The Constitution of the Kingdom

A 33-Session Journey through the Sermon on the Mount & the Sermon on the Plain

SESSION THREE — Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Part One: The Blessings of the Kingdom · Texts: Matthew 5:4; Luke 6:21b, 25b

The Texts

> **Matthew 5:4** *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*
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> **Luke 6:21b** *Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.*
>
> **Luke 6:25b** *Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.*

The Blessing No One Wants

Here is a blessing no one lines up for. We will do almost anything to avoid this one. The whole machinery of our culture is built to keep it at bay — cheer up, stay positive, look on the bright side, don't be a downer. We medicate it, we scroll past it, we schedule around it. Grief is the guest we hope never rings the bell.

And Jesus — the second word out of his mouth in the Kingdom's constitution — calls the mourners blessed.

Last week he blessed the poor. Now the grieving. Do you see the pattern forming? The Kingdom keeps landing its favor exactly where the world hangs its "keep out" sign. So we have to ask, and carefully: what kind of mourning is this — and why on earth would the King call it blessed?

Let's search the Scriptures together.

What Kind of Mourning?

It is not sentimentality, and it is not a mood we're told to manufacture. Nor is it the clinical weight of depression — that is real and heavy and deserves a doctor's care and a friend's steady presence far more than a sermon. The word Jesus uses is stark: the deep grief of the bereaved, the ones who have lost. And he blesses it two ways at once.

First, plainly. The Kingdom draws near to those who are simply, personally broken — who have buried someone, lost something, watched a life come apart. To them the promise arrives with no lecture attached: you will be comforted.

But there is a second grief here, and it runs straight through Israel's prophets. Jesus is nearly quoting Isaiah 61 — the very passage that stands behind this whole Sermon — where the Anointed One comes "to comfort all who mourn."[1] That mourning is grief over the world as it is: over sin, over injustice, over the gap between the world God intends and the world we have made. It is the ache of those who refuse to numb themselves to the pain around them.

The Courage Not to Look Away

Here is the hard, holy center of it. To be a Kingdom person is to keep your heart soft enough to break. The world rewards the calloused — the ones who have learned not to feel the suffering just past the edge of their comfort. But the Sermon blesses the tender: those who let the world's pain reach them, who grieve what God grieves.

Walter Brueggemann taught us that real grief is where newness begins — that a people numbed into contentment cannot even imagine a different world, and that lament is the first crack in that numbness.[2] You cannot work for a justice you will not first weep over. Grief is not the opposite of hope; it is hope's beginning — the refusal to pretend that things as they are are things as they must be.

Bonhoeffer put it bluntly: those who mourn are the ones willing to bear the suffering of the world instead of insulating themselves from it — who will do without the false peace the world is selling.[3] It costs something to keep your heart open. Jesus says it is worth the cost.

"They Will Be Comforted"

Now hear the promise, and notice who does the comforting. "They will be comforted" — and the grammar quietly hides God as the actor: God will comfort them.[4] This is Isaiah again — "comfort, comfort my people" — the tenderness of a God who does not stand off at a safe distance from our tears. And remember where this whole course began: the God of this Kingdom is the God who came down. He is the God who wept at a friend's grave, who cried

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[1]The mourning Jesus blesses is not sentimentality or a mood to manufacture. It reaches back to Isaiah 61:1–3—the Anointed One who comes "to comfort all who mourn"—the same prophetic passage standing behind the whole Sermon. It embraces both personal grief and grief over the world's injustice. See W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, and R. T. France, on Matthew 5:4; and Amy-Jill Levine on the Jewish prophetic context.

[2]Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination: lament is where newness begins; a people numbed into contentment cannot imagine, or work toward, a different world. Grief is the first crack in that numbness.

[3]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship: those who mourn are willing to bear the suffering of the world rather than insulate themselves from it—renouncing the false peace the world offers. It is costly to keep the heart open.

[4]"They will be comforted" is a divine passive: God will comfort them (Isaiah 40:1; 61:2). The God who "came down" (Session One) weeps—at Lazarus's grave (John 11:35) and over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). On the inaugurated "already/not-yet" of this comfort, see N.T. Wright and George Eldon Ladd.

over a city that would not come home. The comfort is coming — that is the not-yet. And the comfort has already come near in the One who weeps with us — that is the now.

Luke's Sharper Edge — Laughter and Woe

Luke, as always, strips it to the bone and adds the edge we'd rather skip. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." And then: "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep."

Hear me clearly, because this one is easy to misread. Jesus is not against joy — this is the man who turned water into wine, who was accused of feasting too freely. The laughter beneath the woe is a particular laughter: the untroubled ease of the comfortable who have made their peace with a world that grinds other people down — the cheer of those who can laugh only because they have stopped noticing who is weeping.[5] It is the same anesthetized contentment that owned the rich man last week. And Jesus says: that peace is thin, and it will not hold. The reversal is coming.

Freedom for Others

Put it to our thread. Mourning, rightly understood, is the most for-others posture there is — it is the flat refusal to stay comfortable while a neighbor suffers. So ask it with me: whose pain am I actually willing to feel? And what comfort — what numbness, what protective distance — might I need to lay down so that another's grief can reach me? *Freedom for others may cost us our composure — what can we lay down?*

Around the Table — For Discussion

- What has your world taught you to do with grief — your own, and the world's? Where did that training come from?
- Jesus blesses two kinds of mourning: personal loss, and grief over the world as it is. Which comes more easily to you? Which do you avoid?
- Brueggemann says a numb people can't imagine a better world. Where have you gone numb — and what might it take to feel again?
- Read Luke's woe on the laughing out loud. What is the difference between the joy Jesus blesses and the laughter he warns against?

