

# Good Mourning?

Blessed are those who mourn: Matthew 5:4

“We were promised sufferings. They were part of the program. We were even told, 'Blessed are they that mourn,' and I accept it. I've got nothing that I hadn't bargained for. Of course it is different when the thing happens to oneself, not to others, and in reality, not imagination.”

— [C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed](#)

What percentage of the Bible's books, chapters, and passages have to do with complaint, grief, and mourning? But in our day and age, or at least in my experience, we so seldom speak publicly about mourning. There is an idea that some things are better left for the private, quiet moments of desperation that we all must bear alone.

At best we have begun to embrace some idea that confession in private (possibly public) worship is important. No musicians are releasing new albums full of laments to God. Wouldn't that be something, Elevation Worship or Hillsong releasing an album of songs dealing with the pain, disappointment, and brokenness we all see around us.

“Talk to me about the truth of religion and I'll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect that you don't understand.” — [C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed](#)

Ironically, I have found contemporary musicians (clearly influenced by Christianity) do understand this concept outside of church music. U2's song remembering an Irish tragedy Sunday, Bloody Sunday comes to mind. The artist Sufjan Stevens explores themes of loss and abandonment on his latest album, *Carrie and Lowell* where he processes through being abandoned by his mother at one year old.<sup>1</sup> I'm not even mentioning The Avett Brothers, Mumford and Sons, Kendrick Lamar, and approximately half of all country songs ;)

But, is this what Scripture teaches? Certainly not if you are familiar with the Psalms. In fact, the lament category of Psalms, though broad, is the most common “type” of Psalm of the 150. We will talk about the Psalms again later, but let's look for a moment at the book that is named for lament.

*I am a man who has seen affliction  
Under the rod of his wrath  
He has driven and brought me  
Into darkness without any light;  
Surely against me he turns his hand*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pitchfork.com/features/interview/9595-true-myth-a-conversation-with-sufjan-stevens/>

*Again and again the whole day long*

*Remember my affliction and my wanderings...*

*My soul continually remembers it*

*And is bowed down within me.*

*But this I call to mind,*

*And therefore I have hope.*

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; (we are not cut off)*

*His mercies never come to an end;*

*They are new every morning;*

*Great is your faithfulness.*

*"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,*

*"Therefore I will hope in him."*

- Lamentations 3:1-3, 20-24

## Mourning can be a good thing

**Those who mourn are blessed,  
for they will be comforted.**

- Matthew 5:4

There is plenty of science available speaking of the benefits of a good cry. "After studying the composition of tears, Dr. Frey found that emotional tears shed these hormones and other toxins which accumulate during stress. Additional studies also suggest that crying stimulates the production of endorphins, our body's natural pain killer and "feel-good" hormones." Interestingly, humans are the only creatures known to shed emotional tears..."<sup>2</sup>

Author and franciscan friar Richard Rohr says it this way, "Jesus describes those who grieve as feeling the pain of the world. Weeping over our sin and the sin of the world is an entirely different response than self-hatred or hatred of others. Grief allows one to carry the dark side, to bear the pain of the world without looking for perpetrators or victims, but instead recognizing the tragic reality that both sides are caught up in. Tears from God are always for everyone, for our universal exile from home. "It is Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted" (Jeremiah 31:15)."<sup>3</sup>

Just a few weeks ago I vented some frustrations to my brother. In our conversation, I had recognized that I have channeled my disappointments into anger. While preparing for this sermon, I found this very helpful as one author suggested that "men finally discover that so much of what they thought was anger was actually sadness, loss, and grief."<sup>4</sup> For possibly the first time, I recognized that my disappointment needed an outlet in the form of "lament" rather than constantly

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/emotional-freedom/201007/the-health-benefits-tears>

<sup>3</sup> <https://cac.org/blessed-are-those-who-mourn-2018-02-01/>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

trying to find a solution for what I might have done differently (better) and anger toward the failures of those around me.

## Should they know are Christians by our tears?

The challenge here is to make a rule, an application, where we swing too far the other way. Should we then aspire to be sad people. Did Jesus have some sort of masochistic idea when he taught the #Blesseds to his followers?

“No one is actually being told that they are better off for being poor, for mourning, for being persecuted, and so on, or that the conditions listed are recommended ways to well-being before God or man. Nor are the Beatitudes indications of who will be on top "after the revolution." They are explanations and illustrations, drawn from the immediate setting, of the present availability of the kingdom through personal relationship to Jesus. They single out cases that provide proof that, in him, the rule of God from the heavens truly is available in life circumstances that are beyond all human hope . . . The Beatitudes simply cannot be "good news" if they are understood as a set of "how-tos" for achieving blessedness. They would then only amount to a new legalism. They would not serve to throw open the kingdom – anything but. They would impose a new brand of Phariseeism, a new way of closing the door – as well as some very gratifying new possibilities for the human engineering of righteousness.”<sup>5</sup>

## How we can embrace the act of mourning AS Christians.

Luke refers to them as “the weeping ones” (6:21). But as they see the kingdom in Jesus, enter it, and learn to live in it, they find comfort, and their tears turn to laughter. Yes, they are even better off than they were before their particular disaster. ***And you don't have to wait until you're dead.*** Jesus offers to all such people as these the present blessedness of the present kingdom—regardless of circumstances. The condition of life sought for by human beings through the ages is attained in the quietly transforming friendship of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

Let me suggest that mourning and lament should be part of the Christian life. Not because it is nice but because it is necessary. Remember our definition of what it means to be blessed when we started this sermon series? Blessed is “**anything that God gives that makes us fully satisfied in Him.**”<sup>7</sup>

We mourn, not because it is easy, but but because without it, it is impossible to find satisfaction in God. Without lament we are stuck in the past; past choices, past offenses, past wrongs. We put our energy into hatred, revenge, bitterness, unfulfilled dreams, and anger.

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<sup>5</sup> The Divine Conspiracy - Willard

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-it-really-mean-to-be-blessed>

How?

How do we release wrongs so deep that maybe some of you can't even talk about them? Perhaps we can look to the church traditions for an answer. Saints from every generation have turned to what has been called the prayer-book of the Bible, the Psalms.

Psalm 139 - Sorrow

Psalm 140 - Anger

Psalm 69 - Fear / Anxiety

Psalm 51 - Repentance

Psalm 88 - Depression

Psalm 85 - Longing

Psalm 102 - Confession

Psalm 22 - Self-hatred / Desolation

Psalm 74 - Disappointment

In a few minutes we are going to take communion together. Before we do, I want you have a few minutes to spend some time together searching the Psalms, praying and mourning together. Cry. Be comforted by the steadfast love of the Lord. His mercies are new every morning.

Psalm 61 - Please read together with me.

*Hear my cry, O God,*

*Listen to my prayer;*

*From the end of the earth I call to you*

*When my heart is faint.*

*Lead me to the rock*

*That is higher than I,*

*For you have been my refuge,*

*A strong tower against my enemy.*