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Matthew 5:4 *Mourning*

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“Father in Heaven, we’ve heard beautiful music today, had a lovely children’s story, had an offering. We’ve done all the things that normally come with worship. But now, we are about to open Your Word and we are longing for You to be the One who teaches us. We pray for a miraculous demonstration of Your presence through Your Word. We pray for a burning fire in our hearts. We pray for conviction and conversion. We ask Heavenly Father that nothing short of miracles will take place as we listen to Your Word today. Please be powerful in our midst. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

When I was growing up, I lived with a man, my father, who was a character. I have told you stories about him over the few years that we’ve had our church here. He was a character. He was a type of guy that could ruin you for life, and maybe I have been? I don’t know? But my Dad was always tormenting us as children, always teasing us, and always having fun with us. I remember one time, I was five years old, and it was around Halloween. We were living in Cadillac, Michigan, up in Northern Michigan. And there, in our little three bedroom house, five children sat in a living room. Mom and Dad had gone to the neighbors next door. My oldest sister was eight or nine years old, and so she was in charge.

And we were just seated there, staring at the big picture window because it was dark. And I don’t remember why we were staring at it, but something got our attention out there. And all of a sudden we heard a scream. And then a pumpkin with a candle in it all of a sudden appeared from underneath the window outside. And we ran to our rooms crying. Of course, my Dad came in laughing; he was having fun with us. It was my Dad! My Dad would exaggerate things to make it more scary for us as children. I remember watching him remove a splinter from my sister’s finger. He would go through a great deal of orchestration to make this an event. He took a match, and he lit it, and he held a needle in the flame, and he said: “Oh yeah, we’ve got to make this thing clean. So when it goes down into the skin, no infection will take place.” And then he’d be describing, “Oh it’s getting hot, it’s getting hot.” Well, you know, let the splinter be.

And then, you know, he’d hold the hand, and by then, you know, everybody, all of us kids are trembling, and he is digging around with that needle. And he is making comments, and he just made it such a drama. And then he just pulls it out with tweezers and “Oho, here it comes, here it comes, aha it’s coming, aha, and...” Well, my Dad was a character. I got a splinter in my thumb when I was five year old. There wasn’t any way on earth I was going to go to my Dad. And my Dad caused me a lot of pain in life starting then. Here is what happened.

I don’t know if it was a metal splinter or a wood one, I don’t know. But my fear of my father in that situation caused me to not turn to him for help. And that splinter worked its way down to the bone. And an infection took place. I had to go to the hospital for several days; I had to have surgery on my thumb. I have a ¾ inch scar right there on my thumb. That’s my Dad’s fault. I blame him. He could have helped me, but I was afraid of him. And because of that I ended up in a lot of pain.

I'd like to study that with you today. Will you please turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5? We are continuing our series in the Sermon on the Mount. This is our third one. And in Matthew 5 verse 4 we will read the second of the beatitudes of Jesus. Matthew 5 verse 4, New King James Version says this: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Now this passage is generally applied one of three ways, and maybe a mixture of the three. One way that it is applied is just simply literally. That mourning is good for you. Sorrow develops a person and it makes him more complete. The Arabs have a saying that says, "All sunshine makes a desert." So we need a little rain in our lives to be balanced and to make us more whole. It also can lead us to God in a time of sorrow. And it helps us to prioritize what is really and truly important in our lives. So some people preach the passage just that way. "It's just good to be sorrowful sometimes."

Others say, "That's okay, but it's better to be sorry for the sorrow and suffering in the world. After all, Christianity is to reflect Christ, and He is caring; so Christianity and Christians should be caring people and the caring religion." And so, "Blessed are you if you are sorrowful for all the pain and suffering that is in the world." And there are applications; I am sure, of that. And there are applications for those who have lost great losses in their lives, loved ones, jobs, divorces, different things like that. There is comfort that God offers.

But in this verse, we are looking at a system that Jesus is presenting. It is a process to draw us closer to His heart. It begins with poverty in the spirit. It begins with being bankrupt spiritually. That we have absolutely nothing to offer God as a righteousness, as any righteousness. There is just nothing that we have. We are bankrupt. And just as if you were notified today that you are going to have to declare bankruptcy and that would create sorrow for you. Spiritually, in the spiritual realm, when we discover that we are bankrupt that also will create sorrow. And I believe it is that that Jesus is addressing here. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

We are talking about repentance because of sin in our lives. That is the mourning that Jesus is talking about. But what type of mourning is He talking about? Let's turn to Genesis 37 verse 31. We have the story there of Jacob being told by his sons that his son Joseph has probably died as a result of an animal. You remember the story. Joseph was the cuddled boy, the hated brother. And his father sent him to look for his brothers. He had that coat of many colors, or a tunic as it's in some versions of the Bible. And ultimately the boys sold him into slavery. And then to try to make up the story as to why; they don't know where he is, they took his tunic, dipped it in some blood from an animal that they killed, and they brought it to their father, Jacob.

