**Sunday 25th September 2016 Message**

**Blessed are they that mourn**

**Introduction**

Let me set the scene, for a scripture text this morning, with the contrast to what the people of Israel had/knew about meeting God on a mountain. In Exodus 19 we read of the Lord God manifesting His presence on Mount Sinai before Moses on the mountain, and the people around the base. It was a terrifying experience of smoke billowing as from a furnace, fire, earth shaking, and large trumpet blasts. Moses was terrified, the people were scared, and this was to receive the ten commandments on how to live a blessed life in covenant relationship with a holy God. They did not see the face of God. They just felt His presence. The law proved impossible to keep in their own strength, they needed a Saviour.

Yet here in the retelling of the Beatitudes we have God incarnate, appearing in the form of the man Jesus, inviting people up a mount to sit down on the grass, and hear how they could live a truly blessed life. Here we have Jesus repeatedly saying blessed are you, when you. The law that Moses received revealed the desperate state of mankind, how mans efforts alone would never enable us to become holy like our creator. Jesus came and offered blessings based on our state of mind and heart empowered by the Spirit of God.

Jesus details in the beatitudes the characteristics of a Christian in pursuit of the blessings that He has to offer. He lists seven steps for us to ascend in our walk of faith to attain the spiritual blessings available to His followers. This was radically different to what Gods people had experienced before, and they were amazed, astonished, awe struck, gob smacked at His authority and the revelation they received.

Do you want to be :- Blessed, blessed, blessed –

Who would not want to sit with God and listen to the blessing He has on offer? Come climb out of your valleys, ascend the mount, sit in the sunshine, bathe in the glory of His presence, and listen to what Jesus has to say.

***Matthew 5:-1-10***

**Climbing out of and upwards**

Last week Linda sat pondering how those of you feeling of low self-worth, would be receiving the message to accept you are poor in spirit. I admit that you could have left thinking of yourself, “Well that’s it, I am the pits”. You are only poor in spirit in comparison to God. The problem that many face with low self-esteem, they ae comparing themselves to others, to the expectations of others on them, to their perceived ideas of what is right in a worldly system. I believe Jesus was asking us to climb out of the miry pit of wrong expectations, and place our feet firmly on the first rung of the ladder, and see what we are in comparison to God.

The reality is as we said the week before, and last week, you are beautiful, awesomely designed, to be the dwelling place of God. You are so chosen that Jesus died and rose again because He loves you so much He wants to lift you into the very kingdom of heaven. Recognising how poor we are in comparison to God is massively different to realising how poor we are in comparison to others people’s expectations and even our own expectations.

Today we look at the second rung of the ladder, which cannot be reached without first ascending the first rung of the ladder, into the blessed life that Jesus has for us.

***Matt 5:4 Blessed and enviably happy [with a happiness produced by the experience of God's favour and especially conditioned by the revelation of His matchless grace] are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted! AMP***

Let us first remember Jesus is talking to us in all the beatitudes about things we have to proactively pursue – He is calling us to go after being poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek, to be merciful, to seek righteousness in order to receive the blessings that these will bring into our lives. He is talking about conditions of heart that are so laden with blessing we have to do as much as we can do to possess them. These are not conditions of heart that we have naturally every day, we have to consciously decide we want to be like this and we are going to do all we can with the help of Holy Spirit to have these heart attitudes. So who would want to pursue mourning? To answer that we need to know what type of mourning Jesus is talking about. There are three types of mourning according to most theological scholars, so which one is Jesus telling us to step into, the go after, to pursue?

1. Natural Mourning – the grief we naturally experience when we lose a loved one. Is obviously not something we would want to pursue so this is clearly not what Jesus was talking about.
2. Sinful mourning – this is as Paul puts it ***2 Cor 7:10b worldly grief (the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world) is deadly [breeding and ending in death]. AMP*** It is a pining for something that God has not given us but has given to somebody else. Another word for this is coveting. It is easy to want a possession that somebody else has, a gift, a talent, or a possession. Don’t tell me it doesn’t happen I see it all the time. Ahab had a problem with this, God had made him king, given him a palace, given him a kingdom but he did not give him Naboths vineyard. He pined for it, walked about the palace pouting, sulked in bed and was angry ***1 Kings 24***, it led to murder, theft and deceit. Beware that which you want God to give you now, that leads you to manipulate circumstances to get it before it is Gods time, such mourning is deadly.

