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Bridge of Hope
July 17, 2011

“The Messianic Exchange”

Before we get into our thoughts let’s take a moment and read through the section of the Sermon on the Mount that we call the Beatitudes.

Matthew 5:1-12 (NKJV) *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus said, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* The first beatitude takes us immediately to the beginning point where disciples of Jesus are made. By the time we finish today we hope that you will understand just how crucial this is, not only at the start of our walk with Christ, but throughout our entire journey with Jesus. R. Kent Hughes writes, *“Poverty of spirit is foundational because a continual sense of spiritual need is the basis for enjoying spiritual blessing. A perpetual awareness of our spiritual insufficiency opens us to continually receiving spiritual riches.”*¹ If we want to live in the blessing of God then we need to learn through humility the character of being poor in spirit.

Let’s go ahead and discover what Jesus meant by this first beatitude.

- **BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT**

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, pg22

1. I decided to check with some friends on Facebook about what they thought it means to be poor in spirit. Here is what they said: (Show Facebook Post)
 2. In order to understand what it means to be poor in spirit we must first understand what it doesn't mean.
 - It is not the attitude or conviction that you have absolutely no worth at all or see yourself as a big fat zero.
 - It doesn't mean that you are shy or introverted. You can be both of these and be extremely proud.
 - It doesn't mean that you are lacking in vitality or spiritually anemic or to be a gutless person. You can be any of these and have a struggle with pride.
 - It does not refer to an inverted pride where one shows off their humility by reminding people of their humble status and situation.
 - To be poor in spirit is about much more than this.
 3. So what does being poor in spirit mean?
 - The Greek word translated as "poor" is the idea to cower or cringe like a beggar.
 - In the New Testament it denotes a poverty so deep that a person must earn his living by begging. They are fully dependent on others to give or provide for them. Simply put, they cannot survive without the aide of another. They are beggarly poor.
 - The second part of the phrase deals with the word "in spirit" which refers to the deepest part of who you are. It is about the person you are when no one else is around and it is just you and God.
 - Thus, when we put this together it would say, blessed or approved by God are those who are desperately poor in their spiritual resources that they realize in the deepest levels of themselves that they need help from outside sources.
 4. "Poverty of spirit then is the personal acknowledgement of spiritual bankruptcy."²
 - In this context it means . . .
 - having the awareness and willingness to admit that we are utterly sinful.
 - we admit we are without the moral virtues adequate to commend us to God.
 - Without help from Jesus there is no hope, way of escape, or fruit worth anything.
 - Poverty of spirit happens when we realize that we are simply not good enough or capable on our own to achieve the things that Jesus would ask or require of us.
 - We are poor in spirit in total dependence on Him to meet what He requires of us.
 5. The poor in spirit recognize their moral unworthiness and see themselves as being spiritually needy; they need a Savior who can make up for their lack.
 6. Blessed are those who realize that they have nothing within themselves to commend them to God, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- **FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**
 1. The promise is much easier to understand and even more attractive when you understand the condition to receive it.
 2. The promise says, "for theirs."
 - It is personal to the individual.
 - It is personal to the community that embraces such a heart.
 - For the person who is poor in spirit God has a reward that is eternal.
 - For the community of believers that is poor in spirit God has a reward that transcends time.
 - So what is it that is theirs?

² R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, pg19

3. The promise says, for theirs *is the kingdom of heaven.*”
- The statement is both for the future and today.
 - It is for the future in that those who have such a heart and come to God will receive heaven as their reward.
 - You pay the price now and your future is taken care of.
 - Recognize the truth and all the tomorrows are settled.
 - Admit your poverty in true humility and you will enjoy eternity with Christ.
 - It is for today because God said that the kingdom of heaven had already come.
 - This is what the first 4 chapters of Matthew’s Gospel account were about as they proclaim that the Messiah has come and it is Jesus.
 - Matthew has taken much time to introduce us to the Messiah who has established the kingdom of heaven.
 - All who come to believe in Jesus Christ and live as His disciple, have begun the walk of eternal life, the kingdom of heaven has come with the Messiah.
 - We need to see this from the perspective of scripture . . . the kingdom of heaven is theirs because the Bible says:
 - **Ephesians 2:1-7** (NIV) *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. . . . But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions** — it is by grace you have been saved. **And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus**, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*
 - **1 John 5:3-5** (NIV) *This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, **for everyone born of God overcomes the world**. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*
 - **1 Peter 2:9-10** (NIV) ***But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God**, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*
4. Blessed are those who realize that they have nothing within themselves to commend them to God, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Conclusion: “Poverty of spirit is the antithesis of the proud selfish and self-sufficiency of today’s world.”³ It is the direct opposite of a proud self-sufficient world. As we bring our thoughts to a close let me share a story that illustrates well what this beatitude is about.

“Fortunately, this truth can penetrate the most privileged of hearts, as it did to one of England’s distinguished judges. The church he attended had three mission churches under its care. On the first Sunday of the New Year all the members of the mission came to the big city church for a combined Communion service. In those mission churches, which were located in the slums

³ R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, pg19

of the city, were some outstanding cases of conversion - thieves, burglars, and so on – but all knelt side by side at the Communion rail.

On one occasion the pastor saw a former thief kneeling beside the aforementioned jurist, a judge of the High Court of England. After his release the thief had been converted and became a Christian worker. Yet as the judge and the former thief knelt together, neither seemed to be aware of the other.

After the service, the judge happened to walk out with the pastor and said, ‘Did you notice who was kneeling beside me at the Communion rail this morning?’

The pastor replied, ‘Yes, but I didn’t think that you did.’

The two walked along in silence for a few more moments, when the judge declared, ‘What a miracle of grace.’

The pastor nodded in agreement. ‘Yes, what a marvelous miracle of grace.’

Then the judge asked, ‘But to whom do you refer?’

The pastor responded, ‘Why to the conversion of the convict.’

“But I was not referring to him. I was thinking of myself,” explained the judge.

Surprised the pastor replied, ‘You were thinking of yourself? I don’t understand.’

‘Yes,’ the judge went on. ‘It was natural for the burglar to respond to God’s grace when he came out of jail. His life was nothing but a desperate history of crime, and when he saw the Savior he knew there was salvation and hope and joy for him. He understood how much he needed that help.

But I . . . I was taught from earliest infancy to be a gentleman – that my word was my bond, that I was to say my prayers, go to church, receive Communion. I went up to Oxford, took my degrees, was called to the bar, and eventually ascended to judge. My friend, it was God’s grace that drew me; it was God’s grace that opened my heart to receive Christ. I’m a greater miracle of his grace.”⁴

There is a question that I have asked myself and must ask all who are here, “Have you experienced true poverty of spirit?” Have you come to that point and recognized your total dependence on Jesus? Have you realized that without Him you simply do not have the kingdom of heaven in your life?

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven
Matthew 5:3 (NKJV)*

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom](#), pg23-24

