

Sermon: Those who mourn

Matthew 5:1-4

Who are those who mourn?

The beatitudes only apply to followers of Christ.

2 Corinthians 7:10

To mourn is to express great sorrow.

The sorrow may be from great loss.

The sorrow may be from repentance.

James 4:7-10

God's comfort for those who mourn

God's cares about us in our sorrow.

2 Corinthians 1:3-6

God has promised to restore our losses.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 2 Samuel 12:23

One day, suffering and loss will be over.

Revelation 21:4

Comfort is not enough of a blessing

Mourning has purposes.

Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Mourning may bring us closer to God.

Psalms 34:18

Bible study: Those who mourn

Getting to know you

1. Last Sunday's sermon was on the blessing of mourning. Is there anything about the sermon that you would like to discuss in your growth group?
2. Have you dealt with grief in your own life or in the lives of anyone close to you? What surprises you about grief?

Going deeper

3. Read John 11:1-16. It seems that Jesus deliberately delayed, choosing to let Lazarus die. What could be a justifiable rationale for this action?

Jesus knew that he could restore Lazarus to life and to his sisters. The faith they and others would gain was worth the grief they would experience. Of course, grief is terrible to experience but faith is absolutely critical. Jesus was not uncaring about their grief; he shared it when he wept.

4. Read John 11:17-37. What are the sisters' first reactions to seeing Jesus? What emotion do you think they are expressing? Is this similar to how you react to loss?

“If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” They both had the same reaction. Even Martha's faith in the resurrection in the last days didn't take away her grief. Of course, she didn't expect him to be resurrected that day. It sounds like they might have been disappointed and/or confused about why Jesus took so long. I think we usually wonder the same thing. If God can do anything, why do we have such hard troubles?

5. How does Jesus react to grief? Is anything surprising or otherwise notable? Would Jesus' attitudes and actions help Mary and Martha?

I think we underestimate God's concern for us. He is so high and holy, why does he even care about us? He might be working for our best but, just like a surgeon does his work even though he may not personally care for his patient, he doesn't worry too much about our feelings. But that is not what we see here. Jesus here enters in to the sisters' grief and shares it. One thing that helps with grief is to know that others share it. Who could be better to share grief with than the God who makes us?

6. Verses 36 and 37 describe the reactions of other observers on the scene. How do people express these ideas today?

Some of the people were amazed at his love for the sisters and Lazarus. Others questioned why someone so powerful didn't do something for the one he loved. People still divide along these lines. Some accept and depend on God's love but others reject him because they can't understand why they have to suffer something.

7. Read John 11:38-44. This story has a happy ending. What do we do with stories that don't have such a clear, happy resolution?

Every person who loves God and wants his will in his/her lives will have a happy ending. When you think about it, Lazarus would have been better off in many ways if he had stayed in heaven. But Jesus knew that Lazarus had a purpose in this world for a while longer.

Putting it into practice

8. Reflect on whether your relationship with God is being hindered by and experiences of loss in your life. Can you ask God to reveal his purposes in those losses? Can you trust God and make peace with him even if he doesn't reveal his purpose?