

Lutheran Vespers, Sometime during 1947-1948
Recording #6
KVNU, 610, Logan, Utah
Rev. Harold Brauer, speaker

Gracious Lord Jesus Christ, in Thy presence is fullness of joy and at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore. In this world of sin and sorrow, strife and pain, we pray Thee to keep our hearts filled with the joy of being in Thy presence here in time and hereafter in eternity. To this end, grant us thy gracious presence in this brief period of meditation and prayer. Amen.

Dear friends of Lutheran Vespers, there is more sorrow in the world than joy, it has been said, more pain than pleasure. Anyone who makes a careful observation of events in his own life or in the world as a whole, will soon find that he must agree with this conclusion. But in the presence of God, there is more joy than sorrow, more pleasure than pain. Anyone who regularly attends the services in a Christian church soon learns that this is true. It is no wonder then that Jesus astonished people when he told them in his Sermon on the Mount in his second beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." He was always giving them joy for sorrow.

A great preacher once said that there is one preacher who is always up-to-date, the man who preaches to aching hearts. Every life has its troubles. Some lives have more than others. In other lives, these troubles are more varied than they are in others. To talk about our troubles is not to be a pessimist and to look at the worst side of everything. It is merely being honest. It is facing reality. Sometimes you know there is a sense of relief just in having a good cry. Tears give a man relief. They lead you to prayer and to strength. Sometimes people never look quite so beautiful as when they have tears in their eyes. Perhaps they are humble and become resentful and proud that they are unlovely. They become hard and bitter. So, blessed are they that mourn.

We remember that even Jesus wept. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. And then he wept over sin, standing there on the slopes of Mount Olivet, looking out at the holy city, remembering how they had stoned the prophets of God and were soon to crucify their own Savior. He was weeping over Jerusalem because, again and again, they did not consider the things that belong to their peace.

Here is something for our world to learn today. How little sorrow there is today for the greed, pride and hate that has thrust our civilization to the ground and still threatens to destroy it completely. People are sorry about it, but do they sorrow for anything they have done? How much regret do we Americans have for our part in fanning the flames of war by our selfishness? You wonder sometimes how sorry even Christian people are because of sin. How seriously do we take sin? We do not kill or steal. But how sorry are we when we have ill will against any individual or when we are envious? How sorry are many people for neglecting to worship God as he demands? Blessed is the man who is sorry, who mourns over his sins, who is ready to get down on his knees and in sincere

prayer turn from self to God.

It often seems the Christian people forget that they are to live for God, entirely for God, not at all for themselves, while the world around us forgets about God and is built up on the principal that life is a kind of mad scramble in which each man, each class, each nation is to seek all for itself. But many church people do not even want to hear criticism about our economic, political and international conduct today. They want to go on thinking like the world about them. They consider themselves good if they adore Jesus on Sunday and then disobey Him in everything else. If they are told about it, they resented it. Their idea is let the preacher speak about the good and the beautiful only.

Jesus saw that men were living in that kind of world. He looked at the multitudes and saw how proud they were when they should have been so humble. So he went up into the mountain and there alone with his disciples He told them: "Blessed are they that mourn." We had better learn from that. Blessed are we if we mourn today.

Let us stop criticizing our neighbor, telling him how to arrange his business and his family affairs and begin within our own hearts to build toward a more spiritual community. Let us stop prescribing what labor and management should do to settle their arguments, what Russia and England and other great powers should do for the peace of mankind and begin with ourselves. Let us see that there is spiritual progress within ourselves that we deplore the lack of growing faith in our own life that we have so little love for God and are living so much unto ourselves. If you can be sorry for that, you are blessed, you are fortunate and happy. You will be comforted, says Jesus. All the sorrow you have will be turned into joy, first of all, the joy of the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord had been talking about heaven, where he would see his disciples again, where their hearts would rejoice and no man would take their joy from them. You don't have to wait for heaven to enjoy it here and now.

Have you ever listened to the Negro spirituals, those tuneful melodies that came from the slave days telling of the joy of the promised land? They had real joy in singing those hymns, just as we have in singing our majestic Christian hymns. We shall gather about the throne of God when we follow at last to the place our Savior has prepared for us. We must keep this hope before us. We are running a race, and we should so run that we may obtain, that we may win, the crown laid up for us.

Life is very different if you know what it is all about, what you are living for, what you are really after. Sometimes people try to comfort us and they really make us feel worse than we were. What they say is so empty. They make our sorrows seem very real. They tell us grin and bear it, to be strong and take it. Sometimes our best friends cannot comfort us. Even Jesus, when he took Peter, James and John into the garden with him, removed himself a stone's cast, and there entered into his agony. There is always a seeming stone's cast, always that distance between us and our dearest friends when we are in great trouble.

But you can always get close to Jesus. You can always look up to the cross and as you behold His amazing love for you, as you learn that you are cleansed of all guilt by His sacrifice there, you find peace with God. You find that He is your friend and you are comforted. You know that His love for you will make all things work together for your good.

Then you start upon a new life. You learn what it really means to love God with all your heart. It is no longer difficult to serve Him because you love Him. You will go about your business with a smile, because you are conducting it for God. You move out among your friends with good cheer, because whatever you do for others is for Jesus. Your home becomes the home of God. For every work done is done unto Him. All the discouragements and cares are lighter, for you are looking forward and upward toward that day when there will be no more pain nor tears nor plotting for the fray. This is a glorious way to live. It is the only way a man should live.

A great preacher once said that the world has never seen what God can do in and for and through and with a man who is fully and perfectly consecrated to God. We have seen what God could do through his Son. We cannot be perfect as He was, but we can try to be like Him. In fact that is our business day after day, hour after hour to try to be like Jesus.

My dear listening friends, have you really given yourself wholly to Him. You cannot do it of yourself. But God can do it for you through his Word. Only, don't refuse Him. Don't hold Him off. Don't buy the wave. Read your Bible. Hear His Word. Think about it and God will do His work within you and draw you to Himself.

Right now, at this very moment, the Lord Jesus is standing at the door of your heart and knocking, asking entrance. Do not keep Him waiting there. Say to Him now, Lord Jesus come in. Fill my life with Thy peace and Thy power. With Him in your heart, in your mourning over your sin and lack of love, you will be comforted. For to have Jesus Christ, to have Him in your heart is to be blessed.

Let us pray. Gracious father in heaven, we come before Thee grieving over our sin and selfishness, our lack of love and heavenly mindedness. Thou alone hast the remedy for our ills and sorrows. We pray Thee therefore, to fill our hearts with peace and joy with the assurance that Thy Son has made for us a reconciliation with Thee, that for His sake we shall be given the blessed joy of everlasting life. And then help us to live the kind of life that reflects this hope and joy, the kind of life that is more and more like the example set before us by Thy son, our Savior and pattern. In His name we pray. Amen.