I do not think, in fact I am certain, Jesus was not encouraging us to mourn sinfully.

1. Spiritual mourning – is to have godly sorrow over the sins we have committed against God – this is the type of mourning that God blesses with the comfort of knowing we are forgiven when we confess our sins and repent, then we can stand guiltless before God.

***2 Cor 7:10 For godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct, produce a repentance that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil, and it never brings regret; AMP***

**Error in the Church**

Sadly, we are surrounded within the Church today that would dismiss such mourning from modern day Christianity. Many have pulled away the second step of the ladder to great blessings, making it impossible to ascend to all the other steps.

Today the focus can be so much on the wonderful truth that we are justified by faith we forget what faith means, and what repentance means.

Faith **is not** merely the assent to facts contained in scripture. Even the devil believes the Bible. We do not become Christians just by accepting what the Bible says. We are justified when we are bonded with Jesus to be made holy and sanctified by obedience to His word.

We are in danger of trivializing Christianity by redefining faith in any other way that does not require repentance that leads to a change in life. Repentance is not merely saying sorry and then carrying on living the same way.

Why is the church full of “believers” who have never changed? Because they have never been grieved by their sin to the point of wanting to change.

***Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have love, pity, and mercy for him, and to our God, for He will multiply to him His abundant pardon. AMP***

***2 Tim 2:19 But the firm foundation of (laid by) God stands, sure and unshaken, bearing this seal (inscription): The Lord knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names [himself by] the name of the Lord give up all iniquity and stand aloof from it.AMP***

Redpath quote : **God has not promised to forgive one sin that you are not willing to forsake.**

If we do not change we are living in the presumption that we will be blessed, but Jesus says comfort comes to those who mourn their sins, because from their mourning they can truly ascend to the blessing of certainty of forgiveness.

True Christians mourn but they do not stop there because they can come out full of hope and comfort hallelujah.

**Developing an attitude that mourns our sins**

One of the most distressing thing for pastors and ourselves, is to see people trapped in a lifestyle which never changes. Who wants in all reality be dealing with the same habitual sin for the rest of their life.

It is sad to see in the book of Judges that the people of Israel repeatedly went through a cycle of idolatory, captivity, crying out to God, God sending a deliverer, return to worship and around again. God was never far away, always listening for the cry of help, always responding, but their hearts never changed.

How can you and I practice a spiritual mourning which will lead us into the blessing of breakthrough?

We have to learn

How to see our sin

How to mourn our sin

How to find the comfort Jesus has promised

**How to see your sin**

**What the eye does not see the heart will not grieve over.** – So true.

Like a child that cracks a vase and turns it around so their mother cannot see the damage, which would result in her grieving and punishment. So we try to disguise our sins with the enemies lie that its only a little crack and it will not matter.

We have to see our sins for what they are. We will only do this by having spiritual sight from reading the word of God to know what He grieves over.

***Ps 19:7-8 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. NIV***

1. When you read the Bible ask 5 questions (SU method)

What does this passage tell me about God

What does this passage tell me about me

Is there a sin to avoid

Is there a promise to believe

Is there a command to obey

***Eg 1 Cor 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.*** ***It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs NIV***

Even these well known verses can reveal our sins and the shortcoming of our love compared to Gods.

**People who rarely read the Bible do not see the sin in their life.**

1. We can improve how we see by asking His Spirit to reveal our sins.

God could take us into the dark basement of our souls and turn on the floodlight. The junk, the treasures neglected, the dead and decaying rodents, the live rodents all revealed would overwhelm us. Yet in His Mercy He gives us Holy Spirit to turn on a torch and point to the things He wants us to deal with one at a time. This is the process of sanctification, cleansing.

When you have read the Word ask Holy Spirit to highlight the sin in your life. Maybe its resentment. Lack of patience. Competitive aggressiveness.

David said in Psalm 139 – search me O God and know my heart. Here is a man who knew his sins were many, but also knew the everlasting loving kindness and mercy of God who worked on His heart all through David’s life.

