

POOR IN SPIRIT

Matthew 5:3 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

The Sermon on the mount starts where Jesus has been walking throughout all Galilee, preaching in synagogues and healing the sick and demon possessed. Word had spread, so large crowds followed Him wherever he went, either to hear Him teach or because they hoped He might make them or someone they knew become well. Some came just to take it in as pure spectacle. Galilee was in the words of our culture: plain, hot, rock-infested, containing a wide mix of people and cultures.

Jesus starts with the words that the “poor in spirit” are the ones who are “blessed.” Many people think that poor in spirit simply means “the poor;” but Jesus has “spiritualized” it by adding “in spirit.” The issue is not so simple as just “the poor.”

Matthew 5:3 joins with passages affirming God’s favor on the lowly and contrite in spirit (e.g., Isaiah 57:15; 66:2). This does not mean there is lack of concern for the materially poor, but that poverty itself is not the chief thing. Jesus also does not confer any spiritual advantage to wealth or poverty, what matters is if our state fosters humility before God.

In the region where Jesus was teaching there was a beautiful city called Tiberius, it was on the sea not far away. Jesus is never said to have gone to Tiberius, He kept mostly to the rocky hillsides and little villages that were usually surrounded by the poor, the “down and outers;” the people society would term “exceedingly broken” or at best “exceedingly plain.” It was in the midst of this rag-tag, mish-mash of humanity, in this rural outpost, that Jesus did His healing and preaching about the “poor in spirit.”

Jesus’ teaching wasn’t a self-help teaching about how to achieve blessedness by attaining poverty of spirit, it was an announcement. The healing that had just taken place was nothing less than the rule and reign of God coming to rest upon the least likely of people. In the midst of their poorness of spirit, these people had been blessed; the kingdom of God had come upon them. In other words, “Fortunate are those who’ve blown it. Blessed are the nobodies.” Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount with blessing, and there’s nothing anybody can do to earn what He’s describing. God is blessing people for no reason other than the fact that blessing is what God does, and everybody, everywhere is fair game.

02 - SERMON NOTES



What we have to understand about God’s blessing is that if at any moment the blessing is for anyone who has somehow got some good in them, who have figured something out, then the favor of God is predicated upon you and your performance. But Jesus’ announcement at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, to this massive crowd of people, is **BLESSED** are all the people who have no reason why they should be blessed. That idea is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God has sent His one and only son into the world to save the world and that includes you and me. Jesus begins His sermon not “high” but low...“if you think you were out, God’s blessing longs to be poured on you.” We don’t earn God’s blessing, it is an announcement of what actually **ALREADY** is. The kingdom of God is available to those who don’t deserve it! If anything in you at any moment says NO, it’s for the good people, then you are rich in spirit and His announcement won’t make sense.



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