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Matthew 5:3 | Spiritual Poverty

June 19, 2022

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 5.
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we started in a new section of Matthew's Gospel— known as the Sermon on the Mount.

One of the things we learned how

Matthew likes to point out the importance of mountains.

So as Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive God's law—

Jesus also hiked a mountain and gave His Disciples a greater law.

BTW, Jesus gave two other sermons in Matthew's Gospel.

The Parables Discourse in chapter 13—Jesus gave six parables back to back.

The Olivet Discourse in chapters 24 & 25—Mount of Olives.

In John's Gospel, Jesus also gives a sermon on His death and resurrection.

But, The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' manifesto.

It's been said that The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest Preacher who ever lived. Btw, is still living today.

In this sermon, Jesus preaches and corrects the theological errors of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus starts His sermon with what we call the Beatitudes.

Notice here that they are called “Be-attitudes” for a reason—they are not “Do-attitudes.”

We are human beings—not human doings.

We saw Jesus sit down to teach, opens His Mouth, and say the word “blessed” nine times in the first twelve verses.

We left off in...

Matthew 5:2—Then ^{Jesus} he began to teach them, saying... “Blessed...

To understand the word *blessed*, we had to look at the original languages in which the Bible was written.

The Greek word is makários (ma-car-e-ohs) which literally means happy.

Makarios corresponds to the Hebrew *’ashrê*, (osh-rey) meaning “happy,” “carefree,” “blessed,” “fortunate,” and “blissful”— all at the same time.

We discovered that the English language doesn’t ^{have} a word like the Greek or Hebrew.

That’s why we had to pile on so many synonyms.

So it is challenging to translate Jesus’ concept of happiness into our 21st century because our perception of happiness is based on emotions.

When Jesus says, “Blessed,” —

He is describing a person who is favored by God.

And because of God's favor, ^{we} ~~this person~~ can't help but be "happy," "carefree," "blessed," "fortunate," and "blissful" all at the same time.

Here's the key—regardless of external circumstances in his life.
 To live ~~this~~ life this way requires a deep settled internal conviction of God's promises.

How is that? *Is that possible - Is that wishful thinking? Or is it a supernatural reality that God promises?*

~~Because~~ Scripture uses the word *blessed* to describe the very character of God Himself.

Within the nature of God—Father, Son and Spirit—God is happy.

Check this out—the Psalmist calls God blessed in

+ **Psalm 68:35**—The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!

+ **Psalm 72:18**—Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wonders.

+ **Psalm 72:19**—Blessed be his glorious name forever; the whole earth is filled with his glory. *(Greatness, splendor, Majesty)*
Amen and amen. —Let it be!

We see the same thing happening in the NT.

The apostle Paul calls Jesus blessed in

+ **1 Timothy 6:15**—He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,

1 Timothy 6:16— who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

So, because this concept of blessing is in the very character of God—happiness and blessings are within God’s very nature—

God chooses to bless His people out of His nature —with a blessing.

God wants His people to be happy because God Himself is happy.

In other words, God can’t help to bless His people.

A person who God blesses has received His divine acceptance.

Being blessed by God is a gift.

We didn’t earn it. We can’t return it—we wouldn’t want to.

And God’s blessing will never be taken away from us.

But what we are to do is worship Him because of it.

God’s blessings drive us to our knees in praise and thankfulness.

And God’s blessedness in our lives brings us to our keypoint from last Sunday.

KEYPOINT 1:

“Blessed” implies an inward satisfaction that does not depend on outward circumstances for happiness.

So regardless of what is happening in the world.

Regardless of the fear that the news forecasts.

Regardless of what your social media feed is feeding you.

Regardless of how your kids and grandkids act.

Regardless of your physical health and your financial situation—

As a child of God, you know that those ^{temporary} external circumstances can't steal your eternal blessing from God.

In other words, to be blessed by God is not a superficial feeling or a set of emotions.

To be blessed by God is refers to the personal relationship that is based solely on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

And the fruit of this relationship brings about contentment and peace in our lives.

We are content, for ^{one} reason—the fact that our lives are right with God.

Not because of what we did—but because of what Jesus did on our behalf.

The Sermon on the Mount drives this point home.

Jesus illustrates our complete lack of ability to get to Heaven on our own.

And we'll see this loud and clear in the first beatitude.

So that's the recap from last week.

We got through two verses.

Today we'll get through one more.

I hope you're not in a hurry.

INTRODUCTION:

So, we know what Jesus means by the word, *blessed*.

And today, we're going to learn what those blessings consist of.

The first blessing is that of poor in spirit.

