

PP The King and His Kingdom

Part 3-Matthew 5:3 *Poor in Spirit*

2/11-12/2017

PP “[Poverty of spirit] *is not a necessary human work to make us worthy, but a necessary divine work to make us see that we are unworthy and cannot change our condition without God.*”

John MacArthur

PP The Sermon on the Mount describes the heart, and the lifestyle of a disciple of Jesus Christ. These are the virtues of the kingdom of God and every one of its citizens must possess them. And every Christian is to manifest all of them, not 1 or 2 of them, and importantly, not one of them are natural inclinations or traits.

PP Yet, this sermon does even more, it describes the heart and lifestyle of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus, in this sermon, is showing His disciples what He will help them become...like Himself.

PP Writer Daniel Doriani said: *“By grace, God sent His Son. By grace, Jesus came to seek and save the lost. By grace, He atoned for our sins. By grace, the Father raised Jesus from the tomb and sent the Spirit to testify to Him. By grace, God completes His work by changing our hearts, so that we love Him and believe in Him. This is how we become like Christ from heart to toe.”* Reformed Expository Commentary-Matthew

The work of the gospel is a heart transformation.

Every person is born with a spiritual heart, and every heart is corrupted by an innate sinfulness. I know it's hard to see this when you are holding that precious, beautiful baby.

You may see that baby as perfectly innocent with a heart that is a moral blank slate upon which is written and into which is poured good or bad.

Yet the sin of Adam has pre-wired itself into the heart of every human being ever born.

And while a sinner's heart varies in degree from person to person, no doubt influenced by a family, friends, and culture, no one escapes the fact that the orientation of their hearts is still, ultimately, themselves, rather than God.

The problem is not education or lack of it, it isn't socio-environmental factors at play in a person, and it isn't the personality of a person...it is sin.

A person may be very religious, serving at church, generously giving to the needy, but until there is a heart change, below all of the altruistic behaviors beats a sinner's heart.

We do sinful things because we are sinful beings.

The heart is the fountain, the source, and the only solution is a heart transplant.

And this is the blessing behind the first Beatitude.

PP 1-Blessed are the *'poor in spirit'*

Christ preached a message of repentance: *“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,*

‘Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.’” Matthew 4:17

Those who repented received a new spiritual heart, to live as citizens in His kingdom.

The first attitude of the new heart is this: ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”*** Matthew 5:3

But how would His Jewish hearers have received this?

Matthew tells us what was happening in Jesus' ministry starting in 4:23,

“And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with

various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them. And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.” Matthew 4:23-25

On the slopes of that mount that day listening to this sermon were likely thousands of people
The crowd was electrified, the disciples in wide-eyed wonder at being picked by this incredible
rabbi to be His Talmidim, and His first word explodes in their Jewish ears, *‘Blessed’*
Their Jewish minds translated this to mean that God was about to deliver them from Rome and
restore their national honor and power

But then Jesus preached, *‘Blessed are the poor in spirit...’ 5:3*

I imagine the disciples, keeping their heads appropriately aimed toward their rabbi, their eyes
screening left and right seeing what reaction the other guys were having

I imagine the people in the crowd whispering to each other, *Did you just hear what I heard?*
‘poor in spirit’ doesn’t sound victorious, that can’t be what divine blessing looks like

PP *‘poor’* here describes not just someone who lacks, but someone who is completely destitute
The Greek people connected this word with an image of a beggar crouching in the corner with a
hand out for help, the other covering the face in shame

The Greek attitude of the poor was that it was a despised state

Plato tried to legislate that the poor would be banished, and if anyone attempted to beg, he would
be driven across the border that our land may be wholly purged by such a creature

PP *‘poor’* in Matthew 5 describes one who has absolutely nothing!

But Jesus was speaking, not in Greek, but a language rooted in the Old Testament

Early in the Hebrew language *‘poor’* was used in the literal sense-lacking material necessities

But it evolved to mean someone who has no power, no prestige, and no influence to defend
himself in the world, the vulnerable

It evolved more to describe the downtrodden and oppressed

PP But finally, the poor were understood as also those who had no help on earth and trusted
themselves to the One Who could help from heaven...God

PP *“This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.”*
Psalm 34:6

PP *“All my bones shall say, ‘O LORD, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is
too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?’”* Psalm 35:10

PP *“As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and
my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!”* Psalm 40:17

PP The *‘poor in spirit’* are those who have come to realize their own inadequacies,
worthlessness and destitution, and appeal to God for help

They have no confidence in their own righteousness but every confidence in God’s mercy

It is the prodigal son who had nothing, repented and returned to his father and was blessed

It is the tax collector of **Luke 18** who beat his chest praying, *‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner’*

But let’s drill into this a little more especially with our modern thoughts in mind

