



Surrey Hills

BAPTIST CHURCH

Dr. Wendell Lang

“The Road to Recovery, Part II”

When He saw the crowd, He went up to the mountain. When He went up to the mountain, He sat down, and the disciples came to Him, and the Bible says He opened His mouth. And as He opened His mouth, He began to teach them. He began to teach them this: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*⁴ *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*

Last week we began this study on recovery. Recovery is a huge thing in our life. We are so glad that God has opened our mind and opened our eyes to see the fact that we all need recovery. We all need to come to this place in our life where we say, “I’m poor in spirit. I’m spiritually bankrupt. My moral bank account is empty, and there is nothing I can do about it.”

We need to come to that place in our life where we say, “I’m mourning over my sin that has separated me from God. I’m so happy that there is a Savior and that there is a Redeemer who we can lift our voices to and allow the fruit of our lips the sacrifice of praise to Him today.”

We are continuing with this series of messages entitled “The Road to Recovery.” Now, what we found out on this road to recovery is that there are some detours on the road to recovery, and there are some tributaries that lead us to where we don’t necessarily want to go. There are some dead ends on the road to recovery. There are some potholes on the road to recovery. It is interesting that in these verses that we are going to study, nine times Our Lord said “blessed” or “happy.” It is a very strong word. It is a word that actually means “to be blessed; a state of contentment, not influenced by situations.”

I found this interesting. There is a group called the Pew Research Center. A few years ago they did a study. In this study, they asked folks how many people were genuinely happy. Only 36% of the people that were a part of this survey admitted to being happy. So 64% of the people in the world have some degree of discontent or malcontent in their lives.

Yet in this sermon, Our Lord is talking to His disciples, not to the multitudes. They may have been behind, but the disciples came because He was getting away from the crowds, the Bible tells us. Then He began to teach. Some translations say that He sat down, which would have been the normal mode of teaching for a rabbi at this time. So He sat down, the disciples came, and He opened His mouth which is a very cool way of saying, “Hey, I’m about to teach you something.” I love the fact that nine times He said, “I want you to be supremely blessed. I want you to be fortunate, well off, extraordinarily happy, deeply content, and completely satisfied.” Blessed. Happy. It is a strong word. It is not a light word at all.

So as we go down our road to recovery today and we continue our trek what we need is what happened to me this

morning—this very day. I went to the computer. Sometimes I'll start doing too many things too fast, and the computer locks up. Then, I'm looking for a little button that says "refresh." Or maybe I've lost something and I need to find some recovery. Maybe today we find ourselves at this point and we have been going so helter skelter in our world and our life that we just need to decompress and we need to refresh and we need to ask God to give us a little bit of recovery.

In case you weren't here last week, we are using some different things along this study. We are approaching this differently than I ever have before. We are approaching it from a kind of a 12-step approach. Celebration Recovery and Rick Warren and those who put together these 12 steps, we're liberally borrowing from them so that we can see what God has to say to us about this test.

There is a memory verse I am encouraged to give to you. It is Acts 3:19, "*Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.*"

And so here is what we're praying about. "God, would You do something really big in our church—bigger than ourselves? And can we get, Father, from you a spirit of refreshing. Can we kind of be rebooted in our life, and can You bring us to a point of recovery in our life?"

I like what Rick Warren had to say about how God gets our attention. He says, "We rarely change when we see the light, but we change when we feel the heat. We don't change until our fear of change is exceeded by pain." So many of us live in this state of denial which is what we put our arms around when we say, "No, I don't have any problems. I can do this myself. I'll handle it my way." When in reality, we are just simply in denial.

Listen to what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "*Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*" And so what we're praying is, "God, would you bring us to a place of repentance that will change our mind about where we are and about the road we are on." We pray that we will go down the Road of Recovery and say, "God, Sir, I need you to be my spiritual GPS in life."

The Meaning of Mourning

I got to share Friday with some of our church friends here at a funeral. I think there is always legitimate mourning even if we know that someone is in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not what this verse is talking about. It is not talking about mourning over the loss of a loved one. It is not talking about even mourning over the plight of our nation.

