



Exploring the Kingdom in Matthew:

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit!

July 23, 2017

OUR PURPOSE IN MATTHEW:

- To receive Kingdom encouragement and Kingdom strength from Matthew's Gospel...from The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) up to Olivet Discourse (through Matthew 20).

TEXT: MATTHEW 5:1-3

1. First, it is noteworthy that the King's continuing response to "seeing the multitudes" was to position Himself to teach them about the Kingdom. Two questions spring to mind: 1) What is our response to seeing the multitudes? 2) Are WE positioned to teach them? And if so, 3) WHAT are we teaching them?
2. As King Jesus begins to set forth His "Constitution of the Kingdom," He does so preaching a series of *Blessing Declarations*, also known as *The Beatitudes* (the Latin term for Blessings).
3. The word *blessed* in the Greek is *makarios*, and means "Happy; very fortunate; a state of bliss."
4. The word *poor* in the Greek is *ptōchos*. It means, and you all will love these definitions:
 - To crouch like a beggar (as in cringing), that is, a pauper (strictly denoting absolute or public mendicancy (begging)).
 - To be destitute of wealth, influence, position, or honor.
 - To be lowly, afflicted, or destitute (of spiritual or natural things). To be helpless or powerless to accomplish an end. To be poor and needy.

To be "poor in spirit" is to be aware of one's **destitution** and **depravity**, one's inability to create anything good or be truly good without Jesus; it is to embrace and confess one's total and complete spiritual and moral bankruptcy and one's absolute need for the grace of the King!

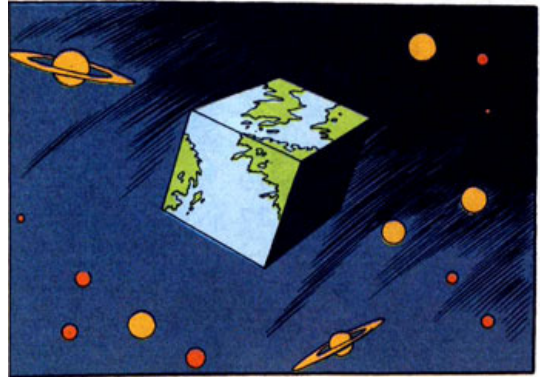
To be "poor in spirit" is to realize who you truly are before a holy God. What a far cry this is from the strong, relentless me-focused, "please-us" mindset (and preaching) that has overtaken the modern church!

5. Our Lord, upon seeing the diseased, tormented, and possessed multitudes (4:24) was moved to heal them and teach them. I'm sure they were grateful for the healing; after all, great multitudes of people followed him as a result (4:25).
6. **His message however, must have sounded very different from what they were hoping for...**

WELCOME TO BIZARRO WORLD...THE UPSIDE-DOWN NATURE OF THE KINGDOM!

- Some of you comic book fans might remember one of Superman's enemies, a character named Bizarro.
- Created by Lex Luthor who shot Superman with a duplicating ray, Bizarro went to live on a planet called htraE...Earth spelled backwards! Everything he did was backwards and everything in his world was backwards!

THE SQUARE **BIZARRO WORLD**, HOME PLANET OF THE STUPID **BIZARRO** CREATURES WHO ARE IMPERFECT DUPLICATES OF **SUPERMAN** AND HIS FRIENDS...



- I wonder how many of this particular multitude must have thought, "Hey, this is backwards!" as they listened to Jesus!
- Blessed are the poor in Spirit? Blessed are the meek? You want us to be happy and blissful as a result of being persecuted? What?
- **Friends, the Kingdom of God doesn't operate like the world. Its values are different. It smashes and clashes against humanism and carnality; self-sufficiency and pride.**
- Kingdom citizens do not seek to exalt themselves or make themselves known; rather they look to exalt Christ and make His Name as great as possible...even to their own detriment when necessary!
- **And perhaps this is why true Kingdom living is so difficult for us.** We live in a world that exalts the biggest, the baddest, the newest, the flashiest, and the most expensive. We are self-exalters and consumers to our core and this makes understanding what the Lord values very difficult.
- The world says, "You are somebody;" the kingdom says, "You are nobody except in Christ Jesus." The world says, "You deserve it;" the kingdom says, "You deserve nothing but a devil's hell." The world says, "The antidote to low self-esteem is high self-esteem;" the kingdom says, "Esteem the King and be found in Him!" The world says, "DO YOU; the kingdom says, "Focus on what was DONE to the King FOR YOU!"
- This mindset is captured succinctly by *The Valley of Vision* Prayer:

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.

