

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 1 – 9. We will be doing a seven-week series on the beatitudes, Jesus's sermon on the mount. This week we will be covering the poor in spirit.

Mt 5:1-9 5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

NIV

It's no accident that the Sermon on the Mount is placed near the beginning of the new testament. Its position indicates its extreme importance. In it, our King summarizes the *character* and *conduct* expected of **His** subjects. This sermon is not a *presentation of the plan of salvation*; nor is its teaching intended for *unsaved people*. It was addressed to the **disciples** and, was intended to be the Constitution, or the system of Laws and Principles which was to govern the King's subjects during HIS reign. It was meant for all – ***past, present, or future*** – who *acknowledge Christ as King*. When Christ was on earth, it had direct application to his disciples. *Now*, while our Lord *reigns in heaven*, it applies to ***all who crown Him King in their hearts***. Finally, it will be the code of *behavior* for Christ's followers during His reign on earth.

The Preacher was our Lord Jesus, the Prince of preachers, the great Prophet of his church, who came into the world, to *be the Light of the world*. The prophets and John were virtuous in their preaching, but Christ excelled them all. He is the eternal Wisdom, that lay in the bosom of the Father, before all worlds, and perfectly knew God's will (Jn 1:18) *18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*; Jesus *is the eternal LIVING Word*, by whom God has spoken to us. The many miraculous cures done by Christ in Galilee, were intended to make way for *this sermon*, and to prepare people to receive instructions from one in whom there appeared so much of a *divine power* and *goodness*; and, this sermon was the *summary*, of what he had preached up and down in the synagogues of Galilee. His message is, ***Repent***, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This is a sermon that shows us what it is to repent. To *repent* is to ***reform***, both in judgment and in practice; and here, in this sermon, he tells us *the answer* to that question posed in (Mal 3:7)

Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

How shall we return? Jesus preached and revealed the divine truth, the wisdom of God, where, *here in parables*, he showed what the kingdom of heaven is like.

The beatitudes are not *simple statements*; they are exclamations! ***Oh the blessedness of!*** As a matter of fact, the Psalms *also* begin with this same exclamation. In Psalm 1:1-4 we read 1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or *stand in the way* of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prosper. That is *most* important, for it means that the beatitudes are not pious hopes of what ***shall be***, they are not glowing, but nebulous prophecies of some *future bliss*; **they are congratulations of WHAT IS!** The *blessedness* that *belongs* to the Christian is not a blessedness that is *postponed* to some future world of glory; it is a blessedness that exists ***here*** and ***now***. It is not a blessedness that the Christian *will enter*; it is something which he ***has entered***. It is true, that it will find its *fullness* and its *consummation* **in** the presence of God; but, for *all that*, it is a present reality to be enjoyed ***here*** and ***now***. The beatitudes in effect say, "O the bliss of **being a Christian!** O the joy of **following Christ!** O the sheer *happiness* of knowing Jesus Christ as Master, Savior, and Lord!" The very form of the beatitudes is the statement of joyous thrill and the radiant gladness of the Christian life.

The word blessed which is used in each of the beatitudes is a very special word. It is the Greek word *makarios*. Makarios is the word which specially describes the gods. In Christianity, there is a godlike joy.

Makarios describes that joy which has its secret *within itself*, that joy that is *serene* and *untouchable*, and **self-contained**, that joy that is *completely independent* of all the *chances* and *changes* of life. The English word happiness gives its own case away, it contains the root *hap* which means *chance*. Human happiness is something which is *dependent* on the chances and the changes of life, something which life may **give** and something which life may also **destroy**. The Christian blessedness is completely **untouchable** and **unassailable**. “No one,” said Jesus “will take your joy from you” we read in John 16:22. The beatitudes speak of *that joy* which seeks us through our pain, *that joy* which sorrow and loss, and pain and grief, are **powerless** to touch, *that joy* which shines through tears, and which **nothing** in life or death can take away.

The world can *win its joys*, and the world can equally well *lose its joys*. A change in fortune, a collapse in health, the failure of a plan, the disappointment of an ambition, even a change in weather, can take away the fickle joy the world can give. But, the Christian has the *serene* and *untouchable joy* from walking **forever** in the *company* and in the very *presence* of Christ. The greatness of the beatitudes is that they are not wistful glimpses of some future beauty; they are not even golden promises of some distant glory; they are the **triumphant shouts of bliss** for a **permanent joy** that **nothing in the world** can **ever** take away.

