

Last week we discussed James C. Howell and how the declaration of independence states we can pursue happiness. But we saw how the word happiness, “Makarios” in Greek, has changed meaning from the time of Jesus. We also discussed how we are to live our lives not only for our own salvation but for the salvation of those around us. Have you thought of this this week?

**Matthew 5:3** – Jesus said: **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,”** “Blessed” means more than “happy” because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. “Blessed” here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. Can you see the difference?

The “poor in spirit” are the humble. Why do you think the humble are blessed?

**Phillip Yancey** – (1949- ) Philip Yancey is an American author who writes primarily about spiritual issues. His books have sold more than 15 million copies in English and have been translated into 40 languages, making him one of the best-selling contemporary Christian authors. Two of his books have won the ECPA's Christian Book of the Year Award: *The Jesus I Never Knew* in 1996, and *What's So Amazing About Grace?* in 1998.

Yancey discusses “poor” in the literal worldly sense. The word poor meaning those without means or the funds to live. Those that struggle in life to get by, even in the basic provisions of food and shelter. Is this what Jesus is referring to when he says, “poor in spirit”?

“Poor in Spirit” means the “humble”, in contrast to the spiritually proud and self-sufficient. Who were the spiritually proud in Jesus' time? What is the one thing that God hates? Why?

**Monika Hellwig's list of advantages to being poor** - Let's replace the word “poor” with the word “humble” and discuss each one:

1. The poor know they are in urgent need of redemption.
2. The poor know not only their dependence on God and powerful people but also their dependence with one another.
3. The poor rest their security not on things but on people.
4. The poor have no exaggerated sense of their own importance, and no exaggerated need of privacy.
5. The poor expect little from competition and much from cooperation.
6. The poor can distinguish between necessities and luxuries.
7. The poor can wait, because they have acquired a kind of dogged patience born of acknowledged dependence.
8. The fears of the poor are more realistic and less exaggerated because they already know that one can survive great suffering and want.
9. When the poor have the gospel preached to them, it sounds like good news and not like a threat or a scolding.
10. The poor can respond to the call of the gospel with a certain abandonment and uncomplicated totality because they have so little to lose and are ready for anything.

**Eberhard Arnold** – (1883 – 1935) was a German theologian and Christian writer. He was the founder of the Bruderhof in 1920. He was born in Königsberg, East Prussia, Germany, the third child of Carl Franklin and Elizabeth (Voight) Arnold. His father was a doctor of theology and philosophy, and his paternal grandfather was a pastor and missionary of the Evangelical State Church of Prussia's older Provinces. Eberhard Arnold's life as a youth was unconventional. In 1899 at age 16, Arnold experienced an inner change, which he acknowledged as God's acceptance and the forgiveness of sins, and felt a calling to “go and witness to my truth.” After he finished school, Arnold studied education, philosophy, and theology in Breslau, Halle, and Erlangen. He engaged in Christian youth work and in evangelism among the poor through the Salvation Army. While in Halle, he became part of the *German Student Christian Movement*, and its General Secretary. His work with the Salvation Army increased his sympathy for the oppressed classes of people and strengthened his stand for preaching conversion and salvation. Here in Halle, he also met Emmy von Hollander and married her in 1909. At age 37, he abandoned middle-class life and the established church, believing it to be complicit in the atrocities of the war. In 1920, he moved with his wife and children to the village of Sannerz in central Germany, and founded the Bruderhof with seven adult members and five children. The community experienced both trouble and growth, but by the mid-1920s the Sannerz farm was too small. In 1926, they bought a farm in the Fulda district and established the Rhön Bruderhof. When Arnold discovered that Hutterite communities still existed in North America, he contacted them and engaged in a long period of correspondence. In 1930 he traveled to America and stayed for about a year, visiting all the communities of Hutterian brethren in the United States and Canada. In December of that year, he was commissioned by them as a missionary to Europe. In November 1933, the Bruderhof community was raided by the Gestapo, who searched for arms and anti-Nazi literature, and closed the community's school. The Bruderhof sent their school children to Switzerland, and began to search for another place to establish their community. When the teacher sent by the government arrived in 1934, he found no children to teach. Property was acquired in the Alps in Liechtenstein, and in March 1934, the *Alm Bruderhof* was founded. Arnold spent the last two years of his life suffering from a leg injury that would lead to his death, while attempting to shepherd his flock to safety. Nevertheless, he remained active in travelling, lecturing, and writing until his death in Darmstadt on 22 November 1935. The Bruderhof is still operational as an intentional community in the United States, Paraguay, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, and Australia. Plough, the publishing house he helped to found, is still operated by the Bruderhof, and carries many of his works.

“It is hard to describe how all our own power must be stripped off us, how our own power must be dropped, dismantled, torn down, and put away...That is not attained so easily and does not happen through a single heroic decision. It must be done in us by God.”

What is Arnold saying here about our own power? Why must this be done?

**Dorothy Day** – (1897 – 1980) was an American journalist, social activist and anarchist who, after a bohemian youth, became a Catholic without abandoning her social activism. She was perhaps the best-known political radical among American Catholics.

Day's conversion is described in her 1952 autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*. Day was also an active journalist, and described her social activism in her writings. In 1917, she was imprisoned as a member of suffragist Alice Paul's nonviolent Silent Sentinels. In the 1930s, Day worked closely with fellow activist Peter Maurin to establish the Catholic Worker Movement, a pacifist movement that combines direct aid for the poor and homeless with nonviolent direct action on their behalf. She practiced civil disobedience, which led to additional arrests in 1955, 1957, and in 1973 at age 75.

As part of the Catholic Worker Movement, Day co-founded the *Catholic Worker* newspaper in 1933, and served as its editor from 1933 until her death in 1980. In this newspaper, Day advocated the Catholic economic theory of distributism, which she considered a third way between capitalism and socialism. Pope Benedict XVI used her conversion story as an example of how to "journey towards faith... in a secularized environment." In an address before the United States Congress, Pope Francis included her in a list of four exemplary Americans who "built a better future". The Catholic Church has opened the cause for Day's possible canonization, which was accepted by the Holy See. For that reason, the Church refers to her with the title Servant of God.

"Precarity is everywhere rejected, and precarity is an essential element of poverty. This has been forgotten."

**Precarity** - the state of being precarious or uncertain. "the precarity of the housing market"; a state of persistent insecurity with regard to employment or income.

"Every religious community, begun in poverty and incredible hardship, but with a joyful acceptance of hardship by the rank-and-file priests, brothers, monks, or nuns who gave their youth and energy to good works, soon began to "thrive."

Day's point is that it is hard to stay poor. Just as we are humble to remain in Christ and lead by the Holy Spirit, we must remain humble in our successes and accomplishments, ever giving God the glory.

Have you had this experience in your life?