

POVERTY OF SPIRIT

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” —MATTHEW 5:3

When we hear of someone being poor, we usually think in terms of money or monetary possessions, but in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about being ‘poor in spirit’ as the first beatitude. What does He mean by ‘poor in spirit’?

The first step Jesus says to true happiness is becoming clear about one fundamental fact, and it is that we do not have what it takes to be what we were created to be. Many of us may think this true for those who are not Christians, but it is equally true for Christians as well, and is the biggest barrier to the Christian life – that “in myself and of myself and by myself, I do not have what it takes. I am poor in spirit.” We do not grow out of this poverty, but actually live in it on a daily basis.

Recognizing our own inherent inability is crucial if we are going to live the life that God has called us to live. In his book, ‘Mere Christianity’, C.S. Lewis writes: “God made us, or invented us, as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He, Himself, is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn. He is the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy without Himself. God cannot give us

happiness and peace apart from Himself because it is not there. There is no such thing.”

The fuel human beings are meant to run on is the Spirit of God, living and operating in us and through us. To discover this, we must first come to the realization of our poverty of spirit, which we usually learn when our backs are against the wall. God, in His mercy, will allow us to get into tough and trying situations so that we will discover we are insufficient in ourselves, and that we need to connect with Him.

Repentance is a change of mind that says of us, “I can’t” and faith says of God, “You can.” When we turn to God, we discover energy we never had before, because we are no longer living with human resources, but in the divine energy of the Lord Jesus Christ. “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus said. Not only is that comforting, but it is absolutely liberating; our poverty exchanged for the riches of Christ and all the resources of heaven made available to us.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for the gift of yourself and being all that we need to live as God intended.

TO REFLECT UPON: Have I realized my poverty of spirit?