**Sunday, February 1, 2026 - Meditation**

Yesterday marked the passing of a member of our family. She was 75 years old. That used to seem old to me but doesn't any longer. She suffered greatly and for a long time from cancer. Yesterday I received a text message that read, "She's home." Indeed, she is. As she entered her final days, I thought of this scripture passage from Paul's second letter to Timothy which were his final days before being put to death in Rome. To his younger colleague he wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

Patsy Reardon fought the good fight, she finished the race. And now she who longed for Christ's appearing has had that longing satisfied. Most of you probably don't know Patsy. But you know someone like her. Someone

who has gone through a similar trial. And now they have finished their race too. But for those left behind, there is still a race to finish, we're still in the fight. And a big part of that fight is carrying the burden of grief. So we turn to a small part of the gospel today, just one of the beatitudes: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Jesus's words come from the sermon on the mount, where he lays before us what it means to be a member of God's kingdom here on earth. It's not an easy way he shows us. He doesn't gloss over the hard things. He opens with this: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs in the kingdom of heaven." C.S. Lewis understood the poor in spirit to mean those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy, their complete dependence on God. "Apart from me you can do nothing," says Jesus in the gospel of John. But if we confess our utter helplessness before God, we are blessed. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Likewise, blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Maybe it's in the face of death that we come to grips with our spiritual poverty and find ourselves cast on God alone. Where we find we are indeed poor in spirit. We mourn, because we cannot retrieve what's been lost. It's gone. We are helpless. But we are not hopeless. And this is the source of our comfort. It is our hope that comforts us. Death does not have the last word. Hear Paul's words to the Thessalonians who were grieving over the loss of loved ones in their congregation: "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."

We mourn, but we do so with the hope, the assurance, of the resurrection. But it is not just a hope cast into the indefinite future. Our comfort comes from knowing the Holy Spirit who is at work in every believer: "In the same

way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness…" Literally takes hold of our burden with us… "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." Not only does death not have the final word, but neither does grief. The Holy Spirit, the presence of the risen Christ in us, assures us that our wordless groans do not fall on deaf ears.

But the blessedness of mourning (which sounds like an oxymoron) stems as well from our connection to each other through the Holy Spirit. After Paul reminds his congregation that they don't grieve like the rest of humanity – hopelessly – he commands them, "Therefore encourage one another with these words." Blessed are those who mourn, because they are being comforted by their brothers and sisters in Christ. God's church puts flesh and blood on the Holy Spirit by taking hold of the burden with the one who grieves.

Let us, like the Holy Spirit, help the grieving in their weakness, intercede for them before God, and enable them to know they are one of the blessed.