

# Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

Matthew 5:3

February 12, 2012

Part 2 in the series...

## JESUS vs RELIGION

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Isn't it interesting that God's way of thinking is almost always opposite of the way we think. It is counterintuitive! His opening beatitude must have really confused people. In order to be rich, you have to become poor! What does that mean?

### I. Jesus vs. Culture and Religion

#### A. Background

1. Sometimes our culture functions like a religion. Our culture has established a worldview apart from God. Our worldview influences our beliefs and our behavior. Jesus took not only took on the religious leaders of His day, but ultimately the culture of His Day!
2. Jesus went toe to toe with...
  - Pharisees: Spiritual elite; considered to be the ideal.
  - Sadducees: Liberals; didn't believe in the resurrection
  - Essenes: Separatists; John the Baptist?
  - Zealots: political operatives who wanted to overthrow Rome.
3. Jesus is a new king in a new age with a new message! How does His message affect our culture?

Jesus	Culture
<b>Poor</b> ...recognize your spiritual need for God	Rich...fill your life with everything but God!
<b>Mourn</b> ...grieve over our losses and our sin.	Be Happy...ignore pain and excuse our sin.
<b>Meek</b> ...demonstrate strength with compassion	Force/power...demand your rights!
<b>Righteous Priorities</b> ... Jesus is the passion of your life	Earthly Pleasures...eat, drink and be merry.
<b>Mercy</b> ...show grace to others	Justice/Judgment...hold everyone accountable
<b>Inward Purity</b> ... look at your heart.	Outward conformity ...look at my behavior
<b>Peace</b> ...love your enemies	Confrontation/Win...hate your enemies
<b>Persecution</b> ...true Christ followers will be hated	Popularity...compromise your values to be accepted.

## II. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit...

### A. It's meaning

1. We are spiritually **bankrupt** apart from God!
  - We are bankrupt, deprived and deficient. **We recognize our spiritual poverty.** This is not a reference to material wealth (Luke 6:20 doesn't add in spirit...just poor). If it did, it would contradict all efforts at "charity" and benevolence that the Lord also commands. God does command us to care for the poor and the oppressed.
  - **We have nothing to bring to the table.** We have nothing to offer God that is worthy; no bargaining power. It is to see oneself as one really is: lost, hopeless, helpless.

- **Our confidence in is in God not our abilities.** Apart from Jesus Christ every person is spiritually destitute, no matter what his education, wealth, social status, accomplishments, or religious knowledge.
- **His Glory and holiness magnifies our sin!**

*Isaiah 6:5-7<sup>1</sup> In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.<sup>2</sup> Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.<sup>3</sup> And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."<sup>4</sup> And the <sup>[b]</sup>foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the <sup>[e]</sup>temple was filling with smoke.<sup>5</sup> Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.<sup>7</sup> He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."*

When we see how awesome God is, it puts our life in perspective. He is holy; we are not. When see God for who He really is, then we see who we really are!

- Even after he became an apostle, Paul recognized that “nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” (Rom. 7:18), that he was the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).
- **Personal Illustration:** Do you ever wish you could be free of sin? Never hurt anyone’s feelings; always make the right choices; never succumb to temptation. Every time we sin we are reminded that we need a Savior.

2. We approach God as a spiritual **beggar!**

*Ptōchos* (**poor**) is from a verb meaning “to shrink, cower, or cringe,” as beggars often did in that day. Classical Greek used the word to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. As he held out one hand for alms he often hid his face with the other hand, because he was ashamed of being recognized. The term did not mean simply poor, but begging poor. It is used in Luke 16:20 to describe the beggar Lazarus. MacArthur

We approach God with...

- Nothing to offer. Religion says do!
- No ability to pay. Religion says pay!
- No deal to make; can't leverage God. Religion says let's make a deal.
- No power to change. Religion says you are in charge;

3. We all have a God shaped **vacuum** in our soul!

- We can't be filled until we are empty.
- We try to fill it with everything but God. Our culture says fame, fortune, fun, friends, family and football are more important. Even good things leave us empty!
- Our self-worth is not found in what we do but who we are. Our worth is found in His imputed righteousness.
- I think sometimes I assess my value in how big our church is, or if the offering was enough, or if people comment positively about the sermon, whether people like me, whether anybody becomes a Christian, whether or not my kids are following Christ, and too many other things to mention.
- Illustration: Faith, Family, Friends, Fame, Fortune, Future, Fun, Food, Females, Flirting, Football, Futbol, Foosball, Facebook, Farming, Frijoles, and Fishing!

