



The poor get a kingdom

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

Matthew 5:3

The Lord Jesus contradicted the ideas of the world. He rejected popular opinion. He spoke and acted differently. Rather than hobnob with the high and mighty, he ate with the tax-collectors and sinners.

He often spoke in startling ways. His Sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7) testifies to that. In this sermon he contradicted common opinion. He rejected popular practice. He contrasted his teaching with that of the law-experts. He criticized the behaviour of the smug and wealthy. He disagreed with the opinions and values of the world.

We can see this in the opening words of his sermon already: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

Whoever heard of that – poor people getting a kingdom? The world says: Blessed are the rich; they get the kingdoms, the power and the glory.” But God doesn’t work the way the world does. Jesus said: *“The poor get a kingdom.”* In the kingdom of heaven, paupers become princely people. Beggars become kings and queens. Whoever heard of that?

What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

When the Lord spoke of a poverty in spirit he was not speaking of material poverty. Being poor in material things as such does not open up the way into the kingdom of heaven. It is only the blood of Jesus Christ, His sacrifice on the cross, that gains admission into the kingdom of heaven – whether you are rich or poor in material things. It is only as we embrace Christ in true faith that we find ourselves inside the kingdom.

Jesus Christ said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in *spirit*. The poor in spirit are those who fall to pieces when they stand before God. The poor in spirit are those who realize that their hands are empty when they come to God.

It’s okay to show self-confidence when you are face to face with another person, but when we face God, our self-confidence dissolves. In the holy presence of God we feel nothing but a sense of utter poverty of spirit.

The word “poor” which the Lord used here refers to the poorest of the poor. A completely destitute beggar. That’s what we are. We must realize that. We must admit that we are spiritually bankrupt. We must become conscious of our sin, our misery, our lack of any natural redeeming qualities. We have nothing of ourselves to offer to God. We can only stand before God, lift up our empty hands and say: “Lord, have mercy; Lord, save us.”

Such an attitude is pleasing to God. In Isaiah 57:15 the LORD God said:

“For thus says the high and lofty One 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 humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”

Are you offended by the suggestion that you are a miserable beggar? Perhaps you resist and want to reject the idea that you must admit absolute poverty. But you shouldn’t be offended. Think about

the poverty of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was poor in spirit. But his poverty was a *self-imposed* poverty. Our poverty is natural. We are born with it. Mankind has been impoverished since he fell into sin. But our Lord took poverty upon himself. He willingly embraced poverty, and humility. He was the eternal Son of God, God himself. But He did not clutch at the glory of being God. He gave it up. He came to earth in the form of a man. He became a man, one of us.

Why did He empty himself? Why did He become poor and dependent? For the salvation of man. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:9:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.”

He became poor that we may be rich. He became a pauper that we might be princes, princesses. He did it all. He emptied himself, He gave himself up, to the point where He died on the cross. In humility. In weakness. In poverty. He went to the cross with empty hands. And those hands were nailed to the cross.

We look only to the cross of Christ.

*Nothing in my hand I bring.
Simply to Thy cross I cling.*

As we go to the cross of Christ with our empty hands, Christ fills them. He blesses us. He makes us happy. He makes us rich. He welcomes us into the kingdom of his Father.

Acknowledge your poverty. Receive a kingdom.

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