In context, remember what Jesus said in the verse before, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*" In other words, blessed are you when you know that you are spiritually bankrupt. So, the second beatitude connects to that, and it says, "*Blessed are those who mourn.*" Blessed are those who are sorry about their sinful condition. The word "mourn" is interesting. In the Greek, it suggests "lament," the desperation of a soul to acknowledge one's own sin. The Bible says in Luke 22:62 that Peter wept bitterly. David, in Psalm 32 it says that he groaned all day long. He was mourning. This is a very strong bit of mourning.

Do you know what a paradox is? A paradox is really when two things don't seemingly jive, but the Bible and Jesus' teaching is full of what seems to be paradoxical statements. For example, "The first shall be the last," and "the last shall be first." And if you want to be great in the Kingdom of God, you must be least. Those are paradoxes. Notice this paradox: Happy are they that mourn. It seems rather somewhat paradoxical to think that God is telling us to be happy when we mourn.

In reality, when we understand that we are mourning over our sin then we are going to be blessed because God wants us to see our sin as we see our sin, which is totally converse of what the secular humanist would say. Here is what the secular humanist would say, "Happy are the self satisfied." That is not where we want to go. 2 Corinthians 10:17 says that Godly sorrow leads to weeping over our sin. We must understand the meaning of mourning.

If you have ever been through a 12-step program, you know that the first step really says, "I'm hopeless to do anything on my own." But the second step which is the one what I always want to engage people who are a part of this because it says that the person in recovery must affirm that he or she is trusting a higher power for help. Now I'm going to let you in on something. The higher power for us is Jesus Christ alone. We are not going to make up some kind of lame idea to say that you can believe in anything. That is not the truth. Our higher power is in Christ alone.

A lot more people today believe in God than used to. George Barna, the guy that does all this research on things like this said, "Ninety-five percent of Americans believe God exists." That is a greatly increased percentage than 100 years ago. The difference is that sometimes we don't act like it, and we are practical atheists in the way that we live. Well listen to the Bible. Colossians 1:15, "*He is the image of the invisible God.*"

I heard a guy last night talking about Tim Tebow. This has been a very interesting phenomenon. If you are wondering, I am a huge fan. You have to love him making a stand for Jesus Christ. Another player said, "Well, he may not be God, but he could be Jesus Christ." And I'm thinking, you don't understand that Jesus Christ IS God. The Bible says, "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" (John 1:1,14) We have to understand that when we come to grips with who God is we learn three things.

Three things I want us to see about the nature of God so then we'll properly be able to mourn over our sin:

1. God knows all about my situation. It is not any kind of unexpected thing that you're going through. You may say, "Preacher, you just don't get it. You don't get the depression, the desperation, the fear and the worry of my life." God knows. And you could say, "Pastor, you don't understand all of the dumb stuff I have done in my life." God knows. Even in that secret place when you think you are the only one, God knows. Listen to what the Bible has to say in Psalm 56:8 talking about God. God knows when you can't sleep, God knows when you cry, and God knows when you are in pain. God knows your situation.

Here's a Biblical example: Jesus met this woman. He was at a well one day. She comes up, and Jesus said, "Hey, I'd like to meet your husband." And she says, "Well, my husband isn't here." Jesus said, "You are right. You've had five husbands, and the guy you are shacking up with right now is not your husband." She said something very interesting. She said, "I can see that you are a prophet." He went right to the core, but the beauty about Jesus engaging this woman at the well is that He had compassion on her. Our church is not going to be a place that throws stones at hurting people. But we are going to open our arms, and we're going to say, "If you are in poverty over your sin and you are mourning and you are spiritually bankrupt, welcome! We love you!" We honestly care. We know that God knows your situation.

2. God cares about your situation. God not only knows your situation, but He cares about your situation. Listen to Psalm 103:13, "*As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*" God knows all about you. He still loves you in spite of who you are.

Let me see if I can give you a Biblical example of that: Jesus is doing ministry, and Mary and Martha had

requested that Jesus come to Bethany because their brother Lazarus is dying, and he dies. So Mary and Martha come up to Jesus, and they are weeping. They are essentially saying, “If you had only been there, Lazarus would not have died.” The Bible says, “Jesus wept.” Jesus is not weeping because Lazarus is dead. He knows that Lazarus is about to be resuscitated. He is really identifying with them and showing compassion. He is weeping with their weeping, probably because of their unbelief. He weeps with those who weep and laughs with those who laugh. He knows your situation. He cares about your situation.

