

Finding Happiness in the Midst of Mourning

This season of pandemic pandemonium has ushered in waves of fear, isolation and loss. Thankfully, we have a powerful beatitude with a promise to remind us of our covering.

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

Derwin Gray, the pastor of Transformation Church in Indian Land, South Carolina, spoke with me about happiness and this particular verse in a recent interview on the *Greenelines* podcast.

“In 2018 my son was playing in the state football championship and had already received a scholarship to play for Wake Forest University. He was one of the top high school defensive backs in the country. In the first quarter of the game, a player was blocked into him, and my son’s leg was broken and he suffered torn ligaments in his ankle,” Gray said.

Gray knows about football injuries. He spent five years as a star defensive back in the NFL.

“The coach motioned to me in the stands to come down to the field. The doctors and players made room for me, and I knelt beside him and put my hand on his chest. He was crying and in pain.

“I looked him in the eyes and said, ‘Son, I am so proud of you. I love you so much. If this is your last high school football game, what a way to go out.’”

Gray recognized the obvious break in his son’s leg, but as his son was lifted to his feet to leave the field, he smiled at his dad and said, “Dad, God is so good! I could have been hurt

in the first game of the season. But I got to play in the state championship. God is so good.”

With those powerful words, Gray experienced the beatitude in a way he never had.

“Right there at that moment, [he was] ‘happier in mourning.’ My son was praising God for who He was and was truly grateful that the injury wasn’t worse. At that moment I learned that mourning doesn’t mean the absence of joy. Mourning doesn’t mean the absence of pain. Mourning means that Jesus is present with us,” he said.

Mourning also reminds us of our humanity.

“When we mourn, we have beautiful solidarity with Jesus because, on the cross, Jesus took all sin upon His flesh,” Gray said. “It makes us appreciate Him more. Mourning moves us closer to Jesus. And as we get closer to Him, He comforts us with His presence in the midst of it.” {eoa}