

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Regardless of our advantages or disadvantages, let us always recognize our utter need for Jesus.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ What does it mean to be *poor in spirit*?
- ❖ Let's pause and give this question some context.
- ❖ In Matthew 5, Jesus delivers a sermon to a Jewish crowd on the Mount of Olives just outside of the city of Jerusalem – a crowd very familiar with the Mosaic Law and the Pharisaic teachings of it. This sermon included what came to be known as the Beatitudes.
- ❖ Some say the Beatitudes are just an elaboration of the Commandments given in Exodus 20. And while the Beatitudes *do* elaborate somewhat on the “Ten Commandments”, there are several very clear ways in which they are distinctive.
- ❖ The Apostle Paul says that the law was a tutor that brought us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). And here, Christ is introducing some very revolutionary concepts:
 - > The Mosaic Law is a list of “shall and shalt nots”, but from the first beatitude, Jesus begins not with a “shall” or “shalt not”, nor with a judgement, but with a blessing, connected to a character trait, not a deed.
 - > Beginning in verse 3, Jesus initiates one of the main themes of Matthew's Gospel – that the Messianic Kingdom so long awaited in the Old Testament, and by the very people listening to Jesus speak, is not of this world, but of the next: The Kingdom of Heaven.
- ❖ Now back to our original question: What does it mean to be *poor in spirit*?
- ❖ First, let us understand that the word ‘poor’ here does not refer exclusively to a financial situation – although some have interpreted this beatitude to be a call to live in poverty. They provide justification from the parallel passage of Luke 6:20 which reads, “Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.”
- ❖ And in Luke 18:25 Jesus says, “For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Here, Jesus was speaking to a rich young ruler; but although Jesus encourages the ruler to sell all that he has and follow Him, could it be that it was not the ruler's financial wealth or goods in and of themselves that jeopardized his entrance into the Kingdom?
- ❖ It seems rather that the young ruler was hindered by his human spirit – his unwillingness to surrender his goods and his over-estimation of his own righteousness.
- ❖ Someone can be ‘as broke as a joke’ and yet be haughty in spirit; or, conversely, one can be blessed with material wealth but completely poor in spirit.
- ❖ So strictly speaking, the phrase *poor in spirit* does not exclusively relate to financial poverty. Natural poverty does not spell spirituality or mandate a blessing.
- ❖ Danger arises when we *rely* on our riches and/or our own righteousness.
- ❖ The teaching in Matthew 5:31 runs counter-culture to just about everything we see in our world today.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:31

- ❖ The world's philosophies are hinged on self-satisfaction, self-reliance, self-assurance, self-expression, and self-entitlement.
- ❖ Unfortunately, these attitudes seem to be abundant and evident in the Church, also.
- ❖ But God cautions against these attitudes (see Revelation 3:15-20).
- ❖ Isaiah, during his first recorded vision, was convicted. He wrote in Isaiah 6:5:

Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the Kings, the Lord of Hosts.
- ❖ Isaiah 57:15: Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”
- ❖ This is the quality of Spirit Jesus describes in Matthew 5:31. And He Himself – our Lord – is our ultimate example.
- ❖ He became a man and “took upon him the likeness of flesh” (Philippians 2:7). He had great powers and, as a natural man, He was fully aware of the power he possessed. But though He was simultaneously Man and God, He did not flaunt or take advantage of His Divinity for His own gain. (See Phil. 2:5-8.)
- ❖ We read of Him fasting in the wilderness and praying hour upon hour. In the Garden of Gethsemane we see His poverty of spirit and utter reliance upon God.
- ❖ Until I come to the realization that I am nothing in and of myself and until I face the reality of my own moral destitution, I cannot know God and I have no hope for salvation.
- ❖ Being **poor in spirit** means: There is nothing to recommend me. It is only by His grace and mercy that I am here today and have the hope of eternal salvation. Selah.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. How can wealth hinder us from being poor in spirit? How can financial need hinder us?
2. Name some of the things we tend to look within ourselves for. How do these things hinder God from working in our lives?
3. Whether rich or poor financially, how might one demonstrate the following traits:
 - a) Haughty in spirit; b) Poor in spirit?
 Use scriptures to support your answers.

Prayer Time

Lord, please increase as I decrease – in my own eyes and in the eyes of those around me. Amen.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2020

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

- ✓ (Reminds me/Confirms) 💡 (New idea) ☁️ (Think about)
- 👉 (Do this) ❤️ (Speaks to my heart) ↔️ (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
 CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
 Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline

Start-up: What are the smallest and largest items you remember ever seeing – with the naked eye and/or using equipment?