

POVERTY GAINS RICHES

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Morning – 6th November 2022

Reading: Matthew 5:1-12. (v5:3)

The blessedness of which our Lord speaks is not something nebulous and vague. It is not something that we will enjoy one day far off. It is something to know now. This first of The Beatitudes is the foundation to all the others.

1. Getting off to a good start.

If we do not have the right foundation, everything we build on it will be faulty and liable to collapse. This first statement is the key to all the others that follow it. It describes an inner attitude which is the needed condition to be in so as to find, understand and walk with the Lord. The opposite is not to find God and to therefore miss the promised peace, joy, and confidence in the Lord. This is the basic attitude that we need to have.

2. Poverty of spirit is not self-manufactured.

This is not an attitude we should put on in an affected way or make fit some idea that we have about what it should be about. We are not to aim to be miserable as though being miserable is the route to holiness and life in the Spirit. We are not to torture ourselves or cultivate an atmosphere of negativity and gloom. We should not be over-scrupulous, seeing sin everywhere and in everything. We should not feel guilty about ever enjoying ourselves. Neither does it mean that we aim to crush ourselves and become invisible. This can lead to resentment and internal anger. Neither should we construct what we think is poverty of spirit from the TV, from literature or from our own imagination.

3. Poor in spirit defined by God.

Our discovery of this condition is God-given and God-inspired. It is only understood in the light of who God is. It is only possessed when we have seen something of His glory

for ourselves. (See Isaiah 6:1-5; and Luke 5:8). It is a discovery we make under God's careful supervision.

The unbeliever is not poor in spirit and says he or she is not undone and that there is no woe to them. They do not take these things seriously. They think that righteousness is something they can comfortably do. Their approach to The Beatitudes is superficial as though ticking boxes. They might agree with them but feel that they are doable.

Really these words are a death blow to pride and self-righteousness. Until Satan's head in us is bruised and pride is subdued, then we are still at the mercy of our lusts and our wills are fatally maimed. Our affections are distorted, and our minds are wrecked. We are prey to all kinds of insane ideas. We will not be prepared to suffer much loss or inconvenience to serve God. We will not want God to interfere too much in our lives and the choices we make. Essentially the unbeliever is un-humbled in the core of his or her being.

To be poor in spirit is to be empty. It is to see oneself in ruins before God and to agree with the Lord's verdict against ourselves that in us there dwells no good thing. We have beheld the glory of God and there is now no place for self-righteousness. It is who we are after the death blow to our pride has been dealt. We see that we need the Spirit's help to love God and do His will.

To be poor in spirit continues to be defined by God for us. We see that it is more than self-denial because we can become quite proud about the things we deny ourselves. Pride is always looking to fight back and re-assert itself through subtle form of self-righteousness. We can become too confident in our own abilities and end up out of our depth. We can enjoy the applause of men too much and can harden ourselves against listening, repenting, and changing. Somewhere in our heart we are trying to prove something to ourselves to earn the approval of God, other people or even of ourselves. We can become too self-focussed and feed our pride, which then can make us judgmental of others.

God requires us to lose ourselves in Him. We are to stop looking at ourselves and be increasingly dead to the views of others about us. Instead, we are to desire to know the will of God, and to understand His revelation, love, commandments, and truth.

4. Poor yet rich.

To be poor in spirit means to be forgiven, justified, and adopted. It means that we are aware of what the Lord has done for us and what still needs to be done in us. We know that we still need forgiving of things and always will. It means that we will be humble but also very hopeful, very bold, and very confident in God. Who we are is in the process of being re-built around the Person of Christ. We find our real personhood in Him.

To be poor in this sense does not mean that we will be silent or invisible. It means that we will be over-powered by God and mastered by Him. We will be self-aware but not self-conscious. We will be suspicious of ourselves but will not be immobilized by this. We will know who we are, but we will also know who God is. We will know that we cannot meet His laws but that we can change with His help. We are humble but we have great faith and hope. We lose self-centredness and gain Christ-centredness. We are not perfectly poor in spirit but are becoming nearer and nearer to it. It is a vote of 'no confidence' in ourselves and a vote of total confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit.

When we are poor in spirit there is more room for us to love God and love other people. We love Him for His sake and love others for their sake, and not for our sake. There are benefits in this way of life, not just in the future. This attitude receives the benefits of being in the kingdom of heaven. It both receives the kingdom and enjoys living in it. We will know that we belong in that kingdom and that this kingdom is ours. We are assured of our sonship through Christ. This is to be poor in spirit which is to be rich in the things that matter most.