

The Amazing Benefits of a Broken Heart
Beatitudes Series 2
Matthew 5:4
Peter Eavis, Vineyard West Side

SLIDE ONE

Today, we are going to continue looking at the collection of Jesus' teachings that have come to be known as the Beatitudes. Rather than explain what they are, I'll get em right up on the screen so that we know what we're referring to when we talk about the Beatitudes.

SLIDE TWO

These are from Matthew's gospel. What we almost certainly see there are condensed teachings that Jesus would give again and again -- this isn't just one sermon. I am sure he would elaborate on each Beatitude. They represent points about life that Jesus was very passionate about and that he wanted to get across at all costs. The Beatitudes show Jesus at his most provocative, his most iconoclastic, his most intriguing. The beatitudes are packed with life-changing wisdom -- and so it makes a lot of sense for us to unpack them in this series of talks.

Looking at them up there on the screen, I think we'd all agree that one of the BIG things all the Beatitudes have in common is that **they are not at first glance** -- or maybe even at second or third glance -- they are not particularly attractive or inviting. That was certainly true of last week's beatitude -- *blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the KoH*. At first glance, that was a hard one. But I think that this week's beatitude could be seen as the toughest of the bunch to stomach. This is the beatitude we're going to look at today...Matthew 5:4, which says this:

SLIDE THREE

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

I can easily understand how that might come over as rather off-putting to people.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

I guess you could just about make the argument that, yeah, there's some promise in there somewhere -- the mourners **will be** comforted. But the thing is that we don't want to be mourning in the first place -- no matter how much comfort we might ultimately get. Mourning, as we understand the term generally, is just *baaaad*.

Mourning, as we think of the word today, is something we don't want to be doing. It certainly doesn't suggest blessing. So this does not appear to be an inviting beatitude.

But what I am setting out to show today is that this Beatitude taps into something that we all do and feel. (x2) And when we let Jesus tap into this thing that we do, he can change our lives and he can use us to help change other people's lives for good. (x2)

What is that thing that we all do that Jesus can tap into -- so powerfully? Well, it is summed up for us by the term "mourning."

When Jesus uses mourning here, he is not referring only to the grief we feel when someone passes away. Mourning, in this Beatitude, definitely includes that, but in this context it has a much wider meaning.

SLIDE FOUR (FILL IN 1)

It means the deep sorrow or brokenheartedness that we feel when we look at some of the awful things going on around us, when we look at people we know doing harm or being harmed

It's the anguish we feel when we see evil get its way.

It's the regret we feel sometimes when we look at our *own life* and maybe some of the areas where we slip up. One expert on the gospel of Matthew said about this beatitude that "*those who mourn*" are those whose: "hearts are broken by the world's suffering and by their own sin."

None of us are strangers to this type of mourning. I felt it when I read about the murder last week of Immette St. Gillen - the 24 yr old John Jay College graduate student. I felt that same deep sorrow when I read about destruction of the Shi'ite Golden mosque in Samarra a couple weeks ago. I felt it about myself when I did a couple of things that upset Phoebe.

So a lot of things can make us feel that basic broken-heartedness. And what I want to do today is look at how we can take that sorrow -- the mourning, as Jesus calls it -- and use it for good. And this week's beatitude -- *blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted* -- shows us how to somehow use that sorrow as a springboard for good.

Before we get to the point where we can do that, I wanted to mention the fork in the road. OK, what's the fork in the road? Here's what I mean:

That feeling of being fundamentally upset with how things are in the world and in our lives actually takes us *to a fork in the road*. One side of the fork takes that discontent turns it into something really special that actually motivates and empowers us to work with God to do good. One fork takes us down that road -- and we're going to look at how Jesus does that with us.

But the other side of the fork can take us into things that are somewhat destructive, or, at least, pointless.

SLIDE FIVE (FILL IN 2)

That feeling of brokenheartedness can all too often lead us down a path where we let it turn into despair, or anger, or even hate.

There's a child in my daughter's class who has pretty significant behavioral problems. Usually I feel irritation when this classmate of my daughter starts to act up. Mentally, up here, I feel a certain level of sympathy for the child. I know it's not the child's fault -- this is just a child. But irritation and judgment have been my main emotions when seeing this

child act up. But on Friday, I was dropping Victoria off at school and her classmate began acting up badly again. But this time, I really felt like God showed me **His** heart for the girl -- and He felt deep compassion for the girl and her situation. And God helped me see how I had let my sorrow turn not into compassion but into resentment. I had taken the wrong side of the fork.

You see, if we let that sorrow become anger or hate or despair, it just backfires on us and we can be sucked into a negative swirl that doesn't actually feel that good. Let me illustrate for you. Does anyone here like the band The Strokes? I am listening to them a lot at the moment. Anyway, there's one song on their new album which really sums up how going down the wrong fork sends us into the negative swirl. This is some lyrics from a Strokes song called: "On the Other Side"

SLIDE SIX

*I'm tired of, of everyone I know
Of everyone I see on the street and on TV
I hate them all, I hate them all
I hate myself for hating them
So I'll drink some more, I'll love them all
I'll drink even more...
I'll hate them even more than I did before*

That sounds pretty grim. But I realized the singer is painfully aware that he's trapped in the pointlessness of his own hate. He's aware that he's gone down the wrong fork. He may not be off that fork and going down the correct fork -- which would be great -- but he knows there's something that's not working with all the hate.

So how do we go down the right fork -- and let God use that broken-heartedness we might feel about stuff going on around us and about ourselves? How does that happen? How do we actually do that with God? How does that end up with us being or feeling blessed, as Jesus says we will in the beatitude?