## B. It's message

1. The opposite of spiritual poverty is not spiritual possessions but spiritual **pride**.
  - We approach God in humility not arrogance. We don't flaunt how much we pray, or give, or study or serve! It isn't look at me, it is look at Him!
  - The culture says being rich is important, but God says being truly rich is a spiritual issue not a financial issue.
2. Understanding our **brokenness** is step 1 in finding God.
  - Help God...I need you!
  - Ask for forgiveness
3. Jesus says you are **dead**! You need **life**!
  - Religion says: You are ok, but we will make you better.
  - Religion says you are a little sick; you need "therapy".
  - Religion says man is basically good.
  - **Illustration: Snorkeling, near drowning during Spring Break '93. I didn't want to admit I needed help!**

## III. For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

- A. We all come to God **penniless** (broke) and **powerless** (broken).

### 1. Penniless/Broke:

- **Is. 64:6 "All our righteous deeds are like filthy rags".**
- What are those supposed righteous deeds? Tithing, church attendance, feeding the poor, missions, serving, etc.

2. Powerless/Broken:

- Rom. 7:14-15 “I don’t do things I know I should, and do things I know I shouldn’t”

B. Our ultimate **inheritance** is heaven

1. Earthly riches/treasures don’t last (Mt. 6:19-21)
2. Our inheritance is incorruptible
3. Our inheritance can’t be stolen

C. He doesn’t give us more rules, He gives us **relationship!**

1. We are his sons not slaves!
2. We receive grace not guilt!
3. We live eternally in heaven not hell.

## **\*5 Appointments with God...** *Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit (Mt. 5:3)*

To help us apply God's Word each week we will provide a weekly Quiet Time guide that ties into the sermon form that week. As we review the scriptures, it cements it in our hearts and minds. These quiet time questions can be used personally or with your family.

Welcome to the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus takes on "religion" and offers His alternative. Jesus leads off with a discussion of life lived under the "blessing" of God in Matthew 5:3-16. How do you experience this "blessed life" and receive the promises made by Jesus? As we begin our journey through the beatitudes, take some time to reflect on the first key truth in Matthew 5:3— *Blessed are the poor in spirit*. It is only as we acknowledge our total poverty without Christ that we can begin to experience the blessings of our spiritual riches in Christ!

### **Monday: Our Struggle**

Read Matthew 5:3 and Romans 7:14–17, 24–25. How does Paul describe his inner struggle with sin? Can you relate? If so, how does it relate to your experience? What solution does He point to in verses 7:24-25? How does this reinforce the truth of Matthew 5:3? Our Father wants to bless, but His blessing is blocked by a prideful and self-sufficient spirit. If you want spiritual riches, get poor!

### **Tuesday: Our Sinful Nature**

Read Matthew 5:3 and Romans 3:9–18, 23–24. Reflect on this honest description of our hearts apart from Christ. How is mankind characterized? Why do we not want to face such hard truth about ourselves as a fallen race? Note again in Romans 7:23-24 where our hope is found. Pray, give thanks, be dependent and then trust Christ to transform you into His likeness!

### **Wednesday: Our Past Slavery, and New Freedom from Sin**

Meditate again on Matthew 5:3 and read Ephesians 2:1–7. We often quote Ephesians 2:8–9 without remembering Ephesians 2:1–7. Reflect on what it teaches about your life apart from Jesus. What drives your life? What controlled you before Jesus gave you life? What did God do in Ephesians 2:8-9 to set your spirit free, allowing you to go forward in a new direction? Rejoice and ask God to help you live as one resurrected to new life and no longer a slave!

### **Thursday: Our New Kingdom for Our New Life!**

Memorize Matthew 5:3 and Colossians 1:9–14. What is Paul's prayer for you as a Christ-follower? Note all the riches available to you in these verses. What transfer of citizenship is described in Colossians 1:13-14? What excites you as you reflect on this passage? Welcome to the Kingdom of God!

### **Friday: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn**

Read Matthew 5:3–5 as you get ready for the next couple weeks. How can suffering and the mourning which follows be a step toward blessing? What is the key to real comfort and restored joy? And what does it mean to be “meek” or “humble”? Ask God to teach you and bless you as we gather for worship and explore this second look at the Jesus alternative for the blessed life!

\* Used with permission from Dale Burke, Sr. Pastor from Seacoast Evangelical Free Church.