If you get to know the Christ of the Scripture, if you get to know the man, Christ Jesus, you realize that he was not meek in the sense that he was mild. He was not weak.

The Old Testament says that Moses was the meekest man who ever lived. And as you get to know the man, Moses, does that mean he was weak? He was not weak just because he was meek. There is another great passage on the subject of meekness in Matthew 11.

In verses 28, 29, and 30, our Lord gave us a great teaching about meekness. It is one of the great invitations of Jesus. Jesus set the precedence of giving invitations, and here is one of his great invitations.

Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

This is a great invitation of Jesus. This invitation is addressed to people who are working very hard to manage their own heavy burdens. The invitation is addressed to people who are laboring and are heavy laden or weary or burdened.

The invitation of Jesus addressed to these people who are working very hard to manage their very heavy burdens or are laboring very hard is, Come to me. It is not come to church. It's not even come to a Bible study.

It's not even come to some sacrament. The invitation is, Come to me. And this invitation of Jesus is addressed to all people who are weary because they have heavy burdens and they have been trying to manage those heavy burdens for a long time.

The promise of Jesus to all these burdened, weary people is, I will give you rest. It sounds at first as if it's all automatic. You come and I will give it to you.

But then if you look further into the invitation, he not only says to these people, Come, come to me. He also says, learn from me. What he wants these burdened, weary people to learn is this.

First of all, learn something about my burden. I have a burden too, but my burden is light. Now I find this amazing.

He had the weight of the world on his shoulders. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have all turned aside to our own way.

And the Lord God Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all. That's found in Isaiah 53 verse 6. Paul said that God the Father made Jesus to be sin for us. He who knew no sin, that we might be declared righteous because of our faith in him.

He did take upon himself the sins of the entire world. That is quite a burden. And yet he said, learn something about my burden.

My burden is light. Then he asked us to learn something about his heart. I am meek and lowly in heart.

Jesus is saying this, I am meek and humble in heart. I want you to learn that about my heart. Then he said, learn something about my yoke.

We need to learn, first of all, what a yoke is before we learn what Jesus asked us to learn about his particular yoke. A yoke was not a burden. A yoke is an instrument for pulling a burden.

A yoke is an instrument that made it possible for an animal like an ox to move a heavy burden. You may have seen ox carts piled high with burdens, all kinds of cargo. And when you have seen that cart piled high with a heavy burden being pulled by an ox, have you ever wondered how, if that ox did not have that yoke, it would be able to move that heavy burden? Could the ox move the burden by pushing it with his head, by rubbing up against it and moving it down the street slowly? A yoke is something that makes it possible for the ox to have its strength controlled in such a way, with ease, the ox moves that big ox cart with that heavy burden.

When Jesus worked in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, some of the things he might have made were yokes. Yokes were very common, ordinary things in the day of Jesus, because the beast of burden was the source of power and energy. We have tractors and all kinds of other machines today.

We have cranes, we have many machines for moving burdens. But we have come to think of a yoke as a burden, and a yoke is not a burden. A yoke is actually a device or an instrument to help you carry that burden.

Again, if you go back to the mountaintop, where Jesus talks about meekness, look down the mountain at all those people with all their problems, and realize that what Jesus is saying, as he focuses on the third beatitude, is this. See all those people down there? Many of them have heavy burdens. They are very weary because they have been trying to manage those burdens, those problems, for a long time.

And what they really need is my yoke. A carpenter like Jesus would make a yoke that would fit very well, that would be smooth inside so it would not hurt the animal. For an animal to have a yoke that fit well, and was smoothly sanded out by a good carpenter, that made the animal's burden easy.

It made it seem light. What Jesus is saying here in his great invitation at the end of Matthew 11, the last three verses, and when he gives the third beatitude, is simply this. There is a certain way of taking life.

If you will take life as Jesus takes it, you will find out real quick. You don't have to be so heavily burdened and so weary. He was really saying here to take life as I take it.

If you have the right attitudes, for example, you will discover that it can make the burden light, and it can make the whole thing easy. What Jesus is really saying is this. If you will get into my values, if you will get into my attitudes, if you will get into spiritual disciplines that I will show you, you will learn why my burden is light.

If you learn that in my heart I am meek, and that I really do want to do the will of the Father. He submitted to the yoke of the Father. He said in John 8, remember, I do always the things that please the Father.

You see, that was the yoke that Jesus wore. All he wanted to do was the will of the Father, and he was 100% controlled by the Father, 100% of the time. There's an expression we use a lot these days, spirit-filled.

We have spirit-filled believers and then believers who are not spirit-filled. We have spirit-filled preachers and preachers who are not spirit-filled. We have spirit-filled churches and churches that are not spirit-filled.

And the implication is the spirit-filled believers are always spirit-filled, and those who are not, well, they're never spirit-filled. The same is true with the spirit-filled preachers and the spirit-filled churches. But that's not the way the New Testament uses the expression spirit-filled.

I've had others ask me, are you spirit-filled? My response is always the same. I always say, I'm not always spirit-filled, are you? Are you always spirit-filled? Is anybody ever always spirit-filled? We are told that Jesus was, but I do not think anyone else is. After all, spirit-filled means spirit-controlled.

I do not believe any of us can really say that we are spirit-filled all the time, because then we would be perfect like Jesus. But I do believe we are commanded to be spirit-filled and to be spirit-controlled. When we are obeying the commandment to be controlled by the spirit, that is when we are meek.

That is what meekness is. You see, Jesus gave a great promise. He said, if you will come to me, all you who are burdened and weary from trying to manage your burdens, I will give you rest.

But there is a formula for rest in this invitation of Jesus at the end of Matthew 11. We have to learn about Jesus, why his burden was light, why his yoke made it easy. We have to learn about his heart, that Jesus was humble in heart, and in his heart he was meek.

Jesus always did what the Father wanted him to do. His heart was controlled by the Father. When we have learned these things about Jesus, and only when we have learned these things about Jesus and applied them, that is what he meant when he said, Take my yoke upon you, the same yoke I wear.

You wear that yoke. When we have fulfilled those conditions, then we can say we have found rest for our souls. That is what Jesus meant about this third beautiful attitude.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, which means they'll receive it all. This word blessed is a word we should focus for a moment. In some translations, it's translated happy.

So it could be read, happy are the poor in spirit. Happy are those who mourn. Happy are the meek.

Spiritually prosperous is another way this word blessed has been translated. That does not mean materially prosperous in the sense of economic wealth. The people who are spiritually prosperous are the people who have these attitudes.

They are poor in spirit, they mourn, and they are meek. Still another translation of the word blessed, one I like very much, is this. In a state of grace are the poor in spirit.

In a state of grace are those who mourn. In a state of grace are the meek. In other words, for the people who have these attitudes, their lives are aligned with God in such a way that He can pour His grace out upon them.

Grace means the attribute of God whereby He gives us good things that we do not deserve. And mercy is the attribute of God whereby He withholds from us what we do deserve. But grace is the attribute of God whereby He gives us the things we do not deserve.

We are in a state of grace when we have the right attitudes. And that is why it is important for us to study this first retreat of Jesus. This retreat that can turn us into solutions and answers for Him.

It is important for us to realize that the state of grace that will make us His answer and His solution has to do with attitudes like these. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn.

And blessed are the meek. God bless you until next time. We at the Mini Bible College desire that these lessons help you grow in your knowledge and faith and encourage you to discover the power of God that enables you to live as Jesus taught His disciples there on the mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

Until next time, we pray God's blessings upon you and your house as you strive to live as a true follower of Jesus Christ our Lord.

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