This morning we will be looking at the first blessing, pronounced on the *poor in spirit*. The focus in today’s scripture is **Mt 5:2 blessed is the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

It's **very important** that the beatitudes begin **here** with this *poverty of spirit*, it's not random, there's a *sequence* here, an *order* here, because the very first **characteristic** that **all** of the rest of the beatitudes must *rest upon* is this *spiritual poverty*. This does not refer to natural disposition, but to one's *deliberate choice*, and *discipline*. The poor in spirit are those who acknowledge their own helplessness and rely on God's omnipotence. They sense their *spiritual need* and find it *supplied in the Lord*. The Greek word used here is "toe-coas' " **ptocho** which describes *absolute* and *abject poverty*. It is associated with the root word "toe-seen" which means to *crouch* or to *cower*; and it describes the *poverty* which is **beaten to his knees**. **BEGGING!** Where *self-sufficiency* is no virtue, and *self-exaltation* is a vice. Without **that recognition of spiritual poverty** there is no humbling, there is no meekness, there is no mourning, there is no hungering and thirsting after righteousness. We must *begin here* for proper recognition of where we are. Now, spiritual poverty is a really a universal thing here in this fallen world isn't it, everybody is spiritually poor in the sense that they lack, right? Somebody *dead in sin* is *very poor*. But, what Jesus is pointing to **here**, is *those* who **recognize** their *spiritual poverty*, they **see it**, they **understand it**, they **know who they are**. The problem is, with others, is they haven't been awakened yet by the spirit to *see* this poverty. They think that they are doing generally ok, and some would even say they are doing quite well, they say they are rich. When in fact as Jesus says in Rv 3:17 **17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,** But the Christian is one who is has been *awakened*, eyes have been *opened* to see the need, the *lack* that needs to be **filled**.

They see that their spiritual bank accounts are in the red and the interest is compounding daily, and daily, and the *need* is growing greater, and greater.

So what does it look like to be poor in spirit? I have three things for you today that *this* looks like. The first, is the person who is poor in spirit is a *lover of Jesus Christ*. The *value* of Jesus Christ is only **seen** when the *need you have* is **seen**. How precious is the bread of life when you are hungry for bread? In **Psalm 107:41** “**I will satisfy her poor with bread.**” If someone is not *poor in spirit*, they have *no need* for Christ, they would have *no interest* in Christ. If you have *low thoughts* of **yourself** then there is made *a way* of **high thoughts** of Jesus Christ. They see the **value** and **necessity** of Christ.

Secondly, the person who is poor in spirit *spends much time in prayer*. When you *see your need* you go to the throne of grace where you can find help in time of need. “**This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles**” **Psalm 34:6** reads. As I stated earlier, the poor are on their knees, **begging**. So if we are *spiritually poor* we are going to be begging to the Lord, **regularly**, at the throne of grace for those things that we so desperately need. **Ps 68:10** we read **You, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor.**

Thirdly, the person who is poor in spirit *regularly contemplates their needs*. The poor person often thinks of what they lack, the food they require for a meal, the clothes they need to stay warm, a bed they require to get some rest. They *see their need*, it's **very obvious** to them, it's *in front of them* **all the time**. They are **constantly** confronted with *what they lack*. So also, the poor in spirit, *regularly see their need*. It's something that's right in front of their eyes, they are able to list, and they say “yes! I need *this*, and *this*, and *this*.”

This is where I **need the grace of God**. They see their need for more *thankfulness*, they see their need for more *kindness*, they see their need for *more patience*, they see their need for the ***work of God in their lives***. Ps 107:41 **But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks.**

The person poor in spirit doesn't deny what God has done in their lives , on the contrary they are very grateful for what God has done. But he BEG's for MORE, continuing to ask for **MORE** of the *works of God* in their lives.

Now as we read in the beatitudes, each comes with a blessing attached to it. The one that is listed here is that we inherit, or receive the kingdom of heaven. We receive the salvation of God. So first of all, as we think about this promise, we must *remember* that it is by the ***free Grace of God*** that we *receive* this kingdom. Jesus says in Luke 12:32 "**Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.**" The reason we are going to receive this kingdom is not because of our goodness, after all we are poor. We have no money to buy such a kingdom do we? We could never muster enough wealth *together* to buy this kingdom; but instead, it is *God's good pleasure* to give it to us as a gift. More importantly, we have much confidence that this kingdom is ours, because there was a price paid for this kingdom. Jesus Christ shed his blood so that we could receive this kingdom. He **bought it** for us, those that are spiritually poor. What Jesus Christ came to do in purchasing the kingdom, for HIS people, those who are spiritually poor, he has secured forever. This **is** the *blessing that we receive* as we are poor in spirit. So, let us cry out to God as spiritual beggars that he would help us to see our need more and more each day.

Closing prayer

Oh God in heaven, we thank you that you have opened our eyes to see our need for our Lord, Jesus Christ.

And how we have nothing in of ourselves that is worthy before you that is holy.

We pray oh Lord that we, as your disciples, will see more and more each day our need of your grace, in that we would act as beggars, constantly praying, constantly knocking, constantly seeking you, asking for your presence, for your guiding, for your protection, and for your help in time of need.

Forgive us for when we have thought that we are rich, in that we are self-sufficient, that we need nothing.

Help us to be more and more dependent on you for all things.

Our daily need of you, of your bread of life Jesus, of your holy spirits guiding in our lives.