

Sermon on the Mount – Blessed are Those Who Mourn

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 5:3](#) • [Matthew 5:4](#) • [Matthew 19](#) • [Luke 4](#) • [Psalm 1:1-3](#) • [1 Kings 10:8](#) • [Isaiah 61](#) • [1 Peter 4](#)

mean to be Blessed

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

All right. Shabbat Shalom, everybody.

Continuing the Sermon on the Mount

So we're continuing in our series on the Sermon on the Mount, and I hope it's been edifying. We're two series in, this is number three, and we're continuing to dive into the kingdom manifesto of Yeshua and how the gospel, the good news...

Now the good news, according to Yeshua, the gospel is not that if you have the right belief or the right opinion, when you die, you can give it to St. Peter and you get into heaven. But according to Yeshua, the gospel is that the world is changing because heaven is coming to earth. That's the good news. Heaven is coming to earth in the form of the reign and the rule of God manifested in and through Yeshua. But not just that. It is manifested in and through the followers of Yeshua as well.

And what does Yeshua say? He says, repent, repent, be prepared for change. That's what that word repent means. It's not just confess your sins. It's bigger than that. That's in there, but it means to change your mind. Be ready to break the mold of everything you thought about the biblical story and where it was going to go.

Repent, be ready to change the way you think about everything you knew about humanity or how you're living. Be prepared to reevaluate all of your own choices, your own structured power in your life, and be prepared to change the way you think about sin that has been in your life or is still in your life because the kingdom of God draws near.

The Radical Nature of the Sermon

And we've read the Sermon on the Mount so many times that it's lost its radical nature. Like, let's be honest. Especially if you've been reading it ever since you were a kid. Sermon on the Mount, yeah. He says these hard things and we smile and we move on.

And when we attempt to put the sermon back in its proper controversial status, it really does make us uncomfortable. I think Katie showed us that during the Torah portion. I mean, we can say love your enemies, but let's move on. Let's not harp on it. Let's not sit on it. Let's not camp out there.

It gets uncomfortable because sometimes things are hard. We have to start defining context for it, or frame it so that—how does this actually apply? And many times we start to frame it out as maybe it only applies to certain people, or we try to water it down. There's no way to water down the absolutely insane, seemingly reckless, some would say foolish, and unintuitive things Yeshua said.

The Poor in Spirit

The first verse in his sermon we reviewed last week: blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who are broken so bad that God is the only hope that they have. Or even people who are so broken that even hope in God has been taken away from them by others.

Y'all know that's a thing, right?

Yeshua went to the beach of a lake and chose some teenagers that were fishing. They were fishing. Why were they fishing? Well, they weren't following another rabbi around, likely because they weren't of the pedigree, or maybe they didn't have the intelligence, or maybe they didn't show the potential to be a disciple of any other rabbi. They would never fit in with the rest of the disciples of the others. They were most likely rejected in any attempt of such a pursuit as that. And so they were fishing with the dads. It's what those people do.

Some people belong in their social class, the world tells us. The world tells us you need to be happy there. They don't need to complain. They should just pull themselves up by their

bootstraps and keep fishing. So what if they don't have boots? They won't be in my group. They just belong there.

Can you ever imagine being in a place where God was taken from you as a means of hope? Some of you have probably been there. Some of you might be there today.

The Church's Response

We American Christians specifically, we hate cleaning up our messes, don't we?

In 2019, there was a report done by Pew Research about the mass exodus of young people from the church. And this was 2019, right? So this is before all of that happened. And of course, our response is always that when young people leave the church, it's their fault for not reading the Bible. Right? They didn't study the Bible hard enough. They didn't understand the Bible to the extent that I know it, which is why they left. They got tempted by Satan and they left. It's their fault.

In the report, they went and interviewed a chunk of these young people. And 73% said they didn't leave because they didn't understand the Bible. They didn't even leave because they didn't believe in God anymore. They left because of issues relating to their own church community or the pastor. People—70%, some overlapping—stated it was because of ethics in their community or even political reasons or political arguments and fights.

In other words, it wasn't God why this mass exodus of younger people are leaving church. It wasn't the Bible. It wasn't the lack of apologetics. It's the fact that God has called his people to represent him. And instead, we have a tendency to represent a God made in our image. And there's a thing about millennials and Gen Z. They see right through it. When God is turned into a weapon, we can't be surprised when people lose hope in it.

