

40-05-05.wpd Blessed Are the Poor

Lent, poverty, possessions, dependence, Providence, God's Kingdom

Mat 5:3

Recognizing our poverty prepares us to possess God's Kingdom.

### INTRODUCTION:

--Mat 5:3, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" This is a great **text** to begin the Lenten season. Jesus fasted 40 days in the desert to identify with the poverty of the human condition. When we voluntarily fast from food, which the body needs to support *physical life*, we demonstrate symbolically how really "*poor*" our condition is... how, on our own, we are without what we need to sustain *spiritual life*. Mat 5:3, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" This verse points to the truth that **HOM.idea**.

#### I. The State of Poverty (Luke 6:20 mentions only "the poor")

- A. The progressive development in Hebrew of the meaning of poverty: 1) **poor** [as we think of it]; 2) because poor, **without power**; 3) because powerless, **oppressed**; and 4) because without defense or earthly resources, **dependent on God**.
- B. Is there a blessing in poverty?
  1. Is it better to have fewer possessions? [Colloquial wisdom: Benjamin Franklin, "*He who multiplies riches multiplies cares.*" // Socrates, "*He is richest who is content with the least.*"]
  2. Less struggle with decisions? (Poverty limits your choices.)
  3. Is living like nature the best way to live? (Humans seem to be the only animals that store up more than they need... [except for a kleptomaniac dog in our neighborhood who steals things it can't use.]
- C. The rich can lose touch with what is truly a necessity [Poverty prays the Lord's Prayer legitimately: "Give us this day our daily bread." It's hard to pray it honestly with a freezer is full of food or a healthy bank account...]

**TRANS:** Poverty is **not** a *virtue*! It is part of the human condition in a fallen world. Poverty can lead to a wrong attitude, but so can *riches*--Prov 30:8b-9, ...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. The state of *physical poverty* illustrates the *spiritual poverty* that Jesus pointed to....

## II. The Spirit of Poverty

- A. What does it mean to be "*the poor in spirit*"?
  1. To be *poor in spirit*, is **to realize** that on our own, we are without what we need to sustain *spiritual life* (We did not create *spiritual life* on our own, and we cannot maintain it on our own. We need the help of God, the Creator and Sustainer of spiritual life.)
  2. Recognizing our need, which is really recognizing our poverty spiritually, is the first step to getting our need met.
- B. ONLY when we can say, "*I am poor in spirit*," are we *blessed* in our condition of *spiritual poverty*,
  1. **because** it places usm in the right pathway for receiving proper help [Standing in the wrong line lead to frustration, not to the help needed.]
  2. **because** it prepares us with a receptive attitude for God's help
  3. and **because**, unless we acknowledge our *spiritual poverty*, we will not seek what we need to become *spiritually rich*, the way God wants us to be-- Rev 3:17-18, You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

**TRANS:** People might say, "*But I have gold. I'm not poor. I have a fine wardrobe. I'm far from wretchedly naked. I have 20-20 vision! Is that what you call blind?*" God wants us to be *spiritually rich*, to have "gold refined in the fire" (a faith that persists under life's trials), "white clothes to wear" (the righteousness of Christ), and "salve" for our "eyes" (the healing enlightenment of the Holy Spirit). **Everyone needs these**, because all of us are *spiritually poor* and in need of God's ultimate plan. **When we recognize that poverty, it prepares us to possess God's Kingdom.**

## III. The Salvation for Poverty

- A. Humanity has both *physical and spiritual poverty*. God's plan, called the *kingdom of heaven*, provides salvation in both areas.
- B. In the *future*, kingdom salvation will include resurrection into a new heaven and a new earth, but *right now* we can already experience that kingdom spiritually through the Holy Spirit-- Rom 14:17, For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- C. Recognizing that we are *poor in spirit*, and going to God for help, brings us into *kingdom* living: "righteousness, peace and joy" (Later in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says the same thing in detail):
1. Mat 6:19-21, Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (No thief can steal your joy, if what you treasure in your heart is beyond what this world can take away.)
  2. Mat 6:24, No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Conflicting loyalties destroy peace, but focusing our allegiance on the *Prince of Peace* gives us peace that no amount of money or any other worldly possession can bring.)
  3. Mat 6:25-33, Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (If I am *poor in spirit*, then **righteousness**, not the physical necessities of life, must be set as my first priority).

### CONCLUSION:

--[Trivial Pursuit is the name of a popular game, but it might be the name God uses to describes those lives that are focused on worldly possession and wealth.] Jesus asked a question in Mat 16:26a, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" A person only starts to find their soul when they realize the soul's spiritual poverty. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" **Recognizing our poverty prepares us to possess God's Kingdom.**