

“The Poor in Spirit”

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

1. Although this sentence begins with the word “blessed,” it is not the subject of the sentence. It describes the subject “the poor.” Can you re-write this sentence so that the subject comes first?

“_____, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

- a. Why do you think Jesus chose to begin the sentence with “blessed?”
- b. Each of the beatitudes begin this way. What does that tell you about what Jesus wanted his hearers thinking about?

2. When people speak of being blessed, what kinds of things do they usually have in mind?

3. In each Beatitude, Jesus gives a reason that the person described can be said to be blessed (i.e. “For”). The last repeats the first, leaving seven reasons. List them.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

- a. How do these seven reasons compare to what we usually call blessings?
- b. What do these reasons say about the nature of our blessings?
- c. What, then, does it mean to be blessed?

4. Compare Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20.

- a. Luke says “kingdom of God” instead of “kingdom of heaven,” but what other phrase does he leave out that Matthew includes?
- b. What does Luke’s version seem to say about poverty?
- c. Is there anything inherently spiritual about being economically poor?

Let’s take some time to explore what the Old Testament has to say about the poor in order to better understand what Luke meant and why Matthew included the phrase “in spirit.”

1. Read Proverbs 6:10–11 and Proverbs 13:18.

- a. What do these passages say about poverty?
- b. Would it be right to assume that these passages apply to all who are poor?
- c. If not, what are other possible reasons for poverty?

2. Read Deuteronomy 15: 11.

- a. What does this passage say about the poor?

b. What attitude is commanded of the people toward the poor? Why?

3. Read 1 Samuel 2:7–8.

a. What does this passage say about the poor?

b. Are these poor likely the poor referred to in the Proverbs? Why or why not?

c. What is God's attitude toward the poor?

4. Take a moment to discuss the plight of the truly destitute.

a. What economic resources do the truly destitute have that will help them improve their lot in life or obtain favor from others?

b. What obstacles stand in their way for acquiring material resources?

c. In what ways are they in need of help?

d. What emotions might they experience?

5. Take a moment to discuss how economic poverty compares to our spiritual state apart from Christ.

a. What resources do we have to purchase grace from God?

b. What stands in the way of our ability to obtain spiritual resources?

c. In what ways do we need help from God?

d. What emotions might those separated from Christ experience?

6. Read Psalm 34:6. How might the discussion above help make sense of this verse?

7. How might the discussion above help make sense of Luke 4:18?

In light of the above, let's bring this discussion back to Matthew 5: 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" and answer the following questions:

1. Who are the poor that Jesus speaks about? What is their spiritual condition?

2. Why are they blessed?

3. Does this poverty or destitution of spirit describe how you think of yourself?

4. What attitudes would change if you truly believed yourself to be spiritually bankrupt?

5. Read Revelation 3:17–18.

a. Who are the people described in verse 17?

b. What is the danger of living as though you have something to offer spiritually?

c. How does verse 18 bring us to the gospel and offer a solution to our spiritual poverty?

Have you "filed bankruptcy with the Lord"?

Have you come to Him with nothing of your own in order to receive from Him the rich blessings of His righteousness given to you?

Doing this is essential for blessing; it is essential for salvation!