

**BLESSED ARE THEY  
THAT MOURN  
FOR THEY SHALL BE  
COMFORTED.**

Matthew 5:4

**HPC Trinity Class**

**March 9, 2025**



Q.: Who are the ones who mourn in this verse?

A: They are those who sorrow for their sins and the sins of others.

- "To mourn" is often coupled with "weeping"  
(MK 16:10; James 4:9, et. al.)
- This phrase in MT 5 is capable of two interpretations:  
#1--The mourning is for those who are afflicted by  
the loss of friends, family, or possessions.

**OR it can also mean:**

#2--Those who mourn over the sins of the world. "As Christ came to preach repentance, to induce people to mourn over their sins and to forsake them, it is probable that he had the latter particularly in view."<sup>1</sup> Jesus does not specify the cause of mourning in our case, but because the verses before and after this all refer to the religious, worldly reasons for mourning (#1 above) can probably be excluded.

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<sup>1</sup> "Barnes' Notes on the Bible," in BibleHub.

The phrase “they shall be comforted” is a Semitic idiom meaning “What God will do.”<sup>2</sup>

❖ **IDIOMS** are sentences that sound silly to everyone but the native speakers who use them.

Examples include: “up in the air,” meaning “no one knows;”  
“give yourself a pat on the back”  
“butterflies in my stomach”  
“let the cat out of the bag.”

**WHAT ARE SOME MORE EXAMPLES OF AMERICAN IDIOMS.**

- The Bible has many idioms. These would have been well understood by the original audience. For example, in Hebrew “*The good of eye...*” (Prov. 22:9) means nothing to us until it is translated into English as “the generous man.”

Some of our most common idioms have their origins in the Bible.

- A “*fly in the ointment*” hints at something not quite right.

**[READ Ecclesiastes 10:1]**

- “*Led like a lamb to the slaughter*” is also from the Old Testament, and is mentioned twice: once in Jeremiah 11:19, and when a prophecy of Jesus’ death is given. **[READ Isaiah 53:7]**

- “*The writing is on the wall*” is a phrase meaning it’s obvious that something bad is about to happen. **WHERE WOULD WE FIND THIS IN THE BIBLE?**

- The New Testament also has a number of idioms:

- In Greek, “place these words in your ears” (LK 9:4) means “listen carefully.”
- Another Greek phrase, this one from John 2:4-- “Woman, what to me and to you?” Like the phrase in today’s lesson, this is also of Semitic origin. In our world today we might say, “What have I done to you that you should do this to me?” It could also mean, “That’s your business; how am I involved?”

It is not enough to recognize our own spiritual sorrow with a detached heart; it is this genuine mourning for our sins that brings us into God's grace.

This means that any lamentation isn’t simply an acknowledgment but a transformative sorrow that leads to repentance and ultimately to the joy of salvation. The faithful remnant of Jesus' time mourned for the collective failures of Israel. They

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<sup>2</sup> France, pg. 110.

understood that their nation's suffering was born from both individual and collective sins. We too must come to a profound realization of our own transgressions. This deep mourning for our sins opens the door for divine comfort and the renewal of our spirit.



This verse in Matthew was not addressed to the **professional mourners**, who were abundant at that time,<sup>3</sup> and who were hired by the family of the deceased. These "rent-a-mourners" specialized in displaying an outpouring of grief and tears during funerals, as well as before and after the ceremony. "Lamentation and other funerary rites were as imperative a duty as burial, and their absence was considered a grave misfortune." The original Hebrew term for "mourning" was "to strike oneself." Tears were also expected to be shed ritually but only at the proper moment. Lamentation began immediately after death and lasted for seven days.<sup>4</sup>

**We gain a good glimpse of such mourning in the New Testament:**

**[READ MT 9:23].** Because these women (and most professional mourners were women) received money for their mourning, any disruption in their ceremonies was far more than just an impoliteness: it meant a loss of income for the mourners. Even poor Jewish families were expected to hire at least two flute players and one "wailing woman" for funerals.



*Modern professional mourners at a Japanese funeral*

<sup>3</sup> Second Chr. 35:25; Eccl. 12:5; Jer. 9:17ff to Hos. 9:16; Ezek 27:32; Amos 5:16.

