

I. Revolution 3: Mourn Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor April 20, 2008

A. *Matthew 5:1-12 (NRSV) When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. {2} Then he began to speak, 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 will be comforted. {5} "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. {6} "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. {7} "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. {8} "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. {9} "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. {10} "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. {12} Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

II. My Season of Grief

A. Up until 1985, I am not sure that I really had ever experienced a deep loss.

B. Mom's Death

C. The Adams Story

D. Divorces of Friends

E. Infertility

III. *Grief defined:* 1. intense emotional suffering caused by loss, disaster, misfortune, etc., acute sorrow; deep sadness 2. a cause or the subject of such suffering 3. a hardship, suffering, or pain

A. Author Edgar Jackson gives a poignant description of grief: Grief is a young widow trying to raise her three children alone.

Grief is the man so filled with shocked uncertainty and confusion that he strikes out at the nearest person. Grief is a mother walking daily to a nearby cemetery to stand quietly and alone a few minutes before going about the tasks of the day. She knows that a part of her is in the cemetery, just as part of her is in her daily work.

Grief is silent, knife-like terror and sadness that comes a hundred times a day, when you start to speak to someone who is no longer there.

Grief is the emptiness that comes when you eat alone after eating with another for many years.

Grief is teaching yourself to go to bed without saying good night to the one who has died.

Grief is the helpless wishing that things were different when you know they are not and never will be again.

Grief is a whole cluster of adjustments, apprehensions, and uncertainties that strike life in its forward progress and make it difficult to redirect the energies of life.

B. John James and Frank Cherry, in their book on grief recovery, describe society's approach to grief management. Trace the story of a boy named Johnny. When five-year-old Johnny's dog dies, Johnny is stunned, and he bursts out crying. His dog was his constant companion; it slept at the foot of his bed. Now the dog is gone, and little Johnny's a basket case.

Johnny's dad stammers a bit and says, "Uh, don't feel bad, Johnny, we'll get you a new dog Saturday." In that one sentence, Johnny's dad is really offering the first two steps in society's grief management program: *Bury your feelings; replace your losses.* Once you have the new dog you won't even think about the old dog any more.

Later when Johnny falls in love with a high school freshman girl the world never looked brighter, until she dumps him. Suddenly a curtain covers the sun. Johnny's heart is broken, and this time it's big time hurt. It's not just a dog. This is a person his heart was fixed on.

John is a wreck. But mom comes to the rescue this time and says with great sensitivity, "Don't feel bad, John, there are other fish in the sea." Bury the pain, replace the loss. Johnny has steps one and two down pat now. He'll use them the rest of his life.

Much later, John's grandfather dies--the one he fished with every summer and felt close to. A note was slipped to him in math class. He read the note and couldn't fight off the tears. He broke down sobbing on

his desk. The teacher felt uncomfortable about it and sent him off to the school office to grieve alone.

When John's father brought him home from school, John saw his mother weeping in the living room, and he wanted to embrace her and cry with her. But his dad said, "Don't disturb her, John, she needs to be alone. She'll be all right in a little while. Then the two of you can talk."

The third piece in the grieving puzzle was now making sense to John: *Grieve alone*. So he went to his room to cry alone, and he felt a deep sense of loneliness. ...

Let's review. *Bury your feelings; replace your losses; grieve alone*. We then learn to *let time heal; live with regret; never trust again*. How does that sound? It sounds familiar. It's been society's approach for years.

IV. *Mourning defined*: To feel or express sorrow; lament; grieve. To feel or express sorrow.

A. {4} *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

B. Jesus is really telling us a new way for us to be able to handle our Grief.

C. When Jesus saw human suffering, he became emotionally engaged in it.

D. *John 11:32-36 (NIV) When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." {33} When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. {34} "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. {35} Jesus wept. {36} Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

E. *Matthew 23:37 (NIV) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.*

F. *Isaiah 53:3-5 (NASB) He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. {4} Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.*

G. It is through mourning that we become like Jesus and start to identify with human suffering.

H. When I stood by the grave of my friend Randy Adams, I hugged her husband, Bill, and with tears streaming from my eyes, out of my mouth came the strangest words: I love you Bill, whatever I have is yours.

