

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

¹⁷ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" ²⁰ And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Remember our haunting truth from last week: Everyone is a disciple of someone/something.

- ➔ By the unwillingness to let go of his grip on his own life, the young man proved himself NOT to be a follower of Jesus.
- ➔ What does your life prove you to be? What do your actions prove you to be following?

Important features of the story:

1. The sincerity of the young man's appeal. "Jesus, looking at him, loved him"... this is not a Pharisee whom Jesus despises. This is an authentic young man coming to Jesus.
2. "One thing" seems more like three things: sell your possessions, give to the poor, follow me.
3. Jesus was modeling 'poorness of spirit' because it is what the young man truly lacked.

WHAT TO KNOW (about Mark 10:17-22):

1. The young man showed that he was not a disciple because he chose disobedience.

- ➔ The first clause of each beatitude is a by-product of being a disciple, not a requirement to become one.
- ➔ By his unwillingness to give up everything the young man showed he is unfit to be a disciple.
- ➔ What a high standard!?!

2. The 'one thing' the young man lacked was a single-hearted devotion to Jesus.

- ➔ So the 'one thing' that is lacking is Jesus. The young man does not have a relationship with Jesus... and that was what Jesus was offering. It is the same call that was offering to Peter, James and John to drop their nets... for Levi to leave his affluent life as a tax collector and follow Jesus... The young man had a choice: obey and follow, or disobey.

Matthew 5:3

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

- This statement by Jesus is the antithesis of a modern culture of self-reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- A Messiah who comes to replace self-determination with sovereign grace will create radically different disciples than that of the world.
- Remember it is our job to follow, his job to make... it is the snare of the world that compels us to look within ourselves and say “but I am like this...” expecting God to build us up and reassure us why we are chosen by grace...
- ... but He doesn't... he responds to us like he did to Moses. “You're right, you can't speak well, but I made the mouth and I will use you despite yourself.”

One of the MARKS of true discipleship, therefore, is a poverty of spirit, a sense or a recognition that we are powerless in ourselves, that we are spiritually bankrupt and helpless before God, that we are unworthy of grace but have been given it anyway.

This is how Jesus distinguishes his disciples from those in the crowd: “these people are blessed with the kingdom of heaven because they realize their dependency upon me”

The mantra of modern culture is to find the value within yourself... even within the church we tend to minimize our sin and lift up our virtue. EVEN THOUGH WE CREDIT OUR VIRTUE TO GOD... WE POINT TO OUR VIRTUE NONETHELESS.

When we minimize our sin, we minimize our Saviour.

- If I can explain away my sin... if I can justify it and make it insignificant or small, then I only need a small saviour.
- If I recognize my sin as horrendous, and terrible and inherent within me, only then can I recognize I have nothing to bring before God except to point to the righteousness of Christ.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Follow Christ instead of yourself.

2. Make it obvious to those around you, what your life is all about.

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^[a] thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house

justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- “I thank you, God, that I have this righteousness.” *That* was not his mistake. His mistake was that he trusted in this apparently God-produced righteousness for justification.
- He was looking at the wrong basis for his righteousness before God. He was looking at the wrong ground for his righteousness before God. He was looking at the wrong person and the wrong righteousness. He is not trying to earn his salvation
- One thing is the issue: This man was morally upright. He was religiously devout. He believed God had made him so. He gave thanks for it. And that is what he looked to and trusted in for his justifying righteousness before God—for his justification. And he was dead wrong to do so.
- Think back to the young man in Mark 10 – he kept the law, but he lacked one thing.
- “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house *justified*, rather than the other.”
- What happens to the Pharisee? Don’t miss the terrifying four words in the middle of verse 14 for this Pharisee, “I tell you, this man [the tax collector] went down to his house justified, *rather than the other*.” The Pharisee, the righteous one, the devout one, the one thanking God for his righteousness, was not justified. He was condemned.
- We are following a person, not creating a checklist of moral righteousness... a person who alone can save us from our sins, who alone can provide the basis of our justification.
- And the scariest thing that I could ever think of is to miss the person because I’m too caught up in trying to be what I think he wants.
- Are you a disciple of Jesus or of something else? Your poverty of spirit, or lack thereof is the marker of how Jesus would answer this question... don’t miss the person, he’s worth giving up everything to follow.

NEXT SUNDAY:

Blessed are those who Mourn

Matthew 5:4