1. Gods people are there to help you see.

Confess your sins to one another the Bible says. Be daring and ask someone you trust, who knows you well, to be honest, as to whether they see any sin in your life. Ask your spouse? If you dare they can be brutally honest. Be careful ask they to tell you just one sin.

Jesus came to set the captives free – from everything that holds them back from the glory of God being revealed in and through them. He never intended for anyone to remain stuck in habitual sin for years on end. He wants you to be blessed by seeing your faults as He reveals them and you receive godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

**How do you mourn a sin once it is revealed?**

Spiritual mourning that leads to repentance arises from humility, it is an impossible thing for a proud person to mourn something they believe can never be changed, because they are unwilling to yield to their heavenly Father.

Spiritual mourning is a matter of the heart.

King Saul is a typical example of one whose sin found him out, but he was more concerned about saving face than true repentance. 1 Samuel 15 Saul defied the instructions of God and took plunder from a defeated enemy. He cheated, he stole, he lied, and believed there was no harm until Samuel the prophet came and confronted him. Saul acknowledged his sin, asked for forgiveness, quickly followed by a request to Samuel to come and honour Saul in front of the elders of the nation. His focus was damage limitation, maintaining his reputation and not that of having a change of heart. How often when confronted with your sin by someone else are you tempted first to save face?

1. State it clearly without excuse and evasion. Be specific about the sin and not general sense of failure.

A hypocrite is often glad to admit they are a sinner but never admits to a specific sin.

Spiritual mourning is clearly focussed, about sins God has bought to your attentions. Take it out of the dark, look it full in the face – Psalm 51 against you only have I sinned O God

1. Weigh what this sin has done to you

How has the sin held you back from holiness, destiny, blessing. How has your sin kept you from going forward, led to you deceiving yourself and others about who you are.

1. Recognize what the sin has done to others.

If you are not what you are meant to be in Christ you deprive others of a revelation of the glory of God in you. You do not live in isolation.

1. Consider what your sin did to Christ and what Christ has done for you.

Christ did not die for sins in general. Every sin has its own punishment. Every punishment was laid on Christ. Jesus died for every single sin that you and I have ever committed and will commit.

To despise your sin you have to see the depth of the punishment on the cross.

To receive comfort when you eventually mourn you also have to see the incredible love of God towards you in giving up His Son for you, and the depth of love of Jesus in bearing every punishment for every sin you have committed.

David asked God for four things in Psalm 51 towards receiving comfort after mourning his sin. We should do the same.

* Ask God for total forgiveness – bot out all my iniquities. We are justified by His blood not by our tears. You cannot do enough to be forgiven.
* Ask God for a clean heart – we need the stains of our sins to removed, by the blood of Jesus. David asked cleansing v2 purging v7 creation of a new heart v10
* Ask God for a renewed spirit – a willingness to follow God
* Ask God for a useful life – to teach transgressors Your ways

**Concluding Encouragement Remember the mission of our Redeemer**

***Isaiah 61:1-3 He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 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. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.***

***NIV***

The comfort, the crown of beauty, the garment of praise, the recognition as oaks of righteousness come to those who mourn.

[Blessed are they that mourn] That is, those who, feeling their spiritual poverty, mourn after God, lamenting the iniquity that separated them from the fountain of blessedness. Everyone flies from sorrow, and seeks after joy, and yet true joy must necessarily be the fruit of sorrow. The whole need not (do not feel the need of) the physician, but they that are sick do; i.e. they who are sensible of their disease. Only such persons as are deeply convinced of the sinfulness of sin, feel the plague of their own heart, and turn with disgust from all worldly consolations, because of their insufficiency to render them happy, have God's promise of solid comfort. They SHALL BE comforted, says Christ, parakleetheesontai, from para, near, and kaleoo , I call: He will call them to himself, and speak the words of pardon, peace, and life eternal, to their hearts. See this notion of the word expressed fully by our Lord, Matt 11:28, Come UNTO ME all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

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Ezek 9:4

and said to him, "Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it."

NIV

Zech 12:10-11

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

NIV

Ps 137:1-4 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?

NIV

Ps 126:5-6 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow,

will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

NIV