<sup>4</sup> All of the above is cited in *Interpreter's*, vol. 3, pg. 453 ("Mourning").

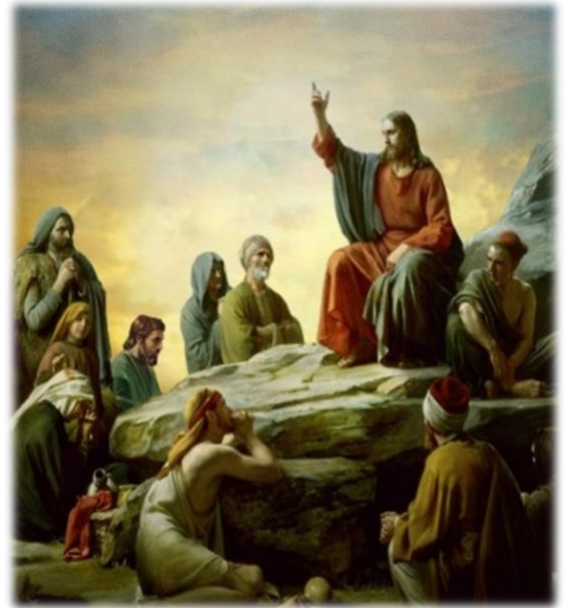
The Greek word *pentheó* (to mourn) often signifies a profound emotional response to loss, sin, or repentance. It can refer to both personal grief (the death of a relative or friend), and corporate grief (a community or nation): #1 and #2 above. *Pentheó* is the strongest possible Greek word for mourning.<sup>5</sup>

We need to remember that Jesus was giving this Sermon on the Mount to his closest friends, his disciples, and probably a smattering of others, but not the general public. The state of Israel by this time was deplorable: "The godly remnant of Jesus' day weeps because of the humiliation of Israel, but they understand that it comes from personal and corporate sins."<sup>6</sup> Jesus was preparing his followers for a new kingdom: God's kingdom, which would mean a radical change in their thought and lifestyle.

However, some people would prove to be indifferent; others would be proudly rebellious. For such people Christ had no blessing. But for those who deplored the evil of their times there was comfort in the gospel that Jesus presented, mainly:

- 1.--Christ brings consolation to those who mourn for sin by bringing forgiveness.
- 2.--He comforts those who deplore the evils of society by introducing a hope of human brotherhood.
- 3.—He consoles those who weep for the dead by shedding light on the life beyond the tomb.

Even so, these first believers would not be able to seek happiness the way the world did...and still does. Instead, they were to find true blessedness by mourning over their sins, and by being both humble and contrite (Is 66:2 and 2 Cor. 7:10). "The people who agree with God about the evil of their own hearts can attain an enviable state of blessedness, due to the comfort they receive from communion with the Holy Spirit."<sup>7</sup> (And let us not forget, God made laughter as well as tears.) 😊



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<sup>5</sup> Augsburg, pg. 63.

<sup>6</sup> (Carson, pg. 133)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pg. 131.



We could simply wallow in our own personal guilt and shame, and some people do. But if we believe the word of God then we know that we are also justified—set free of that sin—by God. (Gal 3:24).

Those who learn to mourn over their own sin find the heart of God.

**As the deepest poverty lies in the sphere of the spirit, so the deepest mourning lies there also.**

We can't repent of our sins if we have no sense of sorrow for those sins.

**DON'T SAY IT OUT LOUD BUT TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO REMEMBER A SIN IN YOUR LIFE—BIG OR SMALL—THAT YOU COMMITTED.**

- Did you even consider it a sin at the time?
- Did you try to "make it good," or has your lack of action left it simmering in your memory for years?

### **"O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" verse 4:**

*He speaks—and, listening to his voice,  
New life the dead receive,  
The mournful broken hearts rejoice,  
The humble poor believe."<sup>8</sup>*

Billy Graham: "Before we can receive power we must first confess that we are powerless.

*We must lament our sins before God before we can rejoice in a Savior. Mourning always comes before exultation. If we have no sense of sorrow for sin, how can we know the need of repentance?"*

**In effect, this means we must come to the end of "self" before we can really begin to live.**

<sup>8</sup> Hymn by Charles Wesley, in our Trinity Hymnal #164.



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