What does Jesus truly mean when He says, *Blessed are the poor in spirit?*

Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:3 CSB

Matthew 5:1— *When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.*

Matthew 5:2— *Then he began to teach them, saying:*

Matthew 5:3— *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

***This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 5:3— *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

What exactly does verse three mean?

Message—*"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.*

GW—“Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The kingdom of Heaven belongs to them.

NLT—“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

NCV—“They are blessed who realize their spiritual poverty, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to them.

Matthew 5:3— “Blessed are ~~the poor in spirit,~~

Notice the wording, *blessed* are...

The Beatitudes are pronouncements and declarations.

Jesus is stating something as a judicial fact.

He’s not saying, “You might be blessed or that you could be blessed.”

Jesus is saying, you are blessed.

Just as you live and breathe, you are blessed.

The beatitudes are not based on random probability.

They are divine judgments for His Disciples.

These judgments are good, not bad. ☺

They’re not like the *woe* judgments (being cursed by God) in Matthew chapter 23.

The Beatitudes are the opposite—God is blessing His Disciples.

MATT 5:3 — *Blessed Are the poor*

The first beatitude points us back to the promises found in the Old Testament.

Psalm 34:6—This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him from all his troubles.

Isaiah 41:17—The poor and the needy seek water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. *↳ getting dying*
I will answer them.
I am the Lord, the God of Israel. I will not abandon them.

Isaiah 61:1—The Spirit of the Lord God is on me (Jesus), because the Lord has anointed me (to do what?) to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives
and freedom to the prisoners;

As we go through Matthew's Gospel, we will see Jesus do just that.

Matthew 5:3— "Blessed are the poor ...

The Old Testament provides examples of three groups of poor people.

The first group are those who are poor because they're lazy.

The second group are poor because of a tragedy in their life. It is no fault of their own.

The third group are poor because others took advantage of them.

There are two Greek words for poor.

1. *penichros* (penny-chros).
2. *ptōchos* (pit-toe-hose)

Understanding the difference is importance so let's take a look.

+ **Luke 21:1**—*Jesus looked up and saw the rich dropping their offerings into the temple treasury.*

+ **Luke 21:2**—*He also saw a (penichros) poor widow dropping in two tiny coins.,*

+ **Luke 21:3**—*"Truly I tell you," he said, "this (penichros) poor widow has put in more than all of them.*

+ **Luke 21:4**—*For all these people have put in gifts out of their surplus, but she— out of her poverty— has put in all she had to live on."*

this widow
She was (penichros) poor— but not a beggar.

Now, someone who is *ptōchos* (pit-toe-hose) poor, however, is entirely dependent on others for sustenance.

Someone who is *ptōchos* (pit-toe-hos) poor, cannot support himself.

He is utterly dependent on others—he is materially destitute.

We see this kind of poverty mentioned when John the Baptizer starts to doubt his faith—

Jesus said this—Tell John...

+ **Matthew 11:5**—*The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the ptōchos (pit-to-hose) poor are told the good news*

John the Baptizer would have immediately recognized that Jesus is God because John knows his OT—how the Messiah was prophesied to care for the poor.

We see it again when Jesus told the Young Rich Ruler—

Matthew 19:21—"If you want to be perfect," Jesus said to him, "go, sell your belongings and give to the *ptōchos* (pit-toe-hose) poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me."

To be *ptōchos* (pit-toe-hose) poor is to *shrink, cower, or cringe* when asking for money or help.

This person is crouching in the corner somewhere, begging for someone help to sustain their life.

As he holds out his hand for help, he used the other to hide his face.

The term doesn't mean poor, but begging poor.

Luke 16:19—"There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, (Armani suits) feasting lavishly every day (Ruth's Chris Steakhouse).
Luke 16:20 But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was lying at his gate.

Luke 16:21— He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man's table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores.

So what's Jesus telling us?

Why would Jesus specifically use *ptōchos* poor?

Nobody is going to volunteer for this kind of blessing.
Matthew 5:3— "Blessed are the poor ...

Jesus is establishing a *Kingdom of God* standard that clashes with our current worldview.

He's painting a picture of material destitution/extreme poverty to reveal a spiritual reality for us all.

Because Jesus is not talking about material poverty in His sermon.

How do we know?

Verse 3 continues...

Matthew 5:3— *"Blessed are the (ptōchos) poor in spirit,*

The context of verse three is not external—it's internal.

It's not material, but spiritual—Jesus says, "(ptōchos) poor in spirit."

To be poor in spirit is to recognize your spiritual poverty apart from God.

It is to see yourself as you truly are—the reality of being lost, hopeless, helpless—apart from the cross of Jesus Christ.

Apart from Jesus—every single one of us is spiritually impoverished.

We are all on the same playing field.

It doesn't matter what your education is.

