

Christ's Beatitudes

Charles Bridges on Proverbs 29:14: "David appears to have been a poor man's king." This must be said chiefly of Christ: He is the poor man's king. He is the One who considers the poor (Ps. 41:1).

The Blessed Poor

Who Jesus does not mean. He does not mean the *materially poor*. John Brown: "Extreme poverty is not favourable to religion any more than extreme affluence" (Cf. Prov. 30:7-9). After all, the poverty Christ describes is not in a man's pocket, but in his spirit. He does not mean *intellectually poor*. Ignorance is not bliss (Hos. 4:6; Prov. 4:5; 23:23). Nor does He mean having a *poor self-image, or being introverted and shy*. Yes, God has made us, but we should not confuse genetics with grace.

What Jesus does mean. 1) It is possible to be *poor with nothing extra*. 2) But it is also possible to be *poor and have nothing at all*. Jesus uses a word that fits with this 2nd picture (ptoxos). And Christ is speaking of someone who is poor in *spirit*, *i.e.* someone who at the core of his being, in his heart is poor, not someone who pretends to be poor. By nature we are full of ourselves, with high thoughts of ourselves. However, sin has made us poor. We have lost God and by nature we miss the riches of His love and peace (Rom. 3:10; 3:23). That is why the Lord needs to open our eyes, and show us our debt, and strip us of our self-made righteousness so that we become a guilty sinner and a beggar before God (Lk. 18:9-14).

Lessons:

1. **Poverty of spirit is the first fruit that God produces by His grace in the soul.** Christ puts it first for a reason. Grace makes you feel your bankrupt condition because of your sin, and you return empty-handed looking to receive whatever the Father might be pleased to give (Lk. 15:17-21).

_____ in my hand I bring
Simply to thy cross I cling,
Naked come to thee for dress
Helpless look to thee for grace
August Toplady

2. **The way God works this self-knowledge is by God-knowledge.** We need an apprehension of His majesty and holiness. He uses the law to humble our proud hearts, and reveals something of His majesty so that you come to say: woe is me, I am undone (Isaiah 6, Job 42; Luke 5; Rev. 1). This way you know the answer to the question in a way you never knew before: what can I bring to God that God will accept? Nothing. You are poor and needy, and you can only cast yourself upon mercy. What a blessed thing that is, when you see you don't have to earn the love and favour of God! You need not come with anything (2 Cor. 8:9).

3. ***The riches of His grace are amazing.*** “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” They come under the gracious kingship of Christ (Col. 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 1:31; Phil. 3:20; Matt. 25:34). Someone has said: Christians are not children of earth trying to get to heaven; they are children of heaven making their way home.
4. ***True believers, while in this life, never cease to be poor in spirit.*** It is the first thing in the lives of God’s people, but it is also an abiding thing in the lives of God’s people (Ex. 3:11; Judg. 6:15; Is. 6; Rom. 7; 1 Tim. 1:15). How frightening if the Lord says that we have high thoughts of ourselves and are rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing, not knowing that we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked (Rev. 3:17). Reason to pray: Search me O God (Ps. 139:23-24).