Let's read it, verse 35: "So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, 'We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?' And he recognized it and said, 'It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.'" Now before we read the next two verses, I want to draw your attention to one thing. In the Septuagint, the Septuagint was written by 70 Greek scholars; consequently the name, "Septa" or "Septuagint." And in that, they took the Hebrew, they wrote it into Greek. And in the Greek Septuagint, the word for mourning that Jacob will use is

the very word Jesus uses in the Greek in Matthew, okay? So this is to help us to see what we are talking about.

Verse 34: “Then Jacob tore his clothes, and put sack-cloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, “For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.” When Jesus says, “Blessed are they that mourn,” he is talking about a very deep pain, the deepest that you can find in the Greek language. And the best that I can use to describe it for you is the anguish of soul that Jacob is feeling that his son is gone, and gone forever. His son has been devoured by a wild beast.

Now let’s go back to Matthew, but this time, to Matthew 4 verse 17. Jesus is beginning His public ministry, and in this verse He lays the foundation for His preaching. Matthew 4 verse 17 it says: “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Now repenting is what we are talking about in this sorrow or in this mourning. It is a sorrow for sin in our lives. Now repenting basically means this: to turn from your own ways and turn to God, or to lift your eyes and look toward Heaven, to stop walking away from God and to walk toward God. That’s what repentance is all about. It is turning; it is changing direction and changing emphasis.

So Jesus talks about, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” We’ve applied that to repentance; now let’s see what the Bible teaches us about repentance. Let’s turn to Second Corinthians chapter 7 verses 9 and 10. Paul has written a very scathing letter to the Corinthians. He’s heard back that they’ve received it okay. And so now, he is commenting on it in these two verses. He says in verse 9, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Now, it’s a heavy couple of verses. There is a lot in there. We are going to unpack it just a little bit today. Notice what Paul says in verse 9: “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner...” There is an ungodly manner that you can be made sorry, and that doesn’t help you. There is a godly manner that leads to life. And we are going to differentiate between them this way. If you have done something that is bad, and it might be in the paper, maybe it’s on the screen for weeks as they talk about it here in the Chattanooga area. Or even better yet, in our small community of Collegedale, it’s on everybody’s lips, and you know how that is around here. Somebody says or does something, you know, it’s everybody is talking about it. Well you’ve done that.

In ungodly sorrow, is embarrassment of the exposure, it is fear of more exposure, it is injured pride, it is profound regret, it is just all about the consequences to yourself. That is not a godly sorrow. That is a natural sorrow. You don’t have to be a Christian to have that type of sorrow. You don’t have to even believe in God to have that type of sorrow. That is going to come upon us. That is a very selfish response to, “Oh man, I’ve just done something, and now everyone is going to know about it. How am I going to face anybody at the Post Office, you know.” You don’t need God for that sorrow. That’s not a godly sorrow.

What is a godly sorrow? Well, hold your hands here because we'll come back, and look at Psalm 51. Psalm 51 you know is a Psalm that David wrote after the experience with Bathsheba. If you are not familiar with a story, I'll just quickly tell it to you. Bathsheba was the wife of another man. David was standing on the roof one day, and saw Bathsheba cleaning herself on a rooftop that was lower than his. He was the King, he had the highest roof. And he is looking down, he sent his soldiers to get her, brought her to his place and they were together physically. And she was even impregnated. He brought her husband back from the war site, and encouraged him to go home. He refused to go home because his fellow soldiers are sleeping out on the ground; he slept out on the ground. He got him drunk; he did everything he could to try to get him to go home to be with her so he could fake that the baby would be Uriah's, that's her husband.

But none of that worked, Uriah was too noble of a man, too committed to his fellows out in the field, and as some have speculated, he may have already suspected something. So David sent a note with Uriah to the Captain of the army there, Joab. I guess he is a general. And in that note it said, "Place Uriah in the heat of the battle near a wall, and when you do, draw back from him." Code, "Make sure he dies." So David has basically forced himself by virtue of his position on another woman, on another man's wife. That results in a pregnancy and also in a murder of a good man, Uriah the Hittite, not even born an Israelite, chose to serve God, chose to be in the army.

Well David is confronted with that sin by Nathan the prophet. And when it all settles down, David writes this in chapter 51, verse 4 of the Psalms. "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight – That you may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge." Now at first reading, this seems rather shallow. And it seems rather careless on David's part. I mean, he had sinned against Bathsheba, the child that Bathsheba had died. David had killed Uriah. And what are the effects on his own family? What are the effects on the community and on the kingdom? And he is saying, "Against You God, and You only have I sinned." I mean, it seems to be rather un-contrite until you recognize what he is saying.

