



Part I in the Series of the Beatitude

Dr. Josef Howard
Facilitator

Introduction

Some scholars believe that this opening of the sermon was designed to shock the audience as Jesus deliberately turned what was commonly accepted upside down.

Most of the shock value has been lost today because we are so familiar with the text. Perhaps the modern equivalent could be something like this: “Blessed are the losers who have nothing to say for themselves – God really favors them and rewards them with the best that He has.”

-The Message Bible puts it like this: “You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.”

Introduction

-As we examine this first beatitude, we will find that poor in spirit really has its own meaning. Those who are poor in spirit know how much they need God. It is not surprising that the kingdom is theirs because the King Himself has become their King and provider. With that in mind, here is the main idea of the message:

Proposition: God's favor rests on those who recognize how much they need Him.

Interrogative: What can we learn about being poor in spirit?

1. What does it mean to be poor?

Giving plasma for gas money? Evicted for rent? Duck tape on the broken car window? Electricity got turned off?

Having or few possessions or resources; Lacking the necessary means to live a reasonably comfortable life.

Synonyms: Destitute, unfortunate, pathetic, miserable, impoverished, broke.
We'd all like to avoid poverty, right?

Jesus appears to encourage a certain kind of poverty.

Not poverty of possessions, but to abandon anything that steers us heart away from God.

II. Terms: The Blessed and the Blessor

A. Blessed - A gift for the wellbeing of another.

The “Blessed” means happy now, and later Happy when in heaven.

Many will feel blessed now, but in hell their will be no blessing, not happiness, only pain and punishment.

Describes the present state of those who have received God’s favor. The blessing is for the present, and for the promise of eternity

Blessed in this text doesn’t mean just “Happy”. It means made happy by God.

Diving Deeper

Let us now focus on the C-A-R of the one who is Poor in Spirit and therefore described as Jesus as being “Blessed”

- 1) Character
- 2) Affirmation
- 3) Reward

1. The character of the Blessed

-Poor in spirit is used figuratively, of those in special need of God's help. The Greek word ptokos means poor, lowly, one who crouches or cringes, a beggar.

-To be poor in spirit really means to realize that we are spiritually bankrupt, that we cannot save ourselves, that we really need help!

-Being poor in spirit speaks of a faithful dependence on the Lord that poverty often produces as opposed to militant anger and force of arms that the revolutionaries in Jesus' time thought would bring about the kingdom of God.

III. The character of the Blessed

-It means to be small in our own eyes, like Saul was before he became King. It means to be unselfish. “Get all you can and can all you get” is not poverty of spirit, but betrays a sense of entitlement and greed.

Certainly there is a place for initiative and ambition, but only in the context of complete surrender to God.

The way up is down in God’s kingdom.

Prayer: “Lord, help us to be unassuming, knowing that we are all undeserving!”

III. The character of the Blessed

-Have you ever noticed how easy it is to offend someone who is not poor in spirit? They are pretty sure that the solar system revolves around them. Therefore, whenever something is said or done that conflicts with their agenda, everybody hears about it.

The poor in spirit are described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

III. The character of the Blessed

-They are those who are not self-assertive, self-reliant, self-confident, self-centered, or self-sufficient. They are not overly concerned with self-esteem. They do not boast in their God given characteristics such as their birth, family, education, physical looks, race, wealth, or culture. None of that matters.

-Jesus is saying, “Blessed are those who know that there’s nothing they can do to help themselves. Blessed are those who humbly realize that they are spiritually bankrupt without Christ.

Blessed are those who understand that without God, they can do nothing.

III. The character of the Blessed

So, the “Poor in spirit” are those who are bankrupt of everything else, but full of confidence in God:

“These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.” - Isaiah 66:2

Attitude: “I am a sinner, I deserve death and hell. I can’t pay my debt of sin, Help me Lord!”

Luke 18:13 records the prayer of one poor in spirit:

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

III. The character of the Blessed



- Keep in mind therefore that the “Poor in Spirit” are:

Humble Minded

III. The character of the Blessed



- Humility only comes when we receive God's revelation of Himself in Jesus and begin to see ourselves the way He sees us.....

totally helpless without Him, but totally blessed with Him.

2. The Affirmation of the Poor

-Blessed- Approved by God, Applauded by Heaven.

-Blessed - being esp. favored, blessed, fortunate, happy, privileged, from God's perspective. The general Greco-Roman perspective of someone who was blessed was one on whom fortune smiles. A blessed person is a privileged recipient of divine favor.

-In today's language, being blessed might mean "to possess an inward contentedness and joy that is not affected by physical circumstances". The poor in spirit are not normally considered blessed on this earth, but are in fact blessed by God.

2. The Affirmation of the Poor

Mary the mother of Jesus may be a good example.

We also read about God's favor or approval being expressed to her by the angel.

Luke 1:28-30 "28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God."

2. The Affirmation of the Poor

Interestingly, God is not impressed by our accomplishments or abilities.

He uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

1 Peter 5:5-6 "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

2. The Affirmation of the Poor

We are less than deserving when it comes to God's grace and favor. Yet, He has set His love on us and has chosen us to associate with Him. He sees us in our weaknesses and gives us the grace to trust in Him for strength.

-Have you been blessed by God? If so, then I hope you recognize His favor for what it is. The Bible says that God gives rain to good people and bad people. However, His favor is reserved for those who are poor in spirit and recognize that they need Him more than anything else in this world.

