

Matthew 5:1-12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 May 2021

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] We'll do turn to Matthew 5. I was driving this week and I heard the advert for Vitality Insurance. I don't know if you've seen it.

! It's not what do you want for your children? It's a really interesting question. What do you want for your children? And there were different responses, but it boiled down to health, happiness and security. Three things that you can't guarantee, nobody can guarantee that they can give to your children apart from Vitality Insurance.

But it's really interesting, isn't it, that that is happiness still, the pursuit of happiness. It's still such a big thing. You want to be happy. And our world is searching for happiness. It shows itself in different ways, doesn't it?

But happiness, according to the Lord Jesus, as we saw a couple of weeks ago, is found in the kingdom of God. And that's not escapism. You know the thought at the moment is that, look, holidays, people thinking holidays is what will make me happy.

Two weeks in the sun, that's what will make me happy. According to Jesus, happiness is found in the kingdom of God. I just need to get away from it all. Christianity is not getting away from it.

[1 : 17] By Christianity, one of the things I love about it is utterly realistic. So look at verse 10.

Jesus says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. They're not people who are escaping reality, they.

These are people who are facing up to the pressures of life and suffering as a result of it. Look at verse 4. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

What I'm trying to do in these series of sermons on the Beatitudes is really try and unpack the Christian life in the way that Jesus speaks about what true happiness is and what true blessedness is.

That's where we are tonight. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Tears are a part of life. Tears are a part of life.

Tears are a part of life. It's an Arab proverb and it says this. All sunshine makes a desert. All sunshine makes a desert.

[2 : 23] To live means there has to be tears and sorrow. And no one can live going through life without tears.

You can exist, but you can't live without tears. And I'm not suggesting for one moment that if you come to Jesus Christ, all your troubles go away. I hope you don't think that.

We don't believe it. The Bible doesn't teach it. Jesus does not promise you immunity or exemption in this life from any of life's disappointments or frustrations or sorrows that are common to everyone.

And yet having said that, even at the natural level, I'm going to argue it pays to be a Christian. Paul in 1 Thessalonians is dealing with the problem of bereavement in church.

People who are mourning the loss of loved ones. And in verse 13 of chapter 4, he says, I don't want you to be uninformed. I don't want you to be ignorant about those who are asleep.

[3 : 28] That you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. And so there are people out there in that church in Thessalonica who are going through probably the most life-shattering experiences.

The loss of a loved one. Bereavement. And Paul doesn't say to them, oh, you mustn't sorrow. He doesn't say, oh, you're letting the side down as a Christian by mourning. He doesn't say, put a smile on your face.

No, he says to them this, you are going to sorrow, but you are not going to sorrow as others do who have no hope. And so even at the natural level, it pays to be a Christian.

We who are Christians are not immune to bereavement or other life-shattering experiences that people go through. We mourn, yes. But not as those who have no hope. And so these words, they make sense for the Christian, even on the natural level. They don't make sense for the non-Christian. I've taken a number of funerals quite recently, and over all the years I've been taking funerals, it is very, very difficult to speak to those who've lost a loved one who is evidently not a Christian.

[4 : 46] I've met people who are inconsolable, and it's been impossible to comfort them. And so these words are not true generally, but they are true.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted, even on the natural level for the Christian. Now it seems to me that Jesus is not primarily or even remotely talking about this kind of thing, but I thought I needed to deal with it.

That's not his intention. We need to understand the logic in these verses. There's a logic in these Beatitudes. I hope you can see it. Look at verse 3. That's where we start. That's the soil out of which all the other Beatitudes grow.

That's where you begin, and to be a Christian. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That's where we start. We start there, with an awareness and an acknowledgement that we are spiritually bankrupt. And unless you've been brought there, you haven't begun as a Christian.

[5 : 48] That's where you begin, and then it will lead on to a mourning and to a sorrow, a bewailing of your spiritual poverty. It's not enough just to be aware of it. It's not enough to acknowledge it, as it were theoretically.

If the Spirit of God is at work in your life, you'll be prepared to admit it and acknowledge it before God, and it will shatter you. It will disturb you.

Literally, the word that Jesus uses here is the word shatter. See, if I picked up this glass and I threw it against this wall, it would shatter, wouldn't it?