The *‘poor in spirit’* are not those who have a mousy, shy, nervous, introverted personality

You can be strong, tenacious and tough and be *‘poor in spirit’*

It is simply, beautifully realizing our sin, and our inability to reform ourselves

The *'poor in spirit'* are utterly conscious of their need for God's mercy and power

PP But there is one final thought in this incredible phrase, *'poor in spirit'*, the word is *empty*

The *'poor in spirit'* are those who have been emptied of self-confidence, self-assurance

We see this when we understand how the gospel works

Gospel preaching, gospel counseling, gospel conversation centers on Jesus and notice what the elderly Simeon said when Mary placed baby Jesus in his arms in the temple

PP *"And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed...so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'"* **Luke 2:34-35**

There are two sides to the gospel, the bad news and the good news

It will make a person fall before it raises them up, empties before it fills

Conviction must precede conversion, condemnation before clearance

A person must come to the realization that they are *poor in spirit* before they can be made rich

Before God can fill us with blessings, we must be emptied of self-confidence in our goodness

The lack of realizing this emptiness was potentially fatal to the Church at Laodicea:

PP *"For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."* **Revelation 3:17**

PP 2-The contrast between the world and the Kingdom of God

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." **Matthew 5:3**

One who is in the kingdom of God must live radically different than one in the kingdom of this world

The world lauds a very different spirit, one of self-assurance, self-expression and self-reliance

To them, an impoverished spirit hinders success and career advancement

So express yourself, believe in yourself, realize the potential in yourself and go for it

The world wants our hearts driven to climb the social, financial, career ladder

What that does is it creates a never-ending need to pursue something that will make us happy

There is great satisfaction in realizing that we are poor paupers before God, yet He has lavished His riches on us

It creates the perpetually grateful, those who come away from the Lord's Table with a humble sense of rightness in our low position and Christ's high position

There is great peace when we step off the ladder, and work hard trusting God to give us all He deems we should have

PP Jesus said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."* **Mark 2:17**

The gospel will bring us face to face with God to see how utterly impoverished we are in our moral condition, and if we fling ourselves on His mercy, we will receive His Kingdom

The Christian is to maintain a poor spirit, for it cultivates a life of submission and utter dependence on God's grace, something that Jesus modeled better than any other

He was not in need of the mercies of His Father, for He had no sin

PP Yet He said, *"I can do nothing on My own. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I seek not My own will but the will of Him Who sent Me."* **John 5:30**

See the hours He spent in prayer and you see His poverty of Spirit and reliance upon God

Recall that the goal of the rabbi was to train his disciples to know what he knows, to live like he lives, to be like him in every way

This is the great beauty of Jewish disciple-making: the disciples were made like the Rabbi in every way

For the Apostle Paul, maturity means reaching the ***'fullness of Christ'*** Ephesians 4:13

Every believer is ***'to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God'*** Ephesians 4:24

We are to love and forgive one another as Christ did, Ephesians 4:32

As His children, we are to ***'be imitators of God'*** Ephesians 5:1

In short, every Christian is being transformed to be like Jesus Christ

PP 3-The evidences of one who is *'poor in spirit'*

Spiritual poverty is deep humility and Puritan preacher Thomas Watson reveals what it looks like
If may be helpful to take some time this week and see if these evidences of grace are in your life

PP a. *The humble are increasingly weaned from themselves, losing their self-preoccupation, thinking less of themselves and more of others*

*Catch those unguarded thoughts and see where their trajectory was...to self or others

PP b. *The humble are lost in the wonder of Christ wanting nothing more than to be transformed to be like Him*

*Is this your single-minded life goal?

PP c. *The humble do not complain about their situation no matter how bad it may become*

*They increasingly know they deserve worse than anything they receive in this life, and no the glory of the life to come

PP d. *The humble more clearly see the strengths and virtues in others and celebrate them rather than get jealous of them*

*They count others more significant than themselves and are driven to honor them

PP e. *The humble will spend increasing amounts of time in prayer*

*They knock often on heaven's gates because they are profoundly aware they are always in need

PP f. *The humble take Christ on His terms readily submitting to His Word whatever it asks*

*They will not seek to go around difficult demands of Jesus, but seek to fully obey them

PP g. *The humble will constantly praise God and make much of His grace*

*Nothing more characterizes the humble Christian than one who pours out a constant stream of gratitude to His Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Because of its seemingly impossible demands, some Christians have taught it is referring to the kingdom age when Christ will return and rule

But every principle taught in this sermon is taught elsewhere in the new testament

The point that Jesus makes is that these are impossible for the natural person to live, but possible when a person comes to Him, repentant and asking for His mercy

He creates in that person internal changes that will bring with them, external changes

This is His standard for those who live in His kingdom, and by His grace we can live them more and more as we walk with Him

Amen

Pray