Blessed

Now, blessed is the poor in spirit. It's a strange verse to translate or interpret. We're not 100% sure what Yeshua was trying to say here. But it's somewhere in there. It's somewhere between the humble knowing God is their only hope and the people that are dispirited, having no hope at all. Theirs is the reign of the kingdom of heaven. They are right next to the threshold, closer than anyone else.

The next verse is about those who mourn. Many of us know what it's like to mourn. And it's a sad reality of getting older, isn't it?

And we think about mourning. And the thing about mourning is it never really goes away, does it? You learn to adapt to it. Somehow, you learn to adapt to mourning. But the other thing about people who mourn is they also tend to become very empathetic towards others who are mourning. You ever realize that?

Like when someone or something happens in someone's life where there is immense grief and mourning, those who understand have such a level of empathy that they know how to give comfort. These may be the ones who don't immediately say, "I'm sorry for your loss," when something happens. Something I've noticed is that many times, those who know grief, those who know mourning, sometimes they won't say, "I'm sorry for your loss" at all. They'll say something more along the lines of, "I hate you're having to go through this."

Having someone or something taken from you is horrible, but it happened, right? The grief and mourning and aching wound that's left, it's happening now and it will likely continue. So many times, like I said, you'll see someone who truly understands. You'll be able to spot them. "I hate you're having to go through this. I hate you're having to live in this world."

Because those who mourn, deeply mourn, are living in a world they never wanted to live in. It's a world that is missing their father or their mother, or their daughter, or their son, or grandmother and grandfather. It's a world that has a hole in it, where your friend is no longer there. And those that mourn tend to develop a tenacity for starting over in this new world. Every day, wondering if they will ever somehow return to the world where they felt whole at one point in their life.

Can anyone relate to that? Blessed.

The Meaning of "Blessed"

So we touched on this last week very briefly. I didn't go in depth because I wanted to focus on the mountain part, but blessed.

Such a religious word, blessed. And I kind of side with calling it a bad translation. As if you're going to get a blessing from God for mourning. You're mourning something. Here's a prize or a blessing or something, right?

That's what a blessing is. A biblical blessing is something that's given to you from the divine, right? Whether it be a house or a baby or whatever, it's a blessing. And that's not what this is talking about. It means a lot more than that. And actually not that at all.

And the Greek word there is makarios. And it's actually a super difficult word to translate into English, right? And it's the first word that Yeshua starts a sermon with.

And when we see a Greek word in the New Testament that is hard to interpret or translate, we, of course, look at extra-biblical writings at the time, cultural writings at the time, letters, poetry, books that people have written around the same time, and we try to find how they used it, right? We can also find the Hebrew equivalent of that word in the Old Testament and see how the New Testament authors may have been pulling from the biblical context and definition of the Hebrew Bible.

And we do this because of an amazing document called the Septuagint, the Greek Septuagint. It was an authoritative Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, that was written and translated centuries before Yeshua was born. And the Hebrew word for blessed is berech or berechah. Like Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, right?

And this is not the word that is the Hebrew equivalent to makarios, the blessed word we see in the Sermon on the Mount. It's another word. It's the word asherah. Generally, it's translated as happy. But it's even more than that.

So one place that we see it, and I want to read this. It's in [Psalm 1](#), the first couple verses in [Psalm 1](#), and I want to read these few verses first to get an idea of how it's used here. Can we take a little journey? It'll be a short journey, I promise, in the Old Testament. Psalm chapter 1, verse 1, it says, How happy, how asherah, right? How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathways with sinners or sit in the company of mockers. Instead, his delight is the Lord's instruction, the Torah of Yahweh. And he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams and bears its fruit in its season and its leaves does not wither and whatever he does prospers. How happy, happy, happy is the one that doesn't participate in the ways of the world, the way of the wicked, the way of oppressing others, the way of violence and deceit. He shall be like a tree who ignores winter. He prospers, prospers. So this is a person, happy.