It would splinter everywhere. And that's exactly what Jesus uses here. He says, Blessed are those who are shattered to pieces, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed is that person who is shattered because of spiritual poverty. That's the logic. That's the progression here. Blessed are those who are deeply, inwardly concerned about their spiritual poverty before God.

[6 : 52] Robbie Burns, you know the Scotsman. He has a poem. I can't read it in Scotch. But let me read it to you. It says this. Oh, would some power, the gift to give us, to see ourselves as others see us.

It would from many a blunder free us and foolish notion. Would some power, the gift to give us, to see ourselves as others see us.

It can be quite a shattering experience, can't it? To see yourself as others see us. It's like that when I have to listen to my own sermons. Occasionally I do that.

It's so painful, isn't it? You think, do I really sound like that? You know, you watch a video of yourself and you're talking in the background and immediately, on the video, as you hear your voice, you think, do I really sound like that?

When we see ourselves as others see us, we're shocked, don't we? Some of us are at that stage of life, isn't it, where we look in the mirror, we see our father. So I really look like that.

[7 : 58] I showed you when I, at the time when I was 19, I was in university, and we thought we'd play a prank on this girl, Sarah Street, and my friend said, leave you hide behind the sofa and when she comes in, I'll ask you what she thinks of you.

And I hid behind the sofa, no one knew, and he asked her and literally for 20 minutes, she just let rip about me. I didn't have the heart to jump up. It was so, I didn't, I let her go out and then I kind of crawled out.

It was awful. What she said was true. What must it be like to see ourselves as God sees us? It's a shattering experience.

It happened to Isaiah. The preacher Isaiah, chapter 6, he sees the Lord high and mighty and he says, woe is me, I'm undone, I'm taken apart, I'm in pieces. I'm shattered, literally, my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts, and I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

Why does he talk like that? Well, he's seen himself. He's seen himself, not as others see him, others thought that actually Isaiah was a very good preacher, it's very acceptable. He'd been preaching for many years, he'd been used by God, but for the first time in Isaiah 6, it seems, he's in the presence of God and he sees him as God sees him and he says, I'm a man of unclean lips.

[9 : 23] Why does he use that phrase? He uses that phrase because he's a preacher, his lips are the tools of his trade. And the lips of Isaiah represented the very best of what Isaiah had to offer.

His most consecrated and devoted service to God and he thought he was doing really well as a prophet, as God's spokesman, and suddenly he comes into the very presence of God and he sees himself as God sees him and he realises the very best part of him is filthy.

And the best that he's got to offer is shot through with pride and self-righteousness and he says, I'm a man of unclean lips and I've been found out. I'm undone, I'm shattered.

It was Peter's experience. Do you remember, Peter really thought he was quite someone, didn't he? He compared himself with all the other disciples, we're really prone to do that, and he says to Jesus, even if they all forsake you, I will never forsake you.

I'll die for you if necessary. And you have that passage, don't you, where Jesus is arrested and Peter is confronted by the servant girl and by another girl and then somebody else and he denies the Lord Jesus with oaths, with swear words.

[10 : 47] I don't know that, I don't know the so-and-so. And with foul oaths, he curses and he swears and he denies he knew anything at all about Jesus Christ and he denied his Lord.

Do you know what Luke tells us? In Luke 22, verse 60, Peter said, man, I do not know what you're talking about and immediately while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed and the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

Matthew doesn't tell us that. But Luke tells us that as the rooster crowed, the Lord turned and looked at Peter and Peter remembered the saying of the Lord how he'd said to him before the rooster crows, today you will deny me three times and Peter went out and wept bitterly.

See, what happened there? It wasn't that Peter had just been caught in the act. That makes us blush, doesn't it? That makes us kind of bluster when we're caught in the act of something but it's more than that.

He caught sight of himself in the eyes of Jesus Christ. He saw himself reflected in the look of Jesus Christ. He saw himself through the eyes of Christ and he goes out and he weeps bitterly.

[12 : 03] And Jesus says to us tonight, he says, blessed are those who do that. Blessed are those who realize the truth about themselves. Blessed are those who've seen themselves as God sees them.

Not as they'd like to think of themselves. Not as they'd like others to think of them. Blessed are those who are poor in spirit and shattered as a result who are deeply concerned about their spiritual poverty and bankruptcy.

