

# Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 5:3

If you spend time in a foreign country, you will eventually be lost. Not exclusively geographically but socially, culturally, or conversationally. Things might appear to be backward or upside down in our Americanized brains.

God challenges followers of Christ to live in His Kingdom while being strangers and aliens in our current residence. We are pilgrims, just passing through. We are to live, think, and react differently than others who do not serve the risen Savior. We are to be continually being formed into the image of Christ. Sadly, and often, the habits of the world are adopted rather than the habits of our King and His Kingdom.

In Matthew 6:10, we are instructed to pray for God's kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven." Yet, if we can be honest, the Kingdom seems like a distant dream of a place. As we will see, the Beatitudes are counterintuitive and countercultural. May God renew our minds with the Kingdom of God's principles and life.

## I. The Counterintuitive Life

- A. The Kingdom might be better recognized as the upside-down kingdom. Why?
  - 1. World: Blessed are the Rich. *Kingdom: Acknowledgement of spiritual poverty.*
  - 2. World: Blessed are those who laugh. *Kingdom: Mourn over your poverty.*
  - 3. World: Blessed are the proud and confident. *Kingdom: Humble yourself before a holy God.*
  - 4. World: Blessed are the satisfied. *Kingdom: Hungering, thirsting for righteousness you don't have.*
- B. The Kingdom way to a "blessed" life upside down.
  - 1. **Psalm 1:1**, *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;*
  - 2. **Psalm 32:1–2**, *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*
  - 3. **Psalm 112:1**, *Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!*
  - 4. **Psalm 119:1–2**, *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,*
- C. What is "Blessed." Have you ever said, "Oh, I am blessed!"
  - 1. Blessed is the word "*makarios*." (happy, bliss, satisfied, fortunate)
  - 2. Some suggest "fortunate" as the best conveys the idea of being blessed.
    - a) Fortunate – carried the idea of receiving a valuable gift that cannot be earned.
    - b) Others, like Augustine suggested, "Happy." Not a fleeting, sought for happiness.
  - 3. Blessed is about leaning into God's promises amid the pain and suffering of life
    - a) **Ephesians 1:3**, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*
    - b) **James 1:17**, *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*
    - c) God's nature is blessed (happy, blissful, satisfied) **2 Peter 1:4**, *By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

## II. The Illogical Pathway: Why Start at Poverty?

- A. Poverty implies there must be an emptying before there is a filling.
  - 1. You can't put new wine in old bottles.
  - 2. The Gospel condemns before it redeems.
  - 3. You can go no farther in our Lord's sermon until you cross this bridge to poverty.
- B. Jesus starts with a person facing their own spiritual bankruptcy before a holy God.
  - 1. Genealogy does not matter.
  - 2. Customs and Traditions do not matter

3. Self-importance and self-righteousness do not matter.
  - a) **A broken heart.** *Isaiah 61:1, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*
  - b) **A broken pride.** *Proverbs 16:5 (ESV) — 5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished.*
  - c) **A broken wardrobe.** *Isaiah 64:6, We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.*
  - d) **Mark 2:17, And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”**

C. The Warning of thinking the opposite.

1. **Revelation 3:17, For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.**
2. **Hosea 12:8, Ephraim has said, “Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.”**

D. It was the process of the Apostle Paul (**Philippians 3:3–8**)

### III. What Does it mean to start at Poverty?

- A. Poor – *ptōchos* – beggarly, destitute like a beggar; begging out of shame, not choice. (**Luke 18:9-14**)
  1. Unwilling to lift his eyes.
  2. No wealth, influence, position, honor, respect. A real beggar.
  3. Vulnerable to oppression.
  4. A second “poor” in the Greek is “*penēs*”
    - a) Poor – no stockpile or savings; must work every day.
    - b) This poor has a skill and can work.
  5. A “*ptōchos*” is so poor, destitute, and unskilled that no living can be earned, and begging is the last resort.
- B. If you want to enter the kingdom, this is where you start.
  1. **Isaiah 66:2, All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.**
  2. **Psalms 34:18, The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves *the crushed in spirit.***

### IV. Basic steps to humility

- A. Recognize it is from the Lord. It is a divine work within us.
- B. Focus our eyes on God and not on ourselves.
- C. Starve the flesh and the things on which it feeds (compliments, popularity, things that promote pride).
- D. Ask God for it (**Psalms 51:10, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.**)

### V. The Results

- A. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven (**Luke 12:32 “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”**)
- B. Gideon **Judges 6:15–16, And he said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” 16 And the Lord said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.”**
- C. **Isaiah 6:1, 5-7, In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Isaiah 6:5–7, And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”**
- D. **Isaiah 57:15, For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a *contrite and lowly spirit*, to *revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.***
- E. In giving up your kingdom, the poor in spirit inherit God’s.
  1. **James 4:10, Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**

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- A. Examples
    - 1. Luke 18:9-14
    - 2. Isaiah 6
    - 3. Solomon
  - B. Poverty, Spiritual Poverty is the Gateway to the Kingdom of God