The Happy Life

We also have another verse in [1 Kings 10](#), 8, where the queen of Sheba comes to King Solomon. You guys know the story, right? King Solomon has made Israel into an empire just like the rest of the world. And the queen of Sheba comes and she sees all of these things. And she's just in awe of the amazing wealth that King Solomon has built up. How he's managed to build all of these big things and built his house, which is like two or three times bigger than the temple of

God. And all of these great things, all of his cars and everything. And she's so amazed that she says, oh, how happy I am. Now, we could translate that as blessed. How blessed are your people? But it's not really the thing here. Asherah does not mean blessing, which is something like a gift from God—everything good comes from God. No, asherah is a descriptive word. And it's a word that instead of referring to God giving blessing, it's a word that is used to describe the good life that someone else has, another human being has. Another way you could see it is, oh, how flourishing your life is. Oh, how flourishing are those who meditate on the word of the Lord. How flourishing is the life of the people who don't listen to the wicked, they're just going to keep prospering. King Solomon, gosh, how flourishing are the lives of your people? It's a way of describing the good life of someone else. Kind of neat, right?

Happy, good life. How would we use it today? Oh, how macarius you are to have bought your house before 2019 and have that 2.5% rate, right? You see the difference. Oh, he's blessed to have a good mortgage rate. I mean, yeah, but the context of this word is looking at someone else and saying, man, they got the good life. How happy, how flourishing. Congratulations, right? How happy they are. They have that. How macarius you are—who landed an awesome job, who drives that BMW, who has a huge house, right? How amazing it is that you have security in your life. That is so awesome for you. You're blessed, but again, that's the context of the word. Happy is he who meditated on the Torah of Yahweh. He's like a tree that's planted.

There's an amazing book by Dr. Jonathan Pennington called *The Sermon on the Mount and Flourishing Humanity*. He gets nerdier than I've ever seen someone get nerdy about a word. Chapters, but it's a great book, great resource. How flourishing. When we look at someone in our culture, who are the types of people that we look to and think, oh, macarius, how flourishing is their life, the good life? Could be that celebrity, right? That wealthy CEO. Man, that rich person. The types of lives that we dream about having—the person who actually got the American dream, the person who drives a nice car, who lives in abundance, that macarius, how happy is he to have that security, to not have to worry? The person who has health, the person who has everything, who has the latest and greatest tech, man, that person who has power and influence to get what they want whenever they want it. How flourishing is he or she that has the good life? Everybody still with me?

The Beatitudes Reversed

How flourishing is the life of those poor in spirit—the good life? How flourishing is the life of those who mourn. How flourishing is the life of the meek. You know who has it? How flourishing are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Man, you know if there's anyone

who demonstrates the good life, it's definitely the merciful. It's the pure in heart. It's the peacemakers. Man, how flourishing and happy are those who are persecuted. How flourishing is your life when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of things against you because of Yeshua. Man, that sounds amazing, right? Yeah. The Beatitudes isn't supposed to be this happy—like, oh yeah, it's dark. It's meant to be dark. It's meant for you to become disturbed when you read it. It's meant for you to stop and reconsider reading anything else of the sermon. I don't know if I want to listen to the rest of this guy. Maybe I'll go back and catch some trout or whatever's in the Galilee. There are four disciples up there on the mountain listening to him anyway. Maybe because he's off his rocker.

That's not the good life. That's not a flourishing life. Those of you who know what it means to mourn a loved one, those of you who are living in the world that you never wanted to live in with this big hole in it, oh, what a flourishing example of the good life you have. Do you feel it? Do you feel how disturbing that is? It's almost a bit twisted. Welcome to the Beatitudes. And that sense of being disturbed when listening to that and realizing the impact—that sense of not being attracted to the reversal or irony or paradox—is appropriate. It is appropriate.

The Cost of the Good Life

Matthew 19, a rich man comes to Yeshua. And he says, hey, what good thing can I do to get eternal life? To enter the kingdom of God, to have the life that is everlasting in God's presence, that starts now, surpasses death in the kingdom. This is a man used to having power. And he's not seeking kingdom life. He's seeking more power. He's seeking something he doesn't have. And that one thing is eternal life. And Yeshua says what? Keep the commandments. And he says, oh, I mean, which ones? A couple things—okay, don't kill anybody. No murder. Don't steal. Don't be a jerk. Don't sleep around. The guy says, okay, I've done all that. This is great. So I mean, I'm doing all that now. What else? Tell me what I need to check off my list. And Yeshua says, all right, if you want to be perfect, if you truly want to enter in, sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and follow me. It says he walked away sad because he had great wealth. He had great power. He had great influence. He had great security, great comfort.