Blessed are those who mourn. And I imagine that there may be some here tonight and you think, Paul, you're overstating this.

I'm not perfect. I know that but I can't say that I'm shattered about that. I'm irritated by my shortcomings. I'm depressed sometimes when I can't live up to my own ideals but shattered. I wouldn't say I'm shattered. I wouldn't say that I'm broken hearted about it. Life has to go on, doesn't it? And I need to say to you tonight, if you've seen your sin for what it is, you would be shattered.

[13 : 09] If you knew what sin really was, you'd be broken hearted. And the reason that you've not mourned for your sin is because you've not realised what it is.

If I am tonight on YouTube, live on the internet, called you out as a criminal, called your name and called you a criminal, you could go to Solicitor tomorrow, can you? You could take out a writ against me.

You could sue me for libel. But if I call you a sinner, it's no big deal, is it? After all, we're all sinners, aren't we?

No one's perfect. Crime is against society. Sin is against God.

sin is infinitely more serious than crime. Sin, somebody has written, sin can take the loveliest life and smash it on a cross.

[14 : 21] That's what sin did, of course, isn't it? Sin took the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and mocked it and nailed it to a cross. And that is what sin has done.

My sin and your sin, it has crucified the Lord of glory. And Jesus went to the cross for the sins of his people.

Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners. There's a great deal of truth, isn't there, in the Negro spiritual.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? There's a real sense in which you were there and I was there. It was my sin that brought Jesus to that cross.

He died for our sins. It's the whole gospel in that phrase. He died for our sins. What does that mean?

[15:22] I might say to you, if you're sitting here with a streaming cold, do you remember before COVID people got colds? I saw a sign on a protest the other day saying, make influenza great again.

Let's say you can remember what a cold is, all right? Pre-COVID. And you say to me after the service, I keep my distance, but I say to you, are you taking something for that cold of yours? You'd understand what I mean, wouldn't you? What do I mean when I say, I hope you're taking something for that cold? That is, I hope you're taking some kind of medicine or you're taking something that will take the cold away.

I'm asking, are you taking something against that cold? Are you taking something for yourself against the cold? I see you next week, I say, how are you? You say, oh my cold is better now. We don't mean that, do we? We mean the opposite. We mean, I'm better, my cold is gone. And when the Bible tells us that Jesus died for our sins, that is the way that we're to understand it.

[16:33] He died for us against our sins. You and I are down, not with a cold, but according to the Bible, down with sin. From the moment we come from our mother's womb, we're down with sin.

From the moment we begin to exist, from the point of conception, where sin is by nature, and we come into this world down with sin. And Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

He died to make our sin better, to make it go away. He died as the remedy, God's remedy for sin. You've heard the story, I'm sure, but the firemen arrive on a farm.

It's a country farm, and everything is burnt out. The barn is burnt to a cinder. They finish putting out the blaze, and the firemen wander around inspecting the damage on the kind of charred ground.

And one of the firemen comes, and a hen has been burnt to death on the floor of one of the buildings. The firemen pokes it with a stick and moves it.

[17:40] And underneath that burnt hen, they find little chicks. Little chicks, alive, clucking around, chirping around.

Jesus said, he was coming down from the Mount of Olives, and he saw the city of Jerusalem spread out before him. And he says, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not.

And Jesus wept of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was destroyed in the most terrible way. Why? Because they did not know the things that belonged to their peace according to Jesus.

Jerusalem didn't realize that God had come into their midst. They didn't know that the Savior walked their streets. And even as he carried his cross to the place of execution to Calvary, the crowds line the route, don't they?

The people of Jerusalem, and Jesus sees some women who are weeping, and he says to them, don't weep for me, weep for yourself. They were saying, such a waste, such a tragedy, a young man in the prime of life, so kind, going to the gallows.

[18:58] And they were weeping. But they weren't weeping for themselves. And they didn't understand what was happening, you see. They didn't realize that Jesus going to the cross wasn't some tragic accident of history, but that this was the Son of God who came to die for their sins.

They didn't understand that. They didn't understand that it was their sins that had brought them to this point in history. They didn't understand that. And so Jesus says to them, weep for yourselves and your children.