3. God can change your situation. I love this verse. Listen to what Luke 18:27 says, “*What is impossible with men is possible with God.*” God can do it!

Here is the Biblical example of that: There is a place called the Pool of Bethesda. All of these crippled people would come and lay around the outside of this pool because apparently what happened is that every now and then the waters in the pool would be stirred and if someone got you in the water while the water was stirred then you would be healed. This man had been lying there 38 years waiting for a couple of things to take place. He wanted the water to be stirred at the right time and then someone to put him into the water while water was being stirred. Then Jesus asked this unbelievable question to the guy who was paralyzed who was waiting to be healed. Jesus said, “Do you want to be made well?” It is interesting, isn’t it? There are a lot of people who are emotionally and spiritually paralyzed but really they don’t seem to want to be healed. So Jesus qualifies with this man by saying, “Hey, do you really want to be healed?”

Listen to God’s character out of the Bible. Ephesians 1:18-19, “*I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people,¹⁹ and how very great is his power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength²⁰ which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world.*” God raised Jesus from the dead! Do we all believe that? So if God could raise Jesus from the dead, God could probably take care of your addiction. If God could raise Jesus from the dead, God may well be able to restore you. Let’s be real. We always wonder why some people are healed and some are not. I don’t know. I just wish we could get a supernatural healing. But I do know this—God is able to restore us in a health that might be greater than physical health. God is able to restore happiness and blessedness and sanity in our life because that is the God we serve. Hallelujah!

There is the message of the mourner. When we became so concerned with our spiritual condition that we are poor in spirit and then we are mourning over the fact that we are spiritually depraved and there is nothing that we can do about that, then we become concerned. These new cars have a feature that we were talking about the other day. If somebody is in your blind spot, there is a light on your rear-view mirror that begins to light up. It warns you because you are blind to this thing that is coming up. Do you know what that’s called in the recovery world? It is called intervention. Sometimes we need someone to tell us that we are getting ready to crash and burn. We are getting ready to have a wreck, and we can’t even tell it. We can’t even see it because of the blind spots in our life. Thank God for intervention. Thank God for Pat who did an intervention on our son and allowed him to go through recovery. We certainly didn’t know what to do. You might not know what to do, but get some help. How would you respond if someone tried to do an intervention to you and said, “Hey, you are poor in spirit. You need to be mourning over this. You are about to have a wreck, and you don’t even know it!” That is the message to the mourner.

Now look at the promise. “*Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*” There is a thing in our house. I’ll just describe it and see if you know what I’m talking about. It is on the bed. You are not supposed to sit on it. It goes over you, and it keeps you really, really warm. It is a comforter. And Jesus said it like this to the people who were following him. He said, “I know you don’t get this, but I’m getting ready to go away. I am

going to prepare this place for you, and if I prepare this place I will come and receive you unto myself so that where I am you may be also.” And He said, “If I go away, I am going to send you a parakleet.” This is a Greek word. The word para means “alongside” like a parachurch group that is supposed to come alongside the church. When I was remembering this in my Greek days, I would always imagine a pair of cleats. The parakleet is actually the comforter who is the Holy Spirit and almost always reference in the Old Testament as oil, this soothing balm that is going to heal. Now here is what is so wonderful. This word says that blessed are those who mourn over the fact that they are poor in spirit over their sin for they shall be comforted by the Holy Spirit. And so we have this intervention in our life and we are getting ready to crash and burn unless we have an intervention and go another way in life. Then we have the promise of Someone to come alongside us.

Listen to some people in the Bible who have had an intervention and have been comforted. Isaiah said it like this, “Woe is me for I am undone. I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips. I’ve got unclean lips. Woe is me!” Paul said it like this after his intervention. He said, “A wretched man am I. Who shall deliver me from death?” Peter said after his intervention, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

So here’s the question. Would you today allow the Holy Spirit to do an intervention in your life? To bring you to that place in your life that you are able to mourn over your sin that you are desperately spiritually bankrupt and allow that Holy Spirit to comfort you as only He can.