It doesn't matter how much money you have or don't have.

It doesn't matter what your social status is.

It doesn't matter how much Bible you know or don't know!

The person who is poor in spirit is someone who recognizes two things:

1. They live in spiritual poverty. spiritual broke
2. their complete dependence on God for the spiritual blessing of eternal life.

A person who is poor in spirit recognizes that they cannot save themselves from the consequences of sin, which lead to a very real place called hell.

A person who is poor in spirit begs for mercy and pleads for grace.

A person who is poor in spirit realizes they have no spiritual goodness.

They know they can earn no spiritual reward because the wages of sin lead to death. (Rom 6:23)

They have no pride left in them.

Jesus specifically paints the picture of (ptōchos) poor—and the image is this:

They are crawling on their hands and knees—ashamed and naked—as they helplessly and hopelessly come before a holy, holy, holy God—begging for mercy and pleading that God will not give us what we truly deserve.

A person who is poor in spirit realizes they have nothing to give back to Almighty God.

This profound realization is not an act—it's genuine—it's called repentance. A person who is poor in spirit experiences true humility.

God speaks through the prophet Isaiah says this...

Isaiah 66:2—I will look favorably on this kind of person:
one who is humble, submissive in spirit,
and trembles at my word.

God will bless this kind of person.

When God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses pleaded his unworthiness.

And because of Moses' humility —God was able to use him mightily.

Exodus 3:10—*I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."*

Exodus 3:11—*But Moses asked God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"*

Moses didn't say—"No sweat God! Consider it done and done! I got this!"

Jesus teaches how to be poor in spirit in a parable...

Luke 18:10—*"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

Luke 18:11—*The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: 'God, I thank you that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.*

Rescue
Luke 18:12—*I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.'*

Luke 18:13—*"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!'*

Luke 18:14—*I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

The Pharisee was proud in spirit; the tax collector was poor in spirit.

And we have the same choice today. We can either choose to humble ourselves, or God will humiliate us.

We see the Apostles humble themselves.

The apostle Peter was a loud mouth, aggressive, self-assertive, and proud.

But Pete begins to change as he walks with God.

But when Jesus miraculously provided the great catch of fish for Peter, Pete was so overwhelmed at his unworthiness as he stood before a holy God,

~~that he confessed,~~

+ **Luke 5:8**—Peter fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"

Even after Paul became an apostle, he said this...

+ **Romans 7:18**—For I know that nothing good lives in me,
Paul goes on to say...
no-thing/No-ct

+ **1 Timothy 1:15**— "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them.

That's not false humility.

Dear friends, very few of us who call ourselves Christians have this attitude.

How many books do you have in your library on becoming ptōchos poor?

It's nothing new. We see this with the Israelites.

Instead of adopting this posture of humility that is found in the Scriptures, the Israelites brought the law down to a human level.

They interpreted God's Word in a more manageable, acceptable, and human way.

They brought God's perfect standard of right living down to a set of rules that they themselves could achieve.

These man-made rules were then turned into man-made traditions taught as God's standard to enter Heaven.

Fast forward to the NT, and the apostle Paul says this—

Romans 1:25— *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie,*

Fast forward to today, and we're still exchanging truths for lies.

We as human beings love to bring God's infinite standards of holiness down to man's finite standards.

This gives us the illusion that we can actually keep God's standards without His help.

And we're still doing the same thing today with all this WOKE business.

One of the most disturbing things about the 21st century American Church is that we come to worship God not as spiritual beggars but as narcissists who demand to be entertained.

At one time or another, we all do this.

It's a part of our spiritual DNA—called sin.

We all think God is less holy than He is—because we can't grasp His true holiness.

Not only that, we believe the lie that we are more holy/good/righteous than we truly are.

We believe the lie that we're further along than we really are.

No other picture in Scripture paints the image of God's holiness compared to our wretchedness than Isaiah chapter 6.

+ **Isaiah 6:1**—In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple. *-Majesty*

+ **Isaiah 6:2**— Seraphim were standing above him; they each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet (disrespect), and with two they flew.

+ **Isaiah 6:3**— And one called to another:
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Armies;
his glory fills the whole earth.

+ **Isaiah 6:4**— The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke. *→ Majesty, Splendor, Authority*

One of the created beings that's in the presence of God spoke—not Jesus—and the foundations of the Temple shook.

Isaiah is watching this whole thing unfold—look at the first word out of his mouth.

Isaiah 6:5—~~Then~~ he said:

Woe is me for I am ruined
because I am a man of unclean lips
and live among a people of unclean lips,
and because my eyes have seen the King,

Isaiah's experienced the reality of his spiritual poverty.

Do you see how when we believe the lie that God is like us—that lie has disastrous consequences.

