

Welcome to Gamma 15. Today we're going to do another part of the beatitudes, Beatitudes Section 2.

Blessed are those who mourn. Today we're going to be looking at those who mourn. Now this may seem absolutely counterintuitive because how can we be Makarios (happy or blessed), flourishing, doing great, at the same time be sad. It is like how can one person wear two emotions which are completely the opposite at the same time. How is this possible?

You see mourning is the mark of spiritual authenticity. If we really believe in our hearts, in our minds that we are poor in spirit then it must actually translate into our emotions. It is like a man opening his bank statement and finally finding out that his balance is zero. He is bankrupt. There must be a visceral response. It is a natural visceral reaction, just like fear, is also a natural visceral reaction when you look at this picture of the horror character, Freddy Krueger. Does it strike fear? Does it cause that sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach? Have you ever watched some movies so terrified you don't even want to go to a toilet? Now right now you feel nothing because you know, Freddy Krueger's is just a picture, an actor. What about this picture. What is your natural visceral reaction? It actually impulses you to imagine what it is going to be like licking this. The trouble is, as Martin Luther says,

'Mournfulness is a rare herb. It's an endangered species, it is something you don't come across very often in these days in a way that we live.

Why don't we mourn?

We don't mourn simply because the default mode the in world is "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall weep'

The world doesn't mourn. Some years ago, Neil Postman wrote a book called Amusing Ourselves to Death, and he comments on modern society that we're actually laughing at things we should be weeping over and were weeping at things that we should laugh at. There was a train crash several years ago across a river and it was televised. There was huge carnage and it showed fire brigade and ambulances coming to rescue people and there was actually a shot of a woman that was sitting in the passenger's seat strapped with little girl in her arms. The mom was dead but the child was still alive and the rescue men came in and they lifted up the child and think of this, as they lifted up the child the child begin to laugh and giggle and then as they lifted her they found that they could later because she had chocolate on both her hands and they took the chocolate out of her hands and as they took the chocolate out of her hand she began to squeal and wail.

Isn't that like us? Isn't that like human nature? At the tragedies of the spiritual world we live in laugh. We can't see it we're blinded by it immediately. When our little candy bar is taken away from us, whether it'll be health or wealth or status, whatever it is, we wail and we cry. We are doing this because sin is always deceptive, as the Lord said to Cain, if you do not do well sin is crouching at the door, it's desire is contrary to you but you must rule over it. So sin is like a predator, camouflaged, crouching, you don't see it and we actually tell ourselves we don't have sin. When we are impulsive, we say we are decisive. When we are greedy, ah that's okay we're ambitious. When we're actually selfish we'll call ourselves that's not selfishness, we're actually disciplined. When we are actually greedy, we say no, we are focused on making profits for the company. When we are stingy, we call ourselves a sharp businessman. And when we're vain we call ourselves appreciating good grooming.

We cover up our sins so that we don't see it and so therefore we don't see we're never going to mourn for it.

Society in a whole will also try to suppress the truth. That's what governments do, whether it's Communist China or the USA. When the Covid-19 crisis was first discovered by Dr Li Wenliang, the local police covered it up. They warned him to shut up and they arrested him. When the pandemic exploded into community because people were never warned early enough, there was widespread anger, finally the people woke up and realized that the party had been suppressing the truth and they wrote,

Countless young people will mature overnight after today the world is not as beautiful as we imagined," one commentator wrote. "Are you angry? If any of us here is fortunate enough to speak up for the public in the future, please make sure you remember tonight's anger'.

Across the Pacific Ocean, when the Covid crisis hit America and President Trump played down concerns. When he was asked whether this was going to be a pandemic. He says no, not at all, it is going to be fine. We have it totally under control. In fact you blow over by April. It didn't blow over. The truth eventually came out. We are now facing a worldwide medical and economic disaster and the whole society has believed in a lie one day the truth will explode like a virus and you cannot suppress the truth for a long, ultimately it will drown you.

The truth came early for the Prophet Isaiah in a vision. He was confronted by the truth, the glory of God.

