

Life is Good

WHEN YOU GRIEVE



The Good Life
Life Is Good When You Grieve
Matthew 5:4

What is the “good life?” We learned this week that to be ‘blessed’ is to live a life of *flourishing*. In short, this is why ‘blessed’ can mean ‘happy.’ But what does it mean to ‘flourish?’ The medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas, observed that everyone wants the good life but not everyone agrees on what that is.¹ Aquinas lists four ways in which the world thinks of the good life, but we could easily paraphrase him in our own words:

- “Blessed are the wealthy” **#candidemoney**
- “Blessed are those who do what they want” **#treatyoself**
- “Blessed are the healthy” **#fitinspo**
- “Blessed are the educated” **#educationmatters**

It sounds like human nature hasn’t changed much since the middle ages. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is a radical reversal of what we naturally think of the good life. According to Jesus, it is the needy who are blessed—those who cannot provide for themselves.

¹Thomas Aquinas, “Commentary on Matthew,” (<https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Matt.C5.L2.n403.8>).

- Think of some other things that our culture would describe as the good life. What is 'the good life' for Americans?
- What is the 'good life' for you? What does it look like for you to flourish?
- Now take your idea of flourishing and ask yourself, "does my idea of flourishing look like how Jesus describes it?" Discuss.

In this week's study we are looking at Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." *Let's go back and read Matthew 5:1-4*

- Why does verse 4 challenge the way we think of flourishing?
- Name some reasons why one would mourn. What are some of the things we mourn over?
- Does the idea of mourning seem opposite to the Christian life to you? If so, why?
- How might Matthew 5:4 challenge the way popular Christianity thinks of mourning?
- Have you ever been in mourning, and if so, over what?
- How did your Christian community respond when you were in mourning? How free did you feel to share about it?

Read John 11:32-36

There are three things we should take note of. First, Jesus does not dismiss grief; instead he acknowledges Mary's pain. Second, we are told that it 'deeply moved' and 'greatly troubled' him. The Greek text is interesting because it conveys a complexity to Jesus' emotions: he felt *upset* and *angry*. Even though Jesus is God, he is also *truly* human; grief is complex, and Jesus was subject to complex emotions. But what was he angry over? It wasn't Mary, but the reality of death.

- Why would Jesus be angry with death? (hint: death means something is wrong).

Finally, Jesus did something about his anger; "where have you laid him?" In this passage, Jesus resolves to right what is wrong with the world by raising Lazarus from the grave. Now let's go back to Matthew 5:4.

Read Matthew 5:4 one more time

- Why are those who mourn 'blessed'? What does the text say?
- Based upon John 11:32-36, why do you think Jesus promises those who mourn that they'll be comforted?

Jesus comforts those who mourn because he gives us hope. And yet hope does not mean we dismiss present evils, or put on rose-colored glasses; that's not what Jesus did. Jesus was saddened, and angry. In a word, Jesus felt grief and he mourned that grief. But Jesus provides us with two things that can comfort us now: his Spirit (the comforter; John 16:7) and the hope of eternal life.