

## Wesley United Methodist Church

November 1, 2015

"When We Mourn."

Matthew 5:1-12

Did you ever wish you could have been in on the heart to heart talks that Jesus had with that little band of twelve? In our Gospel for this All Saints' Sunday, we have what are called "Beatitudes" from the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew has a habit of collecting together all the sayings of Jesus on a particular subject and putting them together in his Gospel. Jesus taught them many things many different times, and today we read in this fifth chapter of Matthew the summary of that teaching.

Matthew gives us some clues as to how important these sayings are. He says, "Jesus saw the crowds and went up a hill, where he sat down. Jewish rabbis did their most important and official teaching from a sitting position. This, then, is his official teaching..."and he began to teach them." Read Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus first spoke these words, they were exclamations and these exclamations are for now. They were not some future bliss prophesied, but blessings we can have now. We can have joy now as we follow Jesus, and are spiritually poor, and mourn, and are meek, and do what God requires, and are merciful to others; and have pure hearts; and we work for peace; and if we are persecuted, and yes, people do persecute us. That's a blessed, joy-filled existence.

Celebrate with me today the fact that when Jesus talked to his disciples out of the depth of his heart, he promised joy and blessings in our worldly discipleship. We not only have the promise of life with him beyond the grave, but a full and joy-filled life with him here and now.

For this All Saints' Day, I want us to look at the second of these summaries of Matthew: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

I have no doubt that this promise originally meant that the person who was sorry for his sins, and knew his need for forgiveness, is blessed. It also meant that the person is blessed who identifies with the sorrows of the world.

"Blessed are they who share in their neighbor's pain." They could side-step it: 'It's not my business; I have enough troubles of my own.' They could even pretend that sorrow does not exist. But they expose themselves to the world's misery. They visit the home where death has come. They enter into the hidden tumult of the criminal in jail. They agonize over slums and become leaders in civic righteousness. They are the compassionate of the earth, and their reward is to grow in compassion.

In addition to all this, let's take this passage very literally: Blessed are those who mourn; God will comfort them. The Greek word here for "to mourn" is one for mourning the dead - like the grief you and I feel when death takes one of our loved ones. And there are certain experiences that only come through grief. There is an Arab saying: "all sunshine does make a desert."

I want to share a poem that I once shared at a funeral:

I walked a mile with Pleasure; She chattered all the way,  
but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow, and ne're a word said she,

But, oh the things I learned from her when sorrow walked with me.

Only such have joy and song; only they are in tune. Joy is not the opposite of pain, or in respite of pain; it is because of pain, and through pain. Joy is sorrow accepted in contrite pain. The mourners enter life's secret; others are barred at the door.

When we mourn, we can find out anew how many friends we have who love us. It happens over and over again. Someone close dies, and we experience an outpouring of love from family and friends we never dreamed was possible. There is joy to be loved like that. We also learn, when we mourn, the kind and depth of comfort God will give if we allow him. I am amazed over and over again the way God can step into a desperate situation, pick us up when we're knocked down, and put us on our feet again.

When everything is alright - we don't often get down to basics. We just live on top of life, and never realize its full significance. But, often to lose a loved one and to grieve is not only to rediscover our loving friends, but is also to rediscover God's power to comfort and heal. When sorrow comes, we must face the important issues of life. We are driven to the deep things of our existence.

The promise you and I share here today which Jesus gave us is this: when we mourn, we are comforted by our fellow Christians. We find out the strength and love that can come from our God. And, we learn again that those who die in the Christian faith are provided for beyond the grave. Psalm 116:15 says: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Let us concentrate on the joy of living, because we know that those who die in the Lord are okay. They, too, have their joy in Christ. He has prepared a place for them. "Blessed are those who mourn; God will comfort them."