In the year of King Uzziah, I saw the Lord sitting upon the throne high and lifted up. The train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the Seraphim. Each had six wings and two he covered his face and two he covered his feet and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

Is the glorious creator of the whole universe. He created every blade of grass on the planet, every strand on our head, and every breath that we take he holds in his hands. And what is the response of man. Men in their unrighteousness suppress the truth. That's why God is mad at them. Let's read on:

19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **20** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. **21** For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him

See this is deliberate. We deliberately as a society and as individuals we suppress the truth. If we suppress the truth there is no way we're going to feel the grief and the mourning that comes with the realization of the truth.

Christians and non-Christians have an inverse view of what reality is. For the Christian they understand the current reality is a good world ravaged by sin and destruction, so therefore they praise God for the good world and mourn for sin and destruction and they actually look forward to the future for one day in a new heaven and you they'll be laughing because they'll be part of the new heavens and the new earth. For a non-Christian, he looks at the world and sees sin and destruction and a good world and he just laughs it, has a good time because he didn't think about a future he doesn't think about spiritual realities and one day in the future he will mourn and have fear and he cannot face death.

Here is the rest of Isaiah 6, and finally Isaiah when he sees God, he looks at himself

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

We are born again. We have to realize our sin and we realise our sin in the light of the holiness of God. There is a huge huge contrast and that contrast causes us to look at ourselves for what we really are and that causes us to grieve, like Isaiah grieving, "woe to me, I am lost", is a heartfelt cry of pain. For Isaiah he had a change of mindset to mourning when he was confronted with a vision of God. For us when we were confronted with a vision of the gospel we repent, as Jesus said repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. The Greek word 'Metanoia' means a change in mindset that would lead to transformation of life. The word mourn is 'Penteoo', in the present active participle, which is a continuous sense. There are nine words used in a New Testament to describe grief in some way. Penteoo is strongest of the nine verbs. It is reserved for mourning for the dead, the final of all causes of human grief. It's the passionate lament over the loss, a permanent loss of one that's really deeply loved. In the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, there is a word used for Jacob's grief when he believed Joseph his son was dead. It has to do with sorrow over death, which is the ultimate source of human suffering. The continuous tense means is an ongoing process.

In fact it was the great reformer, Martin Luther who posted his 95 theses to debate with the Roman Catholic Church against indulgences, who stated at the very beginning of his document in his first thesis was, 'When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent", he intended that the entire life of the believers should be repentance.'

It is not just the sinner's prayer and then you're fine after that. It is a continual repentance.

Listen to how the psalmist describes his grieving over his sin. Psalm 38 verses 4-8

For my iniquities have gone over my head like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds sink and fester because of my foolishness. I am utterly bow down and prostrate; all day I go about mourning. For my sides are filled with burning, and there's no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.

This is a graphic description of the emotional response to his sin. We need to be looking at how we respond to our sin or are we blind to it like the way a Neil Postman writes. How we think everything is an amusement. The only reason we're going to be able to grieve for sins is to be able to understand what sin is. Sin is not a failure of performance. Sin is a failure of intimacy. Sin is a break in relationship with someone whom we love. If we see sin in that way it will bring up grief. If we see sin as merely a failure of performance then we will find out that we are actually going to grieve over the consequences for ourselves, over the failure of performing rather than the break in relationship. So once we see sin that way then repentance is actually either re-establishing intimacy which is actually responding to love or improving our performance which is actually done for ourselves.

Repentance is always a painful process. The Old Testament metaphors for repentance involve rigor, thoroughness and even pain. Jeremiah 4:4 talks about the circumcision of the heart, which is a painful procedure and Hosea 10:12 talks about breaking up fallow ground with a plough. Both metaphors talk about pain.

So if sin is seen as a failure of performance then one would grieve over the consequences that we haven't performed as well. When sin is seen as a failure of intimacy then you've got Godly grief because one has basically sinned against God. 2-Corinthian 7:10,

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret whereas godly grief produces death.

Godly grief, true repentance and mourning produces that emotional capacity for us to be able to change, whereas ungodly grief doesn't lead to that because it's a grief over the consequences of failure of performance.

Look at the rich young ruler. Luke 18:22,

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Come and follow me." But when he heard these things he became very sad for he was extremely rich.

You know why he was sad? He was sad because he couldn't earn his salvation. There was something else that he had to give up which he could not give up. And Jesus was not talking about that. Jesus was talking about relationship. He wanted him to follow him and his treasure and his riches were actually impediment to his total devotion.