SLIDE SEVEN

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. There is hope in this mourning. And to understand where that hope is coming from in this Beatitude, we have to look at a passage from the bible that everyone in Jesus' audience would have thought about when he gave this teaching.

This beatitude would have immediately reminded Jesus' audience of a magnificent passage from the book of Isaiah, which is in our OT's today. This passage told people what would happen when the Messiah came. This passage really helps us understand *blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted...* Here it is:

SLIDE EIGHT

*Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor and the day of vengeance of our God, **to comfort all who mourn.***

*Isa 61:3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of **gladness instead of mourning**,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*

When Jesus comes, this passage tells us, he will bind up the brokenhearted, he will proclaim freedom for the captives, release the prisoners -- and he will comfort all who mourn -- i.e. everyone who carries this deep sorrow about the world's failings and their own failings -- they will be comforted Why? Because the Messiah -- i.e. Jesus -- will usher in an age when God starts to take on, defeat, forgive and heal those things that cause the sorrow. That age began with Jesus. We're comforted precisely because we know God is intervening powerfully to rescue the world and bind up and heal people's lives.

That's great stuff. *What does it look like in real life?*

OK, let's say we had a close relative who was addicted to alcohol and his drinking was messing up his own life and his family's life. Such a situation would certainly cause that brokenheartedness among the people he knew. Anyone who's had an alcoholic parent knows that deep sorrow.

But this passage from Isaiah tells us that Jesus will bring in a time when the captives can be free. In other words, Jesus has come and now he can free people from things like addictions. He can release us from darkness. Jesus can actually do that.

So, yes, we feel broken hearted when we see the addiction at work, but we're comforted because we know Jesus can actually do something about it. Blessed are those who mourn because they will be comforted -- comforted by the knowledge that God has had enough and is acting to overturn all evil and all suffering.

SLIDE NINE

This move of God is often called the Gospel of the Kingdom, because when God's Kingdom comes, Jesus does all sorts of wonderful things that bring God's power and love into our lives.

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What can help us hang in there? The knowledge that God is 100% committed to our lives. This total commitment pops up all through the bible. You could argue that it starts in Genesis when God promises that he will defeat Satan. But it really becomes clear when he forges His covenant with Abraham. The best ever description I have ever heard about the covenant with Abraham is that through that covenant God bound Himself to the human race. No matter where we go, He will come, too, and will always be there if we reach out to Him. He sticks with us no matter how bad things get. And we can always turn to Him. He's bound Himself to our plight.

SLIDE TEN

You can see that on the Cross. Jesus suffered not only for us, but with us. He experienced everything we have to experience -- and more. He was subject to death, just as we are. He was nailed to the Cross -- but somewhere in him he had accepted that he had to do that -- for us. You see, in Jesus, we see God's unshakable commitment to stick by us.

God is going to stick by us -- as He completes that victory. He's available to all of us. The great thing is that we can all call on His name and ask Him to go to work on those things that cause us to feel brokenhearted. Things we aren't happy about in our own lives and things happening around us in the world.

When I sort of step back and recognize that God is 100% committed to us, I am just sort of floored and I am left saying again and again Thank you (x5). Thank you for being there. Thank you for feeling our pain. Thank you.

But it doesn't stop there!

The great thing about knowing that God is 100% committed to our lives is that when we feel that great faithfulness, something in us wants to start show the same faithfulness in to other people. Just as Jesus has stuck by me -- and it's been such an awesome thing -- I start to want to stick by other people...no matter what's going on in their lives. I want God to take the sorrow and brokenheartedness and graduate it into something useful and compassionate.

When people have shown me a sort of covenant-like faithful it has literally changed my life. Marriage does that. But the faithfulness of friends can also be very powerful. One of the most powerful and reassuring things that we can ever say to someone is something like this: "Don't worry -- I am going to be with you every step of the way through this. Call me at any time. I'll be here. Whatever you need, just give me a shout. I am committed to you. I am committed to seeing this situation work out."

SLIDE ELEVEN

We say that -- and then we keep saying it -- right through the rough patch and then out the other side. You see, it makes so much sense to regularly tell people going through hard times that we absolutely will stick them through thick and thin -- and that God will, too.

So what stops us doing that regularly and consistently through our lives? I think we'd all agree that this is a good thing to be doing -- partnering with God as He brings really positive changes into people's lives. What might stop us from throwing ourselves into that in a big way?

And I think the main fear is this: That it would all seem like very grim hard work after a while. It'll become burdensome and joyless and we might even get hurt. The fear might be is that if I really do start making myself available to people who are suffering or who are deprived or who are going through a hard time, suddenly, I'd have to take on all sorts of burdens and my life would suddenly become very hard to live and I would feel absolutely overwhelmed. I'll get taken advantage of. I'll get insulted. "Hurting people

hurt," is how the saying goes. And we generally don't like to have hurtful things said to us.

So what do we do if we feel like that? I can only say this: Trust God that it won't be anything like that over the long run. Of course, there will be days when we feel completely sucked dry of all compassion -- when we can't discern God doing anything. But generally -- over time -- being there for people won't be joyless, overwhelming and painful. Those are lies.

SLIDE TWELVE

Our beatitude for today actually tells us to trust God that it won't be like that: "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*"

That word "blessed" actually means a state of blissfulness -- total happiness. So Jesus is actually saying that the true happiness that comes from God Himself can be found in sticking by others and being there in every way for them. In this beatitude, Jesus is saying that an incredible joy that can't be found anywhere else will be found in acting with compassion towards people who are suffering. This is where life is at, Jesus is saying.

Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

This week -- pray Lord for stuff to happen.

Vision of heart cavity and small heart -- then ballooned in size.

Words.....