[5]Luke 6:25b warns not against ordinary joy—Jesus feasted freely—but against the anesthetized ease of the comfortable who laugh because they have stopped noticing who weeps. On the refusal to look away from suffering, compare James H. Cone, The Cross and the Lynching Tree.

- Freedom for others may cost us something. Whose weeping in our corridor are we not letting ourselves hear?

This Week — A Practice

Two movements again. First, stop numbing one thing. Let yourself actually grieve something you've been holding at arm's length — a loss of your own, or a wound in the world you've trained yourself not to feel. Sit with a psalm of lament and let it give your grief words. Second, let the grief move outward: find one person who mourns in our corridor and go be comfort — not with a fix or a bright-side lecture, but with your presence, on the level, the way Jesus comes. Then bring back what you learn. Comfort, like the Kingdom, is mostly learned in the doing.

Looking Ahead

Next session, a blessing the world has badly misunderstood: "Blessed are the meek." We'll rescue that word from the doormats and the pushovers, and discover the fierce, disciplined strength Jesus actually named — and why the meek, of all people, are promised the earth.

Benediction

So go this week and do the brave thing: let your heart stay soft. Grieve what God grieves. Refuse the cheap comfort that comes from looking away, and trust the deeper comfort that comes from the God who came down and wept. Blessed are those who mourn — not because grief is good, but because the God who meets us there is greater than our numbness, and he will not leave us in our tears.

Love, practiced — not just professed — reveals the Kingdom among us.

Blessings,
Pastor Mick Finch

SESSION THREE

Introduction Video Script

Single presenter, to camera · target 5–6 minutes · warm, steady, unhurried

[Begin still. Gentle — name it honestly.]

Welcome back to the table. Let me start by saying something plainly: today's blessing is the one nobody lines up for.

Last week Jesus blessed the poor. Today he says — the second word out of his mouth in the whole Sermon — "Blessed are those who mourn." The mourners. The grieving. The ones with wet eyes.

And everything in our culture is built to keep us away from this. Cheer up. Stay positive. Don't be a downer. We medicate grief, we scroll past it, we schedule around it — it's the guest we pray never rings the bell. And Jesus calls the mourners blessed. So we have to ask, carefully: what kind of mourning is this?

Two kinds, actually, and Jesus blesses both at once.

The first is plain. Some of you are grieving something right now — you've buried someone, lost something, watched a life come apart. To you the promise comes with no lecture attached: you will be comforted. The Kingdom draws near to the brokenhearted. Full stop.

But there's a second grief running underneath, and it comes straight out of Israel's prophets. Jesus is almost quoting Isaiah — the Anointed One comes "to comfort all who mourn." That's grief over the world as it is. Over injustice. Over the distance between the world God wants and the world we've built. It's the ache of people who refuse to go numb.

[Lean in — the heart of it.]

And that is the hard, holy center of this blessing. To be a Kingdom person is to keep your heart soft enough to break. The world rewards the calloused — the ones who've learned not to feel the suffering just past the edge of their comfort. But Jesus blesses the tender. Walter Brueggemann said something I can't shake: a people numbed into contentment can't even imagine a better world. Lament is the first crack in that numbness. You cannot work for a justice you will not first weep over. Grief isn't the opposite of hope — it's where hope begins.

Now hear the promise, and notice who keeps it. "They will be comforted." The grammar hides God right there in the sentence: God will comfort them. This is the God we met in session one — the God who came down. The God who wept at his friend's grave. Who cried over a city that wouldn't come home. He does not stand off at a safe distance from your tears.

[Steadier — Luke's edge.]

And Luke, as always, adds the edge we'd rather skip. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." And then: "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep." Now hear me — Jesus is not against joy. This is the man who turned water into wine. The laughter beneath that woe is a particular laughter: the untroubled ease of the comfortable who've made their peace with a world that grinds other people down — who can laugh only because they've stopped noticing who's weeping. And Jesus says that peace is thin. It won't hold.

[Direct — the thread and the practice.]

So here's our question this week — freedom for others: whose pain am I actually willing to feel? And what comfort, what numbness, what safe distance might I need to lay down so someone else's grief can reach me?

And here's what I'd ask you to do — two things. First, stop numbing one thing; let yourself really grieve something you've held at arm's length. Sit with a psalm of lament and let it give your grief words. Second, let that grief move outward: find one person who mourns in our corridor, and go be comfort — not with a fix, not with a bright-side speech, just your presence, on the level, the way Jesus comes.

Next time, a blessing the world has badly misunderstood: "Blessed are the meek." We'll rescue that word from the pushovers and the doormats — and find the fierce, disciplined strength Jesus actually meant.

[Slow. A gentle landing.]

For now, go and do the brave thing: let your heart stay soft. Grieve what God grieves. Refuse the cheap comfort of looking away — and trust the deeper comfort of the God who came down and wept, and who will not leave you in your tears.

Love, practiced — not just professed — reveals the Kingdom among us.

Let's search the Scriptures together.

Blessings, Pastor Mick Finch.