What about the two apostles?

Judas and Peter. Both betrayed Jesus and Jesus in Matthew 27 verse 3,

Judas, the one who betrayed him, realized that Jesus was doomed. Overcome with remorse,...

You see that was grief

he gave back the thirty silver coins to the high priests saying I have sinned betrayed an innocent man.

For him is a failure of performance. He didn't perform to his own personal integrity, which he held up as his number one God. In the end he actually hanged himself. Peter on the other hand thought this as a relationship. He went out and wept bitterly but he came back to Jesus. He actually repented because for him it was a matter of relationship and the grief was over the betrayal of a master over this.

We need to understand our sin in the light of who he is, and come to the same sight as God sees, hating our own sin. Psalm 51:3, David after had betrayed God by his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba confesses and look at this confession

For I know my transgressions and my sin is every before me. Against you, and you only, have I sinned.

It is relational issue

and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

He doesn't try to run away. He accepts responsibility. He takes God's side and he hates his own sin and he grieves for his own sin. But for him to come to this situation, to this realization took time, took about a year. It took Nathan who actually confronted him with the sin in 2-Samuel chapter 12 verse 7, Nathan condemned David and he said

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. I have anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wife into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the Word of God to do what is evil in his sight?

Here is a betrayal of the goodness that God had bestowed upon David; giving him victories, treasure, the kingdom, the crown and yet sin is a betrayal of all that. And finally David saw that. That's why he cried out in Psalm 51.

The key word here is that his sin it's just not just a mistake, it is actually David by his actions despised the Word of God. If we despise God's Word, it means you despise him and it's a personal break in relationship.

Genesis 39, we read about how Joseph Potiphar's wife, his master's wife actually came on to him and wanted to have sex with him. And he's contemplated this, he could have easily done it, nobody would have seen it, but he didn't go ahead with this because he wrote, he said how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God. He did not want to betray God. Sin is a break in intimacy.

One of Paul's main struggle is a struggle with sin. If we look here in chapter 7 of Romans,

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is my flesh. For I have desire to do what is right but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but evil I do not want is what I keep doing.

And that's the struggle and he concludes,

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

The struggle he has is the fact that he hates the sin. He sins and he has to grieve over his sin and that is why there is a struggle. If he had no emotional response to his sin then he wouldn't have a struggle. So he struggles against sin.

Chapter 8 verse 23 Paul describes his struggle in this world,

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly.

You see when you got the first fruits of the spirit, when you first get the spirit it actually sensitizes our soul to sin and so therefore when you see the awfulness of our sin we groan inwardly, we mourn and we actually wait eagerly for one day when we will be adopted as the sons of God, redemption of bodies in the final Kingdom and there will be no more sin. That is Pauline struggle and grief.

Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

Is Jesus saying that in this life we are only to mourn and we are only going to look forward to the future Kingdom where we shall be comforted or shall we be comforted is a dual reality in this time as well as the future. In the current time, Paul writes in 2-Corinthians 1 verses 3-4. He describes God as the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves were comforted by God.

So God does the comforting. So when it says, blessed are those who mourn for we shall be comforted there's a current dimension for which God will actually minister to our needs. Then obviously there's a future. Revelations 21,

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away

Mourning will stop in the future when a new world will be upon us. So blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Mourning is important because it authenticates our rejection of sin. It is the respond to sin that God is seeking. It produces the emotional capacity for transformation. It enlarges our soul and anticipates comfort. So we can be blessed, Makarios or happy when we are mourning as well. In fact, the mourning and understanding our sin accentuates our joy and love now. Now we've come to the end of our lesson today. So let me take some time to reflect over a few things.

Do you think that mourning is a sign of weakness, that's why we don't do that?

Why is mourning essential for a disciple? Well after this we're going to have a video taken from a testimony from a young woman called Rachel, who is an orphan and I want you to see how spiritual poverty and mourning is like, that being experienced of being adopted. In Rachel's case, see how her joy was actually heightened by her sorrow. You can be joyful and happy or sorrowful at the same time. Would she have felt this kind of love and loyalty to her parents if she was not adopted? How does this picture of an orphan being adopted apply to us as a spiritual picture of adopted sons and daughters of God.