

The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount **"Blessed are the Poor in Spirit"**

*"Blessed [Happy, joyful, content] are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)*

Those who are to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven are only those who come to the door poor in spirit -- they are the blessed -- they are the happy ones --for they shall enter in.

Poor in spirit is the first requirement to enter and live in the kingdom of heaven. A person who is poor in spirit has begun to see themselves clearly before the Lord. It is a realization that God is God and we are not. No one enters on the basis of pride or self-sufficiency. Only those who humble themselves can enter in. Until we understand our poverty before God, we cannot understand his riches. The only way to come to God is to confess your unrighteousness, confess your inability to meet God's standards, confess that you can't do it without him. You enter with a sense of helplessness and desperation to receive what only God can give --divine blessing.

Who is the greatest? When Jesus was asked by his disciples who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he called a child to him and said *"Unless you change [repent, be born-again, regenerated] and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself [obeys without question] like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:1-4). This was said of Jesus as well: *"Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross!"* (Philippians 2:8). *"Humble yourself before the LORD and he will lift you up"* James 4:10. *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble"* (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6b).

The word "poor" that is used here is from the Greek word *"ptokas"* which means to be "begging poor." It is a beggar, desperately ashamed even to allow his identity to be known. So poor he has to beg to live. Another Greek word for poor which is not used here is the word *"penace,"* which means being poor and having to work just to maintain your living. It means you have some resources of your own to maintain life. In a spiritual sense, it is a man who thinks he can work his way into the kingdom of heaven. *Ptokas* means you have no resources and have to beg to enter the kingdom. It is *ptokas* that is meant here in this passage of Scripture, speaking of being poor of spirit. It means you have no spiritual resources to live and that you come to God as a beggar. Jesus says this beggar is a happy man--absolutely incapable, and totally dependent on the grace of God.

In Luke 18, there is an illustration of the contrast between the contrite (lowly) and the proud. It is a story of the Pharisee who was proud of his righteousness and the Publican who realized he had nothing to offer God and thus begged for God's mercy. Verse 14 states that *"Every one that exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."* James 4:10 states, *"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and he will exalt you."* This is a poverty in which the "will" bows in deep dependence and submission before the Lord. We all are helpless beggars with no righteousness of our own. Not one of us has a right to stand before God based on our own merit.

Isaiah, when the Lord was revealed to him, stated, *"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips... for my eyes have seen the King,"* Isaiah 6:5. At that point, God blessed him.