

“The Light of Mourning,” Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt, September 15, 2019

Ecclesiastes 7:2-6

² It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.

³ Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

⁴ The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

⁵ It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.

⁶ For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.^[a]

James 4:1-10

⁴ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions^[a] are at war within you?^[b] ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people!^[c] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be

Intro Question

How can our mourning shine the gospel into the world?

Background

Last week, Tim introduced the concept that the Beatitudes are difficult to accept since they represent from Christ “Congratulations! you have or are these: poor in spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, mercy, pureness in heart, peacemaker and persecuted.” Particularly tough is being congratulated because we mourn.

Most people in current culture reject God because they have caught a prevailing mood that God isn’t worth the time of effort. There is no reasoned, researched stance, but a contagious mood adopted by many. Such moods cannot be countered with reason, research or arguments, but only by our presence. Being there is how we show we can shine that joyful light of life in Christ. Justin Earley, in [The Common Rule](#), proposes that people spend one meal a day with others, showing what a light-filled life is in action. His suggested habits of Christian behavior include showing up in others’ lives. To show the light in another’s life, even when mourning, we should consider two aspects of mourning. Tim labelled those Honest and Defiance.

1. **Honest.** First, following the order of the Beatitudes, we need to be poor in spirit in order to fully mourn. When we admit that we have nothing to offer God, that we mourn out of a spiritual poverty that our life is a wreck, that we have what seems an impossible loss, then we accept that only God can salvage it and provide comfort. The extreme example of brokenness is Herod the Great, who had nothing to redeem himself, trying to hang on to what could not be salvaged, resorting in his ambition and megalomania to even extreme brutality to his own family. He has been described as Everyman/Everywoman, reflecting how secular people attempt to control themselves and their environment. In Herod’s case, we see a madman and mass murderer who rejects all things of God in pursuit of vain and empty things to “satisfy” and distract. In sin, people try to claim mastery over their life. If we cannot be poor in spirit, how can we recognize the Biblical log in our own eye? Be honest about ourselves, particularly of the wounds we have caused. In our mourning, deal with those wounds, give them a “Christian burial,” and move on.
2. **Defiance.** In our trying circumstances, define them. Rachel represents all the unwanted left behind after the best and

turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.
¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Matthew 2:16-18, 5:1-4

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

⁵ Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

brightest were shipped off as slaves to Babylon. She represents all left behind after the death of a family member or friend, a divorce, abandonment. She refused to be comforted, not moving on. What we face in our mourning at those times when the deaths, illnesses, abandonments etc., is life that just seem not right because we have to face these things. Facing death and loss by not giving in is a defiance that life will overcome death. Jesus exalts those who turn to God, who Himself is a mourner, who in their deep unquenchable mourning refuse to accept that death wins. They obstinately wait for God’s final victory. True mourning refuses to forget and to replace the loss with something or someone else. Jesus celebrates those who mourn, not who used to mourn. They wait in faith of victory by Christ over those who appear to have won. Jesus says they will be comforted, or as Tim prefers in translating the original Greek word, they will be consoled. That consolation is the opposite of isolation. The Gospel says we don’t have to be alone in this and that Jesus has come to be at our side. Our consolation is that we believe in the resurrection of the dead. Sadness, grief, and joy are not mutually exclusive. Be defined in our grief, know Christ is there, and go to others’ side as consolation with the knowledge of Christ, mourning like a Christian, trusting in the strength and promise of Christ.

Conclusion/Application.

1. Am I honest in the circumstances that I face in times of loss?
2. Am I subjecting myself to them, or am I defiant with Christ in what will be eternally there for all who believe? How?
3. How do I display faith when I have that terrible, unforgettable loss that leads to mourning?
4. In what way can I accept His presence, letting him use how I deal with my grief and mourning as a way to show the life of joy in Christ, despite all of those losses and circumstances that, without help, will paralyze me?