

Downward Ascent 2: Good Grief

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ (Matt. 5:4)

Happy are the sad. Real joy comes from Christ, and Christ comes for the sorrowful. Not just any kind of sorrow: I mean the grief which results from poverty of spirit. To look inside and out and to know all is lost, except for the Savior who came to seek and save the lost (LK 19:10).

He waits for us to weary of our self-justifications, the hollow of our own laughter. He intercedes for us as our ‘fun’ digresses into dehumanizing others. We are exposed in the glare of Another’s nakedness.

He waits for us to admit that the ‘gay marriage’ we have championed has no real foundation and will not stand.

The law of gravity never fails: sin’s road goes down and down.

We can go a long way on our own happiness. Yet the ache of conscience can intensify too. Happy are the sad, good is the grief associated with genuine moral loss—the loss of innocence and core values that can only be reclaimed by divine help.

God dwells with the destitute but resists the ‘house-proud,’ those secure in their own defenses. While fools roost in the ‘house of pleasure, the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.’ (EC. 7:4) He enters the temple desecrated by sin and surrendered to Mercy. He gives real comfort to those who cry: ‘Jesus!’

Dr. Joseph Nicolosi writes of how the pursuit of sexy idols is no match for the authentic longings of the grief-stricken heart. Addictions fall away when one unites original injuries with trustworthy sources of comfort. Attachment to real love displaces counterfeits. Yet union with Love Himself necessitates real grief: I am wounded! I am alone! I need a Savior, the Advocate who will never fail me!

Divine comfort now is never complete. The promise is ‘will be comforted.’ We live between the ages: the Comforter has come and is coming again. In the meantime, we can mediate that comfort one to another, always directing our hearts to the time when we shall grieve no more. In the meantime, we agree with St. Paul who describes himself as ‘sorrowful yet always rejoicing.’ (2COR. 6:10)

Happy are the sad. Our losses welcome holy love.

‘Come near to God and He will come near to you...Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourself before the Lord, and He will lift you up.’

(James 4: 8, 9)

Prayer for Monday, March 10th: ‘Father, we welcome the reminder of our poverty, and the good grief that accompanies it. Teach us to make the Valley of Baca (weeping) a place of springs. (PS 84:6) ‘

Prayer for Tuesday, March 11th: ‘Father, we grieve over the unresponsive parts of our hearts: the weak and vulnerable areas that we hate and hide. Teach us to welcome Your love where we need it most.’

Prayer for Wednesday, March 12th: ‘Father, remind us of our original injuries and the ways You have shown Yourself faithful as the God of all comfort and understanding. This Lent, secure us in the Father/child bond that breaks fear and shame and frees us to rest in You.’

Prayer for Thursday, March 13th: ‘Father, we grieve over hearts unresponsive to Your mercy, especially our loved ones. We admit that we can hate those we love most due to how deeply they impact us. We are reactive creatures, poor in love: comfort us so that we might comfort those who need Your love through us.’

Prayer for Friday, March 14th: ‘Father, we grieve over the sexual immorality all around us. We cry out for repentance, beginning with ourselves, and ask that we might manifest holy comfort to sinners; hasten their turning back to You.’

Prayer for Saturday, March 15th: ‘Out of sorrow, let joy arise. Remind us of all the ways that You have comforted us in our afflictions.’

Prayer for Sunday, March 16th: ‘Help Your Church to be the site where we recognize sin and grieve over it. Let Your Church also be the juncture where we exchange our grave clothes for robes of righteousness.’