



MATTHEW

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

Kingdom Character - Poor in Spirit

Matthew 5:1-3

Message #7 of 80 – S1037

Sermon given on February 26, 2023



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Kingdom Character - Poor in Spirit

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Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Matthew 5**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The King and His Kingdom**
- Today, we come to one of the most powerful parts of the gospel of Matthew – the Sermon on the Mount.
- The next three chapters give us a glimpse into what Jesus taught while He was on the earth.
- And today we will begin with the Beatitudes.
- Rightly understood, these beatitudes will change the way you view God and His kingdom and your place in the kingdom.
- Rightly applied to your life, they will change you and the world around you.
- It is probably not an exaggeration that these three chapters have more potential to change your life for the better than any other.
- Let's pray and get into it! - **Pray**

Teaching

- **Kingdom Character - Poor in Spirit**
- Jesus began His public ministry by calling people to repent **Matthew 4:17**.

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

- The Sermon on the Mount is directed to those who have responded.
- This sermon describes the character of the kingdom of God and of those who choose to live in it.
- If the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we need to know how to live in it.
- That's what we get a picture of in the Sermon on the Mount.
- **Matthew 5:1-2**
- Jesus is teaching people who have responded to His call to repent and or His miraculous healings.

- Whatever their reason for being there, Jesus wants them to know what it means to follow Him and be in the kingdom of heaven.
- We will begin with the first beatitude (supreme blessedness)
- **Matthew 5:3**
- Before we can understand and apply the beatitudes, we need to understand the word ‘blessed.’
- ‘Blessed’ – can mean happy, but that is not what it means here. Happiness is subjective.
- Happiness is dependent upon our circumstances.
- Happiness is about how we feel.
- The blessing that Jesus is referring to comes from outside of us.
- It is an objective declaration by God of how He feels about us. **R.**

Kent Hughes

Jesus is not declaring how people feel; rather He is making an objective statement about what God thinks of them. Blessed is a positive judgment by God on the individual that means ‘to be approved’ or ‘to find approval.’ So, when God blesses us, He approves us.

- There is nothing wrong with wanting to be happy.
- The question is, which is more important to you – your happiness or God’s approval?
- The beatitudes teach us the character traits that God approves of.
- These are the traits that cause God to smile over our lives.
- And when God is smiling over our lives, His grace is flowing freely.
- So, the beatitudes are the character traits every believer should be aspiring to so that they can know God’s smiling approval.
- And before we go further, we should note, these beatitudes are not things we do, but are things we are.
- The first beatitude – ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit...’
- The world has a different view on what it means to be blessed.
- To the world the man who is blessed is rich or powerful or famous, or influential, or popular, or satisfied within themselves.
- To those in this modern world, blessedness is found in self.
- There has never been a time in human history when self-worship dominated the culture as it does now.

- Modern media and music have long played a role in promoting a love of self.
- With the introduction of social media, this has exploded exponentially.
- One of the big problems in social media is that it promotes self-worship to spiritually weak people.
- If someone lives in the false world of self-worship they will eventually sense that the god (themselves) they are worshipping can't help them.
- It is very common for people who have grown up in the delusion of social media to struggle with depression and despair and suicidal ideation.
- That is not because they are poor in spirit – they are poor in self.
- The answer is not to build self-esteem – it is to dethrone yourself and let Jesus be God in your life.
- When Jesus talks about being ‘poor in spirit’, He is not saying it is a blessing to be poor financially or materially.
- It has nothing to do with material things.
- Material things will distract us from desiring God's approval

Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

- This applies to people who have material things or to those who don't but wish they did.
- Another rendering of this verse might help us **R. Kent Hughes**
Blessed are those who realize that they have nothing within themselves to commend them to God, for theirs is the kingdom of God.
- This spiritual poverty is the personal acknowledgment of spiritual bankruptcy.
- It is the realization that you have nothing spiritually to draw upon.
- To be ‘poor in spirit’ is to understand the depth of your sin nature.
- It is to admit that deep down, we are all morally corrupt and that there is nothing good in us - Paul said of himself **Romans 7:18**.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

- Paul was expressing his spiritual poverty.
- It is a confession of our total moral unworthiness before God.
- This is totally counter-intuitive.
- From a logical perspective – why would God approve of us if there is nothing that makes us morally worthy of His approval?
- It is because we have no moral worthiness – at all – none **Romans 3:10-12**

There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. ¹² They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.

- God knows that – God approves us when we admit to what He already knows about us.
- If you have been saved, then you have known a time when you were ‘poor in spirit.’
- No one can come to Jesus without poverty of spirit.
- Only those who know there is nothing in them that makes them worthy of God’s grace, especially the grace of salvation, can be saved.
- The spiritually proud or self-sufficient, those who think there is something in them that makes them worthy of God’s undeserved grace – are lost.
- The problem with some Christians is that they used to be poor in spirit.
- Somehow, they grew out of spiritual poverty.
- That is the state of the Laodicean church **Revelation 3:17-18**.
Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.
- As our experience with God grows, there is a serious temptation to depend upon our own knowledge and experience rather than on God and His grace.
- Spiritual poverty is not something we ever outgrow.
- In fact, the more spiritually mature we become, the more aware we should be of our spiritual insufficiency.
- Sometimes God will use circumstances to remind us of our spiritual poverty. Paul talked about that **1 Corinthians 12:10**.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- Jesus concludes this beatitude with the result of being poor in spirit – ‘for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’
- Spiritual poverty today results in spiritual riches both now and in the future.
- Turn to **Luke 18** – a parable of Jesus about this very topic.
- To be ‘poor in spirit’ is to know that you are not worthy of God’s amazing grace.
- And because you know you are not worthy, you turn to God in utter dependence upon Him for everything.
- You know that nothing you can do can earn you God’s approval.
- This parable describes two men as they approach God.
- **Luke 18:10-14**
- The Pharisee was self-righteous and believed his works made him worthy of God’s approval and blessing.
- The tax collector knew exactly who he was and confessed that he had nothing to offer God. He was poor in spirit.
- Jesus said the tax collector went home justified – right with God – having God’s approval – knowing God’s smile.
- Listen, my brothers and sisters, if you have been saved for a while, we have to watch out that we aren’t becoming like the Pharisee.
- We never outgrow the need to be poor in spirit.
- The longer we are in the faith, the more we need to be reminded to be poor in spirit.
- That is how we will experience the kingdom of heaven today.
- What should we do?
- Pray, ask God to reveal your heart to you.
- Ask God to show you if there is any pride creeping in.
- Examine your own heart – can you honestly say you need God for everything.
- How much self dominates your life? How important is happiness?
- There is nothing better in this life than to know God’s smile upon your life. It is the source of true happiness.
- We are living in the King’s kingdom – be poor in spirit - **Pray**