He is not eliminating all the pain he's inflicted upon others. But what he is doing, he is demonstrating godly sorrow. Godly sorrow is the sorrow we have inflicted upon God. And he is saying that, "Against You God, and You only have I sinned, and I have brought pain to Your life. And I have discredited You by the actions of my own life." A godly sorrow begins with what is the effect that this is having upon God. An ungodly sorrow begins with what is the effect is this having upon me, and how do I feel, and how am I doing with this. A godly sorrow begins with God. Let me tell you something brothers and sisters. Our actions have an effect upon God. We can hurt Him. And that's where we must begin this whole process of repentance in a godly way.

Let's go back to Second Corinthians chapter 7 verse 10. Again, a very heavy verse, but we'll try to unpack it for you. It says, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." There is a godly sorrow, and that godly sorrow produces life. In fact, Jesus says not only does it produce life, but He will comfort the person with godly sorrow. "Blessed are they that mourn, they shall be comforted." "But the sorrow of the world produces death." We are talking life and death here. Godly sorrow, worldly sorrow!

You know, worldly sorrow is a surface sorrow. It is the feelings of self. It is not connecting with God for the comfort, and it leads to death. But, godly sorrow will lead to comfort and to life. Let's see it demonstrated in two very short stories in the Bible. Look at Matthew chapter 27 verses 3-5. This takes place on Friday morning, the day Jesus died on Calvary. Matthew 27 verses 3 and 5: "Then Judas, Jesus' betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders..." Was Judas sorrowful? Yes, it says right there, "He was remorseful." So he has a sorrow for what he has done to Jesus, for what he's been involved in. And what does he attempt to do - to bring back the money, "...saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' And they said, 'What is that to us? You see to it!' Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hung himself."

I ask you, did he find any comfort in his sorrow? Did he find any comfort in his grieving and his mourning for the sin in his life? He found no comfort; in fact, he went out and hung himself. That is worldly sorrow. That is not godly sorrow. That is the sorrow that leads to death. It is a surface sorrow. It is all about self. He was not concerned at that point about God, only about himself. Just in front of that in Matthew 26 is another story. Matthew 26 verse 73: "And after awhile, those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you." Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed."

"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly." If you read Luke's account you'll discover that right after that denial, Jesus looked at Peter. Peter looked at Jesus, their eyes locked. And Peter saw into the heart of God, saw the pain in the face of Jesus that His beloved disciple had denied Him in the presence of all those people, had cursed in his denial. And Peter looked in the face of God, and he went out and he wept. Peter ultimately would find comfort. Peter's was a godly sorrow because it was associated with the pain inflicted upon God.

Now I want to show you something about repentance. Look at Romans chapter 2 verse 4. Fascinating concept here; Paul says, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance." The goodness of God leads to repentance. Here is how it works. You go to God, you confess your sin to God, you recognize the pain you've inflicted upon Him, and yet, you realize the forgiveness and mercy He is willing to extend to you. And in your heart you are thinking, "I don't ever want to do this to God again." That mercy of God, that goodness of God leads us to a repentance where we turn from our self and we turn to Him.

Now I will tell you right now, this will work in marriage too. You take two people that are married, and one has hurt the other one. And they go to them and they say, "Please forgive me. I sincerely ask for forgiveness. I hope I will never do anything to cause this grief and pain to you again." When that other spouse does forgive that person, the very goodness of them to forgive that person creates a deeper repentance in the other person's heart and they don't want to hurt that person anymore. I can explain it another way. Here is a dog. Somebody, obviously not me, but somebody kicks the dog. And that dog backs up and growls, and snarls, and the fur comes back up and it's ready to pounce.

First thing that comes into the mind, does that dog deserve to be kicked? Kick it some more until it's out of the yard or where ever you want it to go. Just keep kicking a growling dog. Change of scenario. Kick a dog, and that dog looks at you with his soft brown eyes and just stares at you. Doesn't growl, doesn't do anything, but just kind of cowers, maybe even shakes. Now if you are going to kick that dog again, you are sadistic because that dog is already breaking our heart. Even the goodness of a dog can bring repentance. It works that way with God brothers and sisters. When we go to Him openly, honestly with a sin in our lives, the sorrow that we have for sin in our lives, we will receive a godly repentance. And we will receive comfort from Him.

Now I want to show you in the Bible Psalm 32 where David has experienced this very thing we are talking about, comfort from God. "Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Blessed are those who have a godly sorrow for sin, for they shall be comforted. That's in essence what Jesus is teaching us. Psalm 32, David writes almost beatitude, it sounds just like one. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." And everyone here who is a Christian can say, "Yes, that is a wonderful thing to know, your sin is forgiven and your sin is covered." It goes on to say, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute inequity and in whose spirit there is no guile."