Jesus is not your homey. He is holy, holy, holy.

*Pronounces
Judgment
→ Curses*

No one can enter Heaven until he recognizes how unbelievably unworthy he is of it.

And our unworthiness is the reason why *poor in spirit* is the first beatitude.

It's from this posture of spiritual bankruptcy that all the other beatitudes flow.

So the question becomes, How do we become poor in spirit?

Well, our Brothers and Sisters throughout church history have tried various ways.

Monasticism— People have tried to shut out the world by becoming monks and hermits.

That didn't work because it's not only the world that's filled with sin and wretchedness—it's them.

Asceticism—ascetics are people who choose to live a poor lifestyle—denying themselves luxuries in life.

Other Brothers and Sisters have tried mutilation, where they punish themselves for their sin.

None of these options worked to be poor in spirit. Why?

Because it always has the opposite reaction that they intended.

All of these actions feed their own pride.

They were feeding pride, not starving it.

They're not picking up their cross and following Jesus—they thought they had a better way.

All these things were done by their own self-effort.

Now they may have been sincere, but can you see how they were sincerely wrong?

Rather than becoming poor in spirit, they became proud in spirit.

They were adding to their spiritual resume.

The very definition of being poor in spirit means that it doesn't start with us.

However, in God's sovereign work, there is personal cooperation from our end.

The first thing that we must do is exterminate our pride.

to cooperate w/ God

Men, for the most part, must be broken.

Women, on the other hand, must be wooed.



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

The kingdom of Heaven is a kingdom where Jesus is king.

Today, the Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom.

The kingdom is in our hearts and is revealed by how we treat others.

But very soon, there will be a physical and literal Kingdom—so when Jesus does come back, everything changes.

And here's the thing, Jesus wants to give you His Kingdom.

PREACH

Why does Jesus begin with this particular beatitude?

Well, because poor in spirit, is the foundation in which all the other beatitudes are built.

How do we become poor in spirit?

Maybe a better question is, How do you know you're poor in Spirit?

Psalm 131:1—*Lord, my heart is not proud;
my eyes are not haughty. (Look down on people)
I do not get involved with things
too great or too wondrous for me.*

Psalm 131:2—*Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like a weaned child.*

A weaned child is gradually deprived of mother's milk.

With time, babies learn to eat solid food.

Eventually, the child learns how to feed himself.

We can say the same thing spiritually.

When we are born again—we have to be fed spiritual milk.

But over time, we learn to feed ourselves not just with milk but with solid spiritual food.

When we spend time reading the Word of God with the people of God, we grow from an infant into a mature person who reflects Jesus.

In other words, our soul is weaned off ourselves.

You know you're maturing when you slowly start to have a disgust for the world's lies and hunger and thirst for God's ways.

You know maturing when you hunger for truth.

Your activities change, your habits change.

Nobody guilts you into reading the Bible— You can't help but read the Bible!

Nobody coerces you to come to church, bible studies or to serve and give—you choose to!

You start to sense God changing you—because He is.

God is purging you...of yourself.

Now, those are good indicators that we're maturing and becoming poor in spirit.

But, by far, the number one indicator that we are poor in spirit— is the fruit of gratitude.

The fruit of gratitude grows in our life as we stop complaining about our situation and praise God for grace and mercy no matter what.

Christians have no reason to complain about anything.

Why?

Because we know that by being poor in spirit, we don't deserve anything either.

Everything that we have is because the Lord gave it to us.

Christians should spill over in overwhelming gratitude.

Now, this doesn't mean that we're fake. *allow to hurt*

But We know that the world is broken—and we accept that as best we can.

We understand that this is not our best life now.

That life is to come.

But here's the thing—when we complain we're telling God that we are unsatisfied with His gifts of mercy, grace and forgiveness.

We are demanding God change our situation so that we can become happy.

And as we've just learned, our happiness is not external—it's internal.

Lastly, complaining not only offends God—it exhausts those you love.

How many of you have dealt with kids or grandkids who are always griping about something?

What's that do to you?

Now imagine what it does to your God who has freely given you your next breath.

Here's a couple things to consider this week.

1. When is the last time you asked God to forgive you for your complaining?
2. When is the last time you confessed your sin of ingratitude as sin?
3. When is the last time you asked those that you love, to forgive you for your complaining?

Dear friends, I dare you to make a concentrated effort to stop complaining for one week—watch what happens to your relationship with God and those you love.

The Alternative is to keep complaining & remain unhappy

PRAY/Benediction:

+ Matt 5:3 - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Lord's Supper

Benediction

Rev 22:20
"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'
Amen, Come, Lord Jesus,
The grace of the Lord Jesus
be with you all. Amen

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