

1) THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Matthew 5:3

“Blessed” can also mean abundant, full, happy, fulfilled, at peace.

Read: Matthew 19: 16-22:

A rich man comes to Jesus asking him what he must do to have eternal life. To “have” it is to experience it, to feel assured of it, to know what it means to have abundance of life and peace inside.

Jesus tells him he should keep the commandments and he lists a few of them. The man answers that he keeps them. He is a good man, a good Jew. But somehow he feels he is missing something.

Jesus then tells him to take a further step, a step of faith. He asks him to give up a good portion of his wealth to the poor and focus on his treasure in heaven. He must let go his attachments to that which can be an obstacle to his spiritual abundance and peace.

But the man cannot do this. He leaves ‘grieving’.

This man is rich in material things, but poor spiritually. Poverty of spirit in this case is not a positive thing. It is a deprivation of something essential for true abundance and peace.

Take a few moments to ponder the word attachment... Are there attachments you have in life that have become obstacles that prevent you from the greater abundance and peace that is possible for you?

Read: 1 Kings 17: 8-24:

Elijah, a prophet of God, encounters a woman. The woman is a foreigner in Israel (a Canaanite), she is a woman, and she is a widow. She is poor. And on top of all this, there is a famine in the land. Even the well-off are struggling. Elijah challenges her to risk it all, to show mercy and generosity to him, to give him something to eat even though it may mean she and her son go without. She takes the risk and she does the right thing. She is saved. There is enough for her and her son even after she feeds the prophet. This is a miraculous blessing of God.

But then, something even worse happens to her. Her son gets sick and appears to die. She is angry with the prophet because she presumes his presence has become a curse on her. Once again, the prophet asks her to trust him and to trust God. The boy is revived and the woman finds new life in her faith restored. God is good.

Here is a woman who is materially poor and yet her faith opens her up to spiritual riches.

To be poor in spirit, then, is to be open to God, to trust God in doing the right thing, being generous, compassionate, and ready to listen to where God is calling you to go. Sometimes the attachments and the clutter in our lives are an obstacle to poverty of spirit as openness to God. Sometimes we are far too distracted by our worries and responsibilities.... Sometimes we are stuck too deeply in our fatalism or despair... Sometimes we are too overwhelmed by our pain and sadness... poverty of spirit is a connection with God where we are open in the face of new circumstances, open to the new life God can bring to us in the face of material and relational deprivations around us.

'Poor' in spirit, then, can mean open or humble in spirit, trusting in spirit, hopeful and loving in spirit.

How do you need to grow into a greater poverty of spirit? Where are the obstacles, attachments, clutter, distractions, negative thinking?... How do you surrender them over to God and let them go one by one as they come up?

PRAYER: Too often, O God, I feel empty. I've got nothing left spiritually speaking. I'm in a desert, a wilderness, lost and wandering in search of water and food and abundance beginning with my inner life... Other times I am so full of junk, of noise, of clutter, distracted, restless, listless, irritable, feeling pity for myself and resentment for everything and everyone around me... empty me, O God, and fill me, O God... give me poverty of spirit so that I may be blessed with an abundance of love to overflowing, love for myself and love for others through your love flowing through like an everflowing stream... Amen.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Matthew 15: 21-28 and the book of Ruth (4 short chapters). Our focus is: blessed are those who mourn, and blessed are the meek.