2. The Affirmation of the Poor

Note: The Poor in Spirit Are Highly Regarded

what are other
words for
highly regarded?



esteemed, reputable, admired,
venerable, venerated, famous,
honored, revered, respected,
important



3. The Reward of the Poor

“Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”

A Kingdom has at least 3 components:

❖ **A Perimeter:**

Some are In the Kingdom and others are outside the Kingdom

The lowly (poor in spirit) will enter the Kingdom

The self important (proud) will not be in the Kingdom

Simple put: Not everyone is getting into the Kingdom

Some who will be kept out, who think they should be let in.

#3. The Reward of the Poor

C. Kingdom of Heaven

❖ A King:

Jesus is the King and He's in charge of the Kingdom and the people

Some who were important on earth; who had the power, the money, the self righteous, mistreating the poor, will be surprised the God doesn't answer to them...

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:19-23

#3. The Reward of the Poor

C. Kingdom of Heaven

❖ People/Subjects:

Being in the church doesn't guarantee being a part of the Kingdom.

Examine yourself and see if you have the attitude of poor in spirit. The way to heaven is low and narrow....

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." - John 14:6

The kingdom heaven is given to:

- the poor, not the rich
- the feeble, not the mighty;
- to little children, not to soldiers

Ex. The Rich Young Ruler

He wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus wanted him to clarify his loyalties. “Sell all you have and give it to the poor. When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” - Luke 18:23-25

There is HOPE for the downtrodden

There is no privileged class in God's Kingdom.

The blind, lepers, prostitutes, homeless, alcoholic, unclean, Gentiles, handicapped, dirty, poor and uneducated will not be second class citizens in Heaven.

God's view of the Poor in Spirit

Blessed could be translated “rich” and read it like this....

“Rich are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The poor in spirit may have empty pockets, but it's God who meets their need out of His pocket.

His pockets are not empty, and He never runs out of resources

In Revelation 3, God gave a review of the Church of Laodicea:

It wasn't a good review: They were going through motions; doing the minimum; playing Church, etc.

God's view of the Poor in Spirit

They bragged about how rich they were:

They flashed their gold and showed off fancy houses

People stepped aside when they walked down the street.

They thought they are something impressive...

God has a different opinion of them...

“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” Revelation 3:17

Please note....

Wealth is not a sin, and poverty is not a promise of Heaven:

What happens in the heart is Superior to what happens in the wallet.

Both the poor and the wealthy must choose to be humble before the Lord.

Ill: A farmer went to his banker and announced that he had bad news and good news. "First, the bad news..." "Well," said the farmer, "I can't make my mortgage, tractors and other equipment payments. So, I'm going to have to give up the farm and turn it all over to you for whatever you can salvage out of it." "What's the good news?" "The good news is that I'm going to keep on banking with you," said the farmer.

Please note....

That is just the way we come to God:

- ❖ Unable to pay our debt,
- ❖ Bringing nothing but filthy hands and guilty hearts
- ❖ We come to Jesus with nothing, and Jesus not only accepts us,

But He offers to fill our empty hands with the Salvation of Jesus

It is important to understand that....

The phrase “kingdom of heaven” in this context is not simply referring to the place where those who believe will live forever but rather the environment that Christ rules over.

It's like the trusting child who benefits from his parent's provision.

And what kind of life will the poor in spirit have if Jesus rules over them rather than trying to be the ruler themselves?

Among other things they will receive these **four blessings**.

Blessings #1: God's Grace

(James 4:6) There is an acrostic for Grace which describes what God has done:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

If you are poor in spirit, that's when you admit your need for Him, and that's when He gives mercy, forgiveness and His grace, His favor when we deserve punishment.

Blessings #2: Less Stress

Humility means I don't have to have all the answers.

When I'm humble:

- ❖ I realize that the world does not revolve around me.
- ❖ I am not the general manager of the universe.
- ❖ I don't have to fake it anymore. I can relax in the Lord.
- ❖ I don't have to pretend I'm perfect because God doesn't demand that I be perfect in order for me to be happy.

Blessings #2: Less Stress

Humility means I don't have to have all the answers and it's okay.

Humility accepts the fact that:

- ❖ I can be happy because I'm depending on God.
- ❖ Others will fail me including myself but God won't.
- ❖ I'm not depending on things or others for approval but on Jesus alone.
- ❖ Stress is reduced in my life because of my reliance on Jesus and when that happens, my happiness goes up.

Blessings #3: Better Relationships

Who enjoys being around arrogant, boastful, prideful people? No one likes a selfish or self-centered person (me, myself and I).

When you are “poor in spirit”, you take an interest in others. When you take an interest in others, you become interesting to others.

Being poor in spirit means you ask forgiveness of others, and you in turn are forgiving. It improves relationships.

Song: I love you, you love me...we're a great big family...with a great big hug and a kiss from me to you, won't you say you love me too.

Blessings #4: Excellent Results

Being poor in spirit releases God's power in my life.

God works powerfully through those who are poor in spirit because they are totally dependent of Him. That's faith!

It means that I can simply be faithful and diligent and trust Him for the results.

And So What?

“Poor in spirit” means:

- Being totally dependent on God.
- Realizing our spiritual deficiencies.
- Emptying ourselves of selfishness---humility.

Because:

- We can't impress God by our successes. Psalm 24:1 says "The earth's is the Lord's and everything it!"
- Compared to God we are not great and are nothing without Him.
- We need God.