

Matthew 5:3

## An Invitation to the Kingdom

For those of you who know me you know that I love all things Apple. After Christmas I went out and bought the new Apple TV. One of the new features is the many scenes that the Apple TV switches to if you are inactive. Most of the scenes are overhead shots done by drone cameras. Drones are really changing the way that we view the world and giving us vantage points and vistas that we have never seen. Some of these shots are done so well that you feel like an eagle soaring above the landscape. One of my favorite shots is the Great Wall of China. For 5 minutes a drone takes you to parts of the Great Wall that are inaccessible today revealing some truly breathtaking images. The Great Wall of China is fascinating. The Great Wall stretches across a portion of China for over 13,000 miles. It took over 2,000 years to complete the wall and today there is less than 5,000 miles remaining intact.

This morning I want us to look at a text that has stood for nearly 2,000 years to show men the way to the Kingdom. This morning I want us to look at the Beatitudes and specifically the first of the Beatitudes. I agree with John Chrysostom that, "The Beatitudes are a golden chain." This chain links together to give us a picture of the blessed life that Christ has come to call us to. The first link in the chain, as our Lord lays it out before us today, is this one *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their is the kingdom of heaven.*

### PRAY

This Beatitude stands first in the list of Beatitudes and does so with great purpose. Remember, these blessed statements are not selected randomly, they are here purposefully to tell us about this life of blessedness that our life has called us to. Never forget this fact: Jesus has come to save. Jesus has come to overcome darkness with his glorious light. Matthew has summed up the ministry of Jesus for us in 4:23 and John sums it up this way in John 3:16-18:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (ESV)*

In keeping with Jesus' mission he starts by telling us the way to this blessed life that he is calling us to. He tells us that the poor in spirit are the ones who are blessed; the poor in spirit are to whom the kingdom of heaven belong. So that begs the question. If poor in spirit is the way to the kingdom, then what does it mean to be poor in spirit? This morning I want to give you three truths about the poor in spirit.

## 1. The Poor In Spirit Are Empty Vessels Preparing to Be Filled

What does it mean to be poor in spirit? Is it a result that comes through physical poverty? Is our Lord calling us to a life of poverty? Some have thought so and have renounced all their material goods and joined monasteries in an effort to get closer to God. Those who interpret this verse in this way have missed the life that our Lord is calling us to. A man can have renounced all of his materialism and be very proud of his accomplishments and still not be poor in spirit.

To learn what poor in spirit means we need to learn the language of the Bible. Zephaniah 3:12 tells us that the poor are those who have no refuge but God. This idea of poor in spirit is everywhere in the Psalms and Psalm 34:6 tells us that one who is poor in spirit is destitute and in great need. This one cries out to God and we see that God has his ear bent and is ready to respond with salvation. In Isaiah 41:17, 18, God tells us that he would be the supply all the needs of those who are poor in spirit. Isaiah says again in the last chapter (66) it is the poor in spirit whom God looks upon with love and blessedness.

This is the message that Christ has come proclaiming. Christ has come proclaiming Isaiah 61. *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound....*

Don't miss this. The message of Christ is good news to the poor. Those who are not aware of their poverty miss the message. In Christ's own day the people were not aware of their own poverty. Remember the exchange that John the Baptist had with the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:9? These people were unaware of the depths of their need. They were standing on a foundation of their own righteousness thinking it was enough all the while missing the whole point of the Kingdom - coming to the end of yourself, recognizing your great need and then seeing your great need overwhelmed by a Savior who overcomes your great need with his greater grace.

There is a definite order to these Blessed statements. This one, *blessed are the poor in spirit* is the key that unlocks all the rest. This one is standing at the front of the house of blessedness. Every other characteristic follows this one. This one is an emptying while the others are a filling. Pay close attention here. This is a paramount Gospel truth: You cannot be full unless you are first emptied. We sing about it. *Come ye sinners, poor and needy, Weak and wounded, sick and sore; Jesus ready stands to save you, Full of pity, love and power. I will rise and go to Jesus, He will embrace me in his arms; In the arms of my dear Savior, O there are ten thousand charms.*

Emptying before filling is the stumbling block of the gospel for the world. The gospel is both a decreasing and an increasing. In the Kingdom, what goes down must come up. In the Kingdom what goes down must come up. In the Kingdom, in order to be filled you have to be poured out, to come to the end of yourself bringing with you nothing in your hand but simply clinging tightly to the cross of Jesus.