There were other people who knew of this rich man who used him as a point of reference for Makarios, for the good life, for a flourishing life. How flourishing is this man with great wealth, this man with a good life? Yeshua says, No, flourishing are the poor. Flourishing are those who have lost everything. Flourishing are those who mourn the gaping hole in their hearts. Flourishing are those who are persecuted. Flourishing are those who are humble and those peacemakers. Those don't match the good life. And Yeshua here looks us dead in our eyes and

he says, Yes, they do. Why? How? Because if you fit in these categories, you are more aware than anyone else just how not right this world is. You're not stuck in the matrix anymore because of your deep dissatisfaction of the state of the world.

Positioned for Change

And this positions you to be a revolutionary because that's what causes revolutionaries: loss and trauma and persecution. This positions you to actually be a soldier in a revolution to change it because you're not content. Because you know no one else should have to live a perpetual state of mourning or being dispirited or being persecuted or being made humble. It almost upsets you when you're at that level, when you've gone through it enough. But these are the things that produce change. You are the evidence that God has a responsibility to act. You are the witness. Blessed are those who mourn.

The Promise of Jubilee

Now there's a reference that Yeshua is using here, and it comes from Isaiah. It's [Isaiah 61](#). It is the prophecy of the grand eschatological jubilee that will last forever. The eternal Sabbath that will be ushered in, where God's reign and rule will crash into earth completely. And this will be the reality for all to see. I want to read to you a few verses here, but I encourage you, read the whole chapter when you get home. It's significant. And it begins—this section of scripture hits a little bit deeper for some.

This is also the prophecy that Jesus says he has come and fulfilled in Luke chapter four. He ushers in the grand jubilee of God's rest. It's the prophecy that one day God is going to make this world that is not right, he's gonna make it right. It's the promise that one day the tears will no longer fall from our cheeks. It's the prophecy that those in chains and shackles, they will be set free forever. The injustice that is in the world will be burned up and true justice and righteousness and equity for all will flourish. And in that day, there will be a stream like an oil of joy rushed out instead of mourning. How flourishing is he who experiences the promise of God, who pushes for the promises of God?

The Revolution of Hope

Who resisted in the name of the promises of God, who saw a structured, systemic, oppressive system of the world and said, "I'm not satisfied with this. This is not the world I want to live in. So I'm going to join the revolution and change it"—to be a reminder of hope beyond this world,

to be an example of hope to those who have lost all hope, to be a light in a dark place, to be the salt of the earth, to bring flavor and bounty back to the world where others see nothing but a barren desert.

Yeshua is speaking of a people who we would never consider having the good life because the people with the good life can never see what's coming, nor would they ever want what's coming because they're happy with what they have.

Now, this is not meant to be a circumstance where Jesus is just telling you to suck it up in the name of God and keep pushing forward because it's hard and get over it—grit your teeth, get through it, maybe one day you'll be blessed. No, he's using ironic reversals and a type of apocalyptic and eschatological means of communication. Like, this is how he speaks. It's meant to be shocking because he wants to get your attention.

Understanding Loss Together

Remember when I said people who have experienced loss of some kind tend to find themselves with extreme empathy for others who are experiencing the same thing? It's this extra deep, intimate human condition. And no one else gets it like those who have lived it. Jason and I, we bring comfort to each other because we both lost our father suddenly when neither one of us were expecting it. Just tragic all of a sudden, what just happened?

The way that we comfort each other in that mourning is always consistent and it's day to day. It's very deep and it's very meaningful to me and him. And the way that we discuss the loss, people who haven't gone through a traumatic loss don't get it. They don't understand why we speak of our dads the way that we do, the circumstances of their passing, and talk about them in the way that we speak about them. It makes some people uncomfortable because they're just not used to talking about loss in such a way.

But we're pushing each other forward with a level of human experience that Yeshua encourages. We are at a place where we are dissatisfied with the world, but we know that there is comfort and we push forward. We push forward like a plow breaking up the soil for a fresh harvest. We push forward on the cusp of the kingdom of God to make itself known and overtake the world, so that complete comfort will come one day.

Flourishing in Suffering

And Yeshua is redefining what flourishing looks like. And he's redefining it as suffering while waiting for the kingdom to fully engulf the world. It's not the opposite of grace. It's the means of it. Flourishing is now found amid suffering.

