

# SERMON NOTES

Sunday, September 15, 2024

## *Upside Down Blessings*

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3 (NIV)

It's when we are at our lowest that we are most likely to recognize our neediness and look up and receive something from God. You can have it all and still recognize your need for God, but it's a lot harder – when you are top of the heap and life is going well, it's easier to become self-sufficient, self-righteous, or apathetic and lose touch with your need for God. The poor in spirit are blessed because they more easily recognize their need for God and that puts them in a good place to receive something special from God.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near..[g]” Matthew 4:17 (NLT)

The Big Story of the Bible

1. Creation – the kingdoms of heaven and earth were one realm
2. Fall – the kingdoms of heaven and earth are torn apart
3. Redemption – the kingdoms of heaven and earth are overlapping
4. New Creation – the kingdoms heaven and earth are one again

Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-39 (NLT)

A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. Luke 7:37-38 (NIV)

“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” Luke 7:47 (NIV)



# SERMON NOTES

And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? Matthew 26:26 (NLT)

Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything. 2 Corinthians 6:10 (NLT)

## **Questions for thought and discussion:**

1. What is the kingdom of heaven and what does Jesus mean when he says it has come near (or is now here)?
2. What does it mean to be poor in spirit?
3. Discuss the two primary characters in the story of Luke 7:36-50 (Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman).
  - How is the woman in the story poor in spirit? What specifically does she say or do that suggests she is poor in spirit? How does the fact that she is poor in spirit open the door to experience God in a special way?
  - How is Simon the opposite of poor in spirit? What does he specifically say or do to suggest that he is not poor in spirit? How does the fact that he is not poor in spirit cause him to miss the opportunity to experience God in a special way?
4. What types of things interfere with your being poor in spirit? What things make it hard for you to see your own spiritual neediness?
5. How does gratitude and generosity allow someone to remain poor in spirit even when life is good?

