

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:3

Blessed Poverty

THREE IS A DEEP, profound, spiritual joy that is far superior to any amount of superficial happiness. It speaks of God's riches poured into a life, of a clearer understanding of one's role in the Kingdom, of intimate communion that need not always be revealed in one's face.

It is this sort of blessedness that Jesus referred to in the prologue to His sermon on the mount.



Man is born with a capacity for God, but with no guarantee that that space will be filled with Him. The Son of God was manifested on earth as a human being, not as a chickadee, or camel, or slug. He came as a person, because it was with people that God desired a higher relationship—not slugs. So it was in people that God instilled this holy capacity.

We begin empty. The person who never fills that void with Christ—the truth that He, and He alone can save—will die separated from God, thinking all the while that his God-space had been filled with something better.

But there is nothing better, and Jesus says that those who are truly blessed are the ones who have acknowledged the emptiness inside their souls, and that it is a space Christ alone is able to fill.

"Poverty" is the cry of the broken, repentant heart. Though he was the great king of Israel, and could purchase anything he desired—even another man's wife—David later acknowledged his own spiritual poverty and wrote

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part You will make me know
wisdom.
Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalm 51:5-10

Admitting one's spiritual poverty is a sign of humility; refusing to make this admission is a sign of pride. Jesus illustrated the difference with a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector.

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The

Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:9-14

The arrogant man, always expecting that he is owed more than he has, shakes his fist in God's face and cries out, "I don't deserve to be treated like this!" But the humble man, aware that he is, in himself, bankrupt, lifts up open hands to God and, with bowed head and grateful heart, cries, "I don't deserve to be treated like this."



To be "poor in spirit" is to understand that in ourselves we are utterly unworthy before God, deserving nothing, but that through Christ we are granted the right to stand before Him with confidence. To be poor in this world is to have an empty purse; to be spiritually poor is to have one's heart filled with God.

*Jesus, I am resting, resting
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.
Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,
And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power,
Thou hast made me whole.*

*Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
I behold Thee as Thou art,
And Thy love, so pure, so changeless,
Satisfies my heart;
Satisfies its deepest longings,
Meets supplies its every need,
Compasseth me round with blessings:
Thine is love indeed!*

Jean S. Pigott