Some other biblical authors speak of this. Peter writes about this extensively in 1 Peter, in chapter 4. He says, "For the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." Man, that's a hard teaching, isn't it? That's a hard thing to swallow. I'm being persecuted. People don't like me. People have oppressed me. People have taken things from me. People have—fill in the blank. First, second, third century, people have killed my loved ones. People have burned down my house. People have kicked me out and exiled me.

And here, the calling of Yeshua is to rejoice because you're participating in the arrival of God's kingdom. It's not a very happy message, is it? Not at all.

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

We should go back to blessed. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they're going to be comforted." That's good. It's happy.

The calling to follow Yeshua is never advertised or marketed as something that is easy. It's advertised and marketed as something that is hard, as something that very few will actually do. Very few. It was never meant to be something easy that brings you prosperity and the good life in this world, the way the world speaks about it.

Following Yeshua and living a kingdom life is a way to combat the way the world is. It's a way to stand up to it. It's a way to not simply give up. It's a way to know that the promises of God are coming. And it's a way to display that in a way that is so unintuitive that it causes a revolution in the world. And that has been the Christian tradition for a long time. Very long time.

The Example of St. Francis

St. Francis, really neat guy, right? He started the order of Franciscan monks, right? And when we went to Italy in Rome, I got to see a lot of St. Francis. I developed a respect for the tradition of Francis. He's always displayed with the crucifixion marks. The tradition is he had stigmata.

But the one thing that he pushed and was so revolutionary in the order of monks that he started was this: you don't own anything that you cannot share with everyone. That was literally what he taught. And there is a whole line, a huge lineage that births from his type of life example.

Now, I'm not saying you should do that. I'm saying, take the example of his dedication and how he viewed living a life of humility and piety. Can you imagine? Don't own anything that you can't share for everybody. No, no. A, we're the United States. We don't do that. B, no. I mean, I'm like, no, it's mine, mine. My house, open it up for everybody? I mean, maybe a few of you, but maybe not—some of you know them.

And it was really neat to see a man, according to what we know written about him, who welcomed suffering. He welcomed endurance. He mourned a lot, mourned a lot. But his pursuit was to fully align himself with the sufferings of Yeshua. And a pursuit to not simply experience, but to live out the kingdom ethic. And he lived his life giving to those who had less than him, supporting those who had less than him, treating the sick, being a light during some of the darkest times of the world. And I think that's just pretty neat, pretty neat.

Again, I'm not advertising that we have to join the order of Franciscan monks. I just think it's a neat tradition. But it's a hard teaching because it was meant to be.

The Sermon Embodied

Yeshua starts off dark in his sermon, and he's breaking the mold so that we can be prepared for the rest of the sermon. It gets better. It gets lighter. It gets better. And then after the sermon, we get to see what the sermon looks like when it's actually lived out for the rest of the book of Matthew. And Yeshua demonstrates to us what a flourishing life looks like with who he interacts with, with how he lives out the character of the reign of heaven on earth as its king. He demonstrates how a flourishing life appears when it impacts everyone around him and even creation itself.

Yeshua embodied the Sermon on the Mount, and we sometimes forget that. But if we're trying to imitate Yeshua, then we should take a closer look.

The Blessing of Those Who Mourn

So those who are mourning, you have the good life, according to Yeshua. Not because you have a hole in your world. Not because you go through times of remembrance that, although probably now cause happy memories, still cause that pain. Not because of that, but because you are part of the revolution that is going to bring hope to the world. And you will see the kingdom closer and more intimately, engulfed by it than anyone else.

So yes, flourishing is your life for those who mourn, for you will find the comfort of God. For he will provide to those who grieve, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and the garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Blessed are we, dear heavenly Father. We thank you for this time as we humble ourselves and dive into your word, and we ask that the Holy Spirit, which your word says is within us even now reanimating us as the new humanity that lives out your kingdom ethic, Father, I ask that it would do its job and help us repent and help us change the way we look at things and help us break the mold, but also remind us how serious the calling of Yeshua is, what our job is, how we're supposed to live, but not only that, how we're supposed to recognize the blessing of the kingdom and how we're supposed to take seriously the promises of God.

We thank you, Father, for your comfort that you give us even now and also the hope of what is coming in the future, that we would truly be the revolutionaries changing the world forever. In Yeshua's name, we pray, amen.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God. The Lord is One. Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance towards you and give you peace.

Shabbat Shalom.

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