Because unless you're brought to that point where you are desperately concerned about the problem of your sin, the judgment of God will hem down upon you. And so Jesus says to you tonight, he says, how often would I have gathered you?

how often would I have gathered you but you wouldn't? You wouldn't acknowledge your need.

You were too proud. You wouldn't acknowledge your need of me. So I want to tell you tonight, you too will die in your sin under the judgment of God unless you come to Jesus and unless you shelter

beneath his atoning sacrifice underneath his propitiation like we looked at this morning for your sins. [20 : 26] That's what Jesus means. What he's talking about here in this little phrase. He says, blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Spurgeon put it like this. He says, repentance. That's what Jesus is talking about here.

When Paul talks about repentance in 2 Corinthians 7 he calls it godly sorrow. Spurgeon says repentance is the tear in the eye of faith. That's what it is.

Repentance is the tear in the eye of faith. You cannot look at a crucified saviour dry eyed. Blessed are they that mourn because they are concerned that the fact of their sin that is against God and their sin has crucified the Lord of glory.

Blessed are they that are disturbed who care about that. They will be comforted. They shall be comforted. Somebody has said if you want to know someone's character you find out what makes them laugh and you find out what makes them cry.

What makes you laugh? What makes you cry? There's a line in a hymn Peter will remind me what it is but the line of the hymn is this the pleasures lost I sadly mourned!

[21 : 52] But never wept for thee! Till grace the sightless eyes received thy loveliness to see! I mourned the pleasures lost but I never mourned for him the Lord Jesus.

Somebody's rightly described the Beatitudes as the birthmarks of the child of God. I think that's a fair description. A child comes out of the womb naked and helpless totally dependent upon its mother.

So the Christian is born again poor in spirit nothing he has nothing he is nothing totally dependent upon God to save him.

What's one of the first marks of life in a newborn baby? What do you look for when a baby is born? It's the happiest sound in the world isn't it? It's the sound of a newborn baby crying.

Although it's chosen that the midwife holds him up by the legs and smacks him on the bottom and you hear the sound of a newborn baby crying. It's one of the happiest sounds in the world.

[23 : 10] The sound of a newborn baby crying as it comes into the world. Jesus blessed are those who mourn blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

And so can you mourn over your sins tonight? Is that what makes you cry? Your sin? I am not arguing please don't please don't think that I'm asking you to mourn over your sins helplessly hopelessly and desperate but I am asking you to mourn over them desperately.

We look at the table don't we gratefully to Jesus Christ because he has borne our sin and we look to him the eyes of faith with tears in our eyes there's this paradox isn't there the great paradox can you see it?

The person who mourns and yet at the same time is happy I think it's so helpful and so tonight for those of us who are in Christ we're alive we're not we're not going around as a miserable sinner going around bewailing and bemoaning the fact that you are a miserable sinner all the time no no that's not that's not what we want God wants you to mourn he wants you to be sorry about your sin all your Christian life but at the same time he wants you to have this deep profound inward joy of knowing that those sins are forgiven knowing that those sins are cleansed and put away it's not either or don't fall for that the Christian life is both and it's always repenting always forgiven and so Jesus says the Christian life is a life of the happy mourner the happy weeper do you recognise yourself a child is overdue

Noah is overdue I think for about two weeks and when you're overdue time drags it drags doesn't it a week a week overdue is nothing some babies have three weeks overdue and they say well we'll induce you because if it goes on longer than that it can get dangerous there are people that sit in churches that are not a week overdue or three weeks overdue they're years and decades overdue and if it goes on any longer it'll be dangerous because you must be born again and Jesus said you can't see the kingdom let alone get into it unless you're born from above so don't go on any longer and you look tonight to Jesus with the eye of faith not dry eyed what I mean by that is you don't think well I am a sinner Jesus died for sinners hey presto that's okay isn't it we look to him not dry eyed we look to him with tears moaning over our sin with a broken heart and maybe tonight it's a stage before that isn't it you need to look to him for a broken heart maybe your heart is too heavy and it's too hard and you look to him because he will break it and he will melt it and here is the wonderful thing that the

[26 : 36] Lord Jesus he breaks your heart but at the same time he heals it it's the same look the same sight the same sight of a crucified saviour breaks your heart and comforts it and heals it

blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted let's pray let's pray let's pray