One of the first ones to recognize Jesus as the Savior was an old man waiting outside the temple when here comes Joseph and Mary with Jesus and when the old man named Simeon saw Jesus he said: *My eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord, a salvation that you have prepared in the present of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. This child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel...* (Luke 2:22-35). Fall first and then rising. The gospel condemns before it converts and conviction is always before conversion. You must know you need saving before you can be saved.

Remember that at the heart of Christianity is a King who came giving himself for our sakes on a cruel cross. Our need was so great that it took the death of life to undo. Our need was so great that it took Jesus dying and rising from the dead again to be able to be the remedy for our need. He emptied himself so that he could fill us, we have to empty our selves in order to be filled. There is no clearer expression in all Scripture of Justification by Faith than this one. The way that we are made right with God has nothing to do with what we do. The opposite is true, we are made right with God because of our trust in all that he has done to save us. We are empty, spiritually bankrupt, with nothing to give and everything to gain.

There are two other truths that I want to tell you quickly about the poor in Spirit.

## **2. The Poor In Spirit Have the Utmost Confidence in God**

To be poor in spirit means that you have confidence in God, not in yourself. Can you hear why this point is the point where most people stumble? How many self-help, self-improvement, self-advancement books and strategies are there out there? Against all these the King of Kings comes and says the way for self advancement is coming to the end of yourself and wholly trusting in God.

This doesn't mean that we are holy pushovers. What it means is that we are a people who know that there is one who is infinitely greater than ourselves. We are not the center of our universe and we know it. This frees us to live a life of adventure for God. If there is anyone who should be confident people it is people who are trusting in God. When we trust in God we can't fail. Even if it looks like a failure to our selves and to the world, there is no failure when we are trusting in the Lord and doing his will.

Poor in spirit does not mean no ambition. It means that our ambition is focused on one thing. We are not living for ourselves we are living for God. David was a man who was poor in spirit and look how God used him. He united the tribes of Israel and established a dynasty! Be poor in spirit, know that God is the greatest, and give yourself wholeheartedly to accomplish his will. As William Carey (the father of the modern missions movement) said, "Expect grate things from God. Attempt great things for God.

The poor in spirit will do this because:

### 3. The Poor In Spirit Desire Nothing Greater Than Eternity With God

Look at the positive side of this verse. *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Is there anything better than that? When you come to the point of realizing that there is someone greater and something better than you, you will spend every effort pursuing what is greater. The problem, most of us either don't know or we forget that he is greater.

You know who we are? We are those whose lives are being prepared to be filled with glory. How are we prepared? Emptied of ourselves Our God is preparing us for new wine to be poured in to our wine skins. Jesus is going to say later that you cant put new wine into old wine skins (Matthew 9:14-17). Our entire lives are about us going to the end our ourselves and finding a God who is greater, a God to whom we bow our knees in devotion and life our hands in adoration and praise. Listen to CS Lewis.

"Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good - above all, that we are better than someone else - I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil. The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether." [C. S. Lewis](#) (Mere Christianity)

This is why we preach Christ centered sermons at Oxford. This is why Oxford is all about Jesus. We are poor in spirit, he is greater.

Lloyd Jones was right when he said, "If one feels anything in the presence of God except utter poverty in spirit, it ultimately means that you have never faced him." - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

So we have before us the King of Kings bringing his everlasting kingdom inviting us to be with him for forever. The requirements are on the back. To enter the Kingdom you must be poor in spirit. But listen closely to the old hymn, *Come ye weary, heaven laden, Lost and ruined by the fall; if you tarry till you're better, You will never come at all.* Your invitation today is to arise and go to Jesus, to be embraced by his able arms. In the arms of Jesus our Savior you will find 10,000 charms.