1. Even after I said it I thought that was odd!
2. Bill never called me and asked for my car, or my house.
3. I think he knew what I was trying to say, was "We are in this together. We all hurt. We will all share the loss of Randy. We all grieve. You are not alone."

I. We were Praying together on Monday morning when Nancy Hess started to pray, she began to weep.

1. We could all sense what was going on.
2. It has happened to me.
3. She and I talked about it later, because I wasn't sure if it was the particular prayer request for which she was praying.
4. She told me that it was just an over whelming feeling of the needs that so many people have for redemption, for healing, for Salvation, not just personal, but for the whole state of our fallen world.
5. I told her that I felt that kind of praying is a sign of her deep faith and devotion to Jesus that has made her so sensitive to the needs of people all around her.

J. The New Testament follower of Jesus, Paul, stated in *Romans 8:16-28 (NASB) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. {18}*

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. {19} For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. {20} For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope {21} that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. {22} For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. {23} And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. {24} For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? {25} But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. {26} And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; {27} and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. {28} And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

K. Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God* day by day (p233) states: If we do not grieve over the weight of our sin, we have no concept of sin's devastating power. If we treat our sin lightly, we demonstrate that we have no sense of the enormity of our offense against almighty God. It causes us to fall short of what God intends (Rom. 3:23). It brings pain and sorrow to others, as well as to ourselves.

L. This is the problem that we talked about last week, when a person is not able to be "Poor in Spirit. It is often why the wealthy, the powerful, the intellectual, the successful have a hard time with the need for embracing a Savior in their life.

M. Blackaby concludes: Do not try and skip the grieving process of repentance in order to move on to experience joy. God will not leave you to weep over your sin but will forgive you, comfort you, and fill you with His joy.

V. Our Comfort is in our faith in the Risen Lord Jesus!

A. *John 16:20-22 (NRSV) Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. {21} When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. {22} So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*

B. Mrs. Charles E. Cowman in *Streams in the Desert*. Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 4.

How strangely stupid is grief. It neither learns nor knows nor wishes to learn or know. When the sorrowing sisters sat over against the door of God's sepulchre, did they see the two thousand years that have passed triumphing away? Did they see anything but this: "Our Christ is gone!"

Your Christ and my Christ came from their loss; Myriad mourning hearts have had resurrection in the midst of their grief; and yet the sorrowing watchers looked at the seed-form of this result, and saw nothing. What they regarded as the end of life was the very preparation for coronation; for Christ was silent that He might live again in tenfold power.

They saw it not. ... [I]t was a sepulchre, unprophetic, voiceless, lusterless.

So with us. Every man sits over against the sepulchre in his garden, in the first instance, and says, "This woe is irremediable. I see no benefit in it. I will take no comfort in it." And yet, right in our deepest and worst mishaps, often, our Christ is lying, waiting for resurrection.

VI. An excerpt from one of the many personal revelations written by *Tricia* in the margins of her Bible.

A. Eye the wisdom of God in all your afflictions—the kind, the degree and the issue to which it is overruled. It is to your good; not ruin. See the faithfulness of God. He would rather hear the groan now, than howl later. He consults my good rather than my ease. See the all sufficiency of God. His fountain is as full as ever. There is more in God than in any creature comforts that you have lost.

B. Look at the immutability of God—the Word of God stands forever. His mercy endures forever.

C. Consider your spiritual mercies and privileges. Consider your sins. Consider how near you are to the change of your conditions. Consider that afflictive providences must accomplish that design upon our hearts that they were sent for. His heart is toward us though His hand seems against us. The delay of His mercy is for your advantage. It is a greater mercy to have a heart willing to refer all to God and be at His disposal, than to enjoy, immediately, the mercy we are impatient for.

VII. Invitation