*Let me learn **by paradox** that: **the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision.***

*Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine; let me find **Thy light in my darkness, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.***

Amen!

THE POOR IN SPIRIT: IT'S A HEART THING!

1. So the King immediately begins to establish what He values in His Kingdom. As usual with Jesus, He goes immediately to the heart.

2. Although this was a hard thing for God's people to remember, the heart of man has been God's focus all along.
3. God judged the earth due to the wickedness flowing from man's heart:

Gen 6:5-7 *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.*

4. But here is what God always wanted: Love from the heart!

Deu 6:5 *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

Deu 10:12 *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,*

Deu 11:13-16 *And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, 14 That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. 15 And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. 16 Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;*

5. The King doesn't want haughty, me-focused subjects; He wants Kingdom Citizens who recognize their need for Him, and who are striving to please Him in **humility**.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT!

1. God has always blessed His people when they walked in humility and poorness of spirit.
2. Another striking passage in Deuteronomy makes this points clearly:

Deu 8:2-10 *And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. 4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. 5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.*

6 *Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. 7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; 8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; 9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. 10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.*

3. God will often set up the **circumstances** that will produce the heart-qualities He loves!
4. And even while He does so, He often blesses, strengthens, and provides for His people.
5. His people for their part, must never “seek the blessing;” rather, they must seek the LORD! (Matt 6:33)
6. Remember, *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* (Jam 4:6)
7. Oh the verses that describe this precious posture before God (being poor in spirit) are endless!

Mic 6:8 *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

Isa 57:15 *For 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.*

Psa 34:18 *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

Isa 66:2 *For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

And one of the most well known of all...

2Ch 7:14-15 *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place.*

Friends, may we realize our deep and profound need for God. May we realize that we cannot take a breath unless He ordains it. Although we are daily tempted towards **pride**, the truth is we are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Rev 3:17)

Before God, we are destitute beggars, saved only by God’s grace in Christ. Yes, we are also “more than conquerors”...but only “through Him,” not in our own strength (Rom 8:37)! If that truth ever connects with our *spirit*, we will be truly blessed.

“THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN!”

- May we not forget the blessing promised to those who are poor in spirit: **theirs is the Kingdom of heaven!**
- Is the Kingdom of Heaven worth humbling yourself?
- “The essence of Christianity is humility, humility, humility.” - Zac Poonen
- Yes, the “I am nothing” mindset is contrary to the worldly (and even church) thinking. May the Lord help us take captive every prideful thought and make them obedient to Christ. (2 Cor 10:5)

Amen.

FAMILY WORSHIP/PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

1. Discuss what you learned about being poor in spirit.
2. Do you think this is a hard truth to accept in our culture? Why or why not?
3. Find a few more verses that describe being poor in spirit and discuss.
4. Most of the people in the Bible that God used for His glory eventually developed a “poorness of spirit.” John the Baptist, as an example, said: *“I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”* (Lk 3:16)
5. Can you find a few more?

CRCC At-A-Glance

Harvest Assembly House of Blessing

Summer is here and House of Blessing is looking for summer volunteers for the food pantry. If you are interested, please complete the volunteer form in the lobby!

CRCC's Annual Clothing Giveaway

Our annual clothing giveaway will be held on August 26th.
Please begin looking through your closets for items to donate!
All items can be brought to the main office.

Catechism

Question: What does God require from us to escape his anger and curse, which we deserve for our sin?

Answer: To escape God's anger and curse, which we deserve for our sins, God requires from us faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life along with diligent involvement in all the external ways Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption.