

“JESUS ON PROBLEMS”
by Rom A. Pegram (7/14/19)

Today, we’re talking about ‘Jesus on Problems.’ We’re in Week #2 of our ‘40 Days with Jesus’ adventure. We’re studying Jesus’ most powerful teachings, found in the Sermon on the Mount—specifically looking at the eight statements Jesus makes at the beginning of Matthew 5 called ‘The Beatitudes.’ Today, we move on to the second of those beatitudes in Matthew 5:4. Would you please read this out loud with me—our scripture for today:

God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

So, this is the second incredible statement Jesus makes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. And tying today into the intro from last week, let’s review again the 4 commitments we need to make in order to put God in first place in our lives:

- 1) Give God the first part of my DAY...
- 2) Give God the first part of my WEEK...
- 3) Give God the first part of my FINANCES...
- 4) Give God first place in our RELATIONSHIPS...

Especially if you missed last week, those are the four commitments we kicked off this 40-day spiritual adventure with. Inside your bulletin, you have a Connection Card—looks like this (show card). On the back of that card are ‘Next Steps’ to help you grow in your walk with God—particularly the areas we’re studying now. For as many of you who are willing, I asked that you check #1—to familiarize yourself with Matthew 5—the first few verses. It’d be even better if you read Matthew 5-7 (the whole Sermon on the Mount) in preparation for the rest of this series. Then you can drop those connection cards in the offering basket at the end of the service. For regular attenders, please just put your name on the front, so we’ll know you’re here and doing okay. For guests, please fill out as much of the front side as you feel comfortable filling out; we’d love to thank you for worshiping with us here at Trinity...

So, we’re studying the ‘God blesses’ statements from the Sermon on the Mount. These very powerful statements are the key to understanding Jesus and his ministry. These statements are also the key to happiness. If you think about it, real happiness comes from being blessed by God. You are happy when you’re blessed—sad when you’re not. So, last week we looked at the first ‘God blesses’ statement, about *our* realization of our need for God. The second God blesses statement—that we read just a minute ago—is a very unusual statement Jesus’ made. And it’s connected to ‘problems’ in life; when we have problems, they cause us to mourn. “God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Knowing we have problems in life, and knowing we mourn because of those problems, God promises to offer those who turn to him ... *comfort*. That’s where we’re going; let’s read our scripture out loud again together...

God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

WE have problems; our problems cause us to mourn (to be down); God offers us comfort. All of us will experience problems in this life; that, I could guarantee you. And in Matthew 6 (later in the Sermon on the Mount), here's what Jesus says (Matt. 5:45, NLT): "...For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike." What is Jesus saying here? It really doesn't matter who you are in this imperfect world; we'll all experience our share of problems...

I want to go on record today as saying ... over 90% of the suffering or problems we experience in the world is caused because of the reality of sin in human beings—the fact we have free will and get to make choices on our own. A lot of times, we use that free will (gift from God) to make choices that are harmful to other people, and many times to ourselves.

Now, natural disasters and other things beyond our control also happen, but it's a small percentage of the actual problems that go on in this world. So, because much of the time it's US that're responsible for the troubles we experience, and we already know we need God—the first beatitude, let me offer you this today. Here's *God's comfort for my problems*:

GOD IS MY SIGH HEARER. This is the first way God brings comfort to us when we face problems; God's my 'sigh hearer'...

If you've ever had younger kids in your house, you'll understand this. Jane and I noticed when our family were visiting recently, we didn't seem to sleep quite so deeply. We slept, but even while we were in bed at night, we were *keenly aware of the presence of our grandchildren*. Occasionally, one of us would wake up and say, "Did you hear something?" Sometimes we did; sometimes we didn't. But, either way, we were keenly aware that on the other side of the bedroom wall were two little ones we love very dearly; it was as if *we could hear every sigh they made*—especially at night when it was quiet...

Do you know, God loves us so much that it's similar with him. *God hears every sigh we make!* God is aware of every problem we have—every struggle within us. Remember the words of the prophet Isaiah (40:27): "O Jacob, how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights?" Folks, God knows ... and brings us comfort as our 'sigh hearer', giving us...

God's first provision: PRAYER. Simply put, prayer is communicating with God—not formal & not complicated; there's no formula you need to learn in order to pray. Prayer is simply communicating with God in a real and personal way, opening your heart and sharing with God what's on your mind and then, in turn, being willing to listen to that still small voice of God...

In fact, Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount *not* to use formulas, repetition, or try to look good to others when you pray, because ... *God already knows what you're thinking*. God already knows what your motivations are, and the Bible says ... God even knows what you need before you ask him... So, why bother to pray? I know that's what

some of you are thinking... And all you must do is *look what happens when you do pray* (Matthew 7:7-8, NLT). Read this with me, would you? “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”

You want to know how to pray? That’s it. Keep doing these 3 things: Keep on asking, keep on looking/seeking, and keep on knocking—persistently. When you’re facing problems and you pray (and others pray for you), you bring God into the equation. God sees. God hears. God understands. But it’s when we ask ... that God gives. There’s your provision, God being your ‘sigh hearer’... Next...

GOD IS MY LIGHT SHINER. When we face problems, the second thing God does is to shine light into a dark situation—bringing truth into our lives where clarity is needed. Example: Psalm 119:105 (NLT)—*God’s provision* as ‘light shiner’... **Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.**

The year 2013 will always be known as a bittersweet year in Jane’s and my life—*much of it dark*. It was January of 2013 I went through quadruple bypass surgery. If you’ve never been through a surgery like this, especially at 54 years old, the feelings you go through are hard to describe. I felt like my life was over—a failure, in a sense. After all, you only have one heart ... and the arteries of mine were diseased—nothing I could do about it, immediately. 54 years old! Why was this happening to me?

Then, 9 months later—totally unrelated, I passed out very early one morning, hit the floor, and broke my neck. With no prior diagnosis, through this experience I was diagnosed with *Ankylosing Spondylitis*—a brittle spine (the real reason my neck broke). Again, seriously? I’d just had heart surgery 9 months ago; why me ... and why now? 2013 was memorable, but not necessarily in a good way...

But, guess what? Good came out of 2013 when we began to see things from God’s perspective. The whole year reminded me of Paul’s experience described in 2 Corinthians 1:8b-10 (NLT): “...We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. ⁹In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us.” *We were crushed and overwhelmed...* Have you ever been there? I know some of you have. So, please know this as...

God’s second provision: **HIS PROMISES**. Get to know them; God wants to show you the truth—the real reality of your situation ... and shine light on your problems; *get to know God’s promises that come to us through his word* ... and God will! Next:

GOD IS MY HEART HEALER (no pun intended). I’m not talking about the physical heart now but understand this: *problems are really issues of the heart* (i.e. my heart’s

crushed, broken, cries out)! Look at the words of the Psalmist with me (Psalm 147:3-4, NLT)...

**He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.
⁴ He counts the stars and calls them all by name.**

That doesn't really need much explanation, does it? God's the great 'heart healer' and cares about us personally—he even counts stars and calls them by name. How much more does he love us—made in his image? And, folks, here's the GOOD NEWS: WE DON'T HAVE TO GET THROUGH TROUBLES ALONE, because...

God's third provision: HIS PEOPLE. Sometimes you need someone to come alongside you; sometimes you need someone to carry you to Jesus! One of my favorite sayings is this: *A friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and can sing it back to you when you've forgotten the words* (going through trouble in life)! That's what we're to be to each other, as we each go through troubles in our lives. 2 Corinthians 1:4a says, "He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others." Pass it on, folks... And finally:

GOD IS MY STRENGTH GIVER. It's God who provides strength when troubles come our way!

All of you know problems tend to zap our strength! We feel pressed down. We use phrases like, "I ran out of gas" or "The wind's been knocked out of me" or "I'm out of steam"—*all sources of power*. Isaiah, though, reminds us (Is. 40:29a, NIV): "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."

There's the fuel source we need! God is our 'strength giver' and ... God's fourth provision (to comfort us): HIS PRESENCE. God's provision for us when we're going through problems and zapped of our strength ... is to be there for us! In the Old Testament, God's presence was very tangible—a pillar of smoke by day ... and fire by night; God was there! In the New Testament, when Jesus walked into the room, someone was given strength—beyond their own! Jesus presence brought strength, healing, calm ... and *God's presence can do the same for us today*...

One thing in this life is guaranteed: every single one of us will experience problems from time to time. But we can count on God to provide the strength we need. That's why Paul said in Phil. 4:13 (NLT): "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." Not in your own strength, but in God's... Again, problems are guaranteed in life, but for those who learn to lean on God, who give him first place in their lives...

- They'll be able to call on him in prayer...
- They'll be able to receive his promises...
- They'll experience healing through other people...
- And they'll learn more and more to lean on his presence, calling upon his Spirit to help us on this sometimes-difficult journey called ... life!

The Bible also shares with us about 'the life to come' where eternal life will be problem-free; it's hard to imagine now, isn't it? But look up Revelation 21:4 some time and you can read about what's to come. But for now, life will give us problems from time to time. The GOOD NEWS today though is: We have a God who loves us ... and provides for us at every turn; God's our 'sigh hearer,' our 'light shiner,' our 'heart healer,' and our 'strength giver.' Let's thank God for his provision, shall we?