So the Lord imputes no inequity on that person. That man is blessed. Now notice what happened. Verse 3, David said, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long." He is saying, "Before I went to God with my sin, I kept it in." You see his concept of God was kind of like my concept of my father at times. Where I wouldn't go to him because I thought it would be more painful going to my father than it would be just to live with the pain I had. And so David doesn't want to go to God. But there is an effect upon him. It says right here in verse 3, "My bones grew old and my groaning was all day long." It was affecting him physically, affecting him spiritually. It was affecting him in every way not to be honest with God, not to be upfront about the sin in his life.

We read on, "For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into the drought of summer." He is describing guilt, shame. Now notice the change, verse 5: "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." David will describe finding that godly comfort because of godly sorrow. Godly sorrow leads us to God. Godly sorrow leads us to openness, to honesty with the Lord. "For this cause, everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found. Surely, in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him."

Now notice this, verse 7: "You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall surround me with songs of deliverance." For those who have sinned, and the sin has become public, and the sin is on the lips of everybody in their community or in their family, and maybe in the written page or on the screen. For those people who have experienced that, when they go to God with a godly sorrow, they will receive a godly comfort. And even though people are surrounding them and waving their tongues at them, it doesn't matter. They are okay with God, and that's all that it matters to them. They will be just fine.

But a person who does not have godly sorrow will be destroyed. They will be destroyed. “You are my hiding place. You preserve me from trouble; you surround me with songs of deliverance.” In verse 8 it’s God actually speaking. And He is essentially saying, “To those people who come to Me mourning for sin in their lives, to those people who come to Me who are truly repentant with a godly sorrow, I will instruct them and teach them in the way they should go. I will guide them with My eye.” He is describing a relationship that is like that of a married couple.

It’s fun to watch married people. Now, you know, if you’ve been married 50-60 years, you are not so fun to watch ‘cause you are so much like each other and so accepting of one another. There is no challenge to watching you. We are just happy for you. Happy you made it through all the rough times, and now you can enjoy being together. Take a couple that’s been married two or three years and watch them. It is fascinating. He starts a story. Just watch his eyes. If he is avoiding looking at her at all cost, you know the action will soon begin. Look at her eyes. You are discerning enough to know whether there is lightning flashing in there or not. And they begin to communicate with their eyes. And if he looks over at her eyes and he has any discernment at all, he’ll know, “I’m not going to tell the story now. No, no, not going to work.” Or she may be saying with her look, “It’s okay.”

Couples communicate with their eyes. God is saying, look, this godly sorrow, this mourning for sin, this openness with God will result in comfort. And not only comfort, but in experience with God that is so close, He will direct you with His eyes. He’ll just look, and you’ll know what you are to do, and what you are not to do. He goes on to say in verse 10: “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart.” “Blessed are they that mourn, they shall be comforted.” That comfort that Jesus is describing is comfort that is talked about back in the Old Testament where it’s described that the Messiah will come and He will comfort His people.

And even Isaiah says, “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people.” And then Jesus comes and He mentions it here in Matthew. Later in Matthew 11 He says, “Any one of you who is burdened and heavy laden, come to Me and I will give you rest, and I will give you comfort.” It’s associated with that. You follow along through the Bible and ultimately you come to the Book of Revelation when it’s all over, and it’s all done. One of the great things God does, is we receive the ultimate outpouring of comfort. No more sorrow, no more tears, no more sadness at all.

Right now today, I don’t know where are you at spiritually? But I do know this: When we do things wrong, there is a sorrow. The question is: Do we have a sorrow of the world that leads to death, or are we seeking God so we can have a godly sorrow that leads to life. I have a scar, $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long on my thumb. It’s my Dad’s fault. He had me afraid to go to him. And you know, one thing about the scar though, it teaches me that healing took place. Something happened in that hospital and with the doctors, and healing took place. Overtime as I grew and matured I recognized my Dad was nobody to fear, he was just a character.

I hope that in your life you are learning your Father in Heaven is no one to fear when it comes to your sin, and to the pain in your life. I hope you are learning that you can go to Him, and you

can be honest with Him. I hope that your relationship is such with Him that when you sin, your first reaction and your first response is, 'How is God feeling about this? What is it doing to Him?' And in that context and in that fellowship God will create in you a godly sorrow that He can comfort. He can't comfort a worldly sorrow, but He can comfort a godly sorrow.

Today, if you would like to say to the Lord, "I want you as my Savior, and I want You to work within me a godly sorrow for sin." If you would like to say that, I am just going to ask you to stand. "Father in Heaven, I am asking that You would bring healing and comfort to all of us. We give You our sins Lord. We confess that against You and You only have we sinned. Please forgive us Lord. And Lord, may the scars of our lives be reminders of Your healings. We ask in Jesus name, Amen."