



KICK OFF

Would you say the 'Sermon on the Mount' is the greatest sermon ever given? Why?



KEY VERSE

Matthew 5:3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'



BIG IDEA

The entry point into the Christian life is being 'poor in spirit.'



INVESTIGATE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Read Matthew 5: 1—3

1. The Old Testament looks to a day when the eternal kingdom of God would be established. What do we learn from Isaiah 9:1-7, 11: 1—10; Ezekiel 34:23—24; Daniel 7:13—14 about this Kingdom?
2. What would have been in the minds of Jesus' Jewish hearers as they listened to his teaching concerning the 'kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 4:23-25?
3. To whom did Jesus preach this sermon? Matthew 5: 1—2

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says the structure of the Sermon on the Mount is as follows:

- 5: 1 – 10 – the character of the Christian
- 5:11 – 12 – the character of the Christian in the world
- 5: 13 – 16 – the relationship of the Christian to the world.
- 5: 17 – 48 – the Christian facing the law of God and its demands.
- 6: 1 – 34 - the Christian living his life in the presence of God
- 7: 1 – 29 – the Christian always lives under the judgement of God and in the fear of God.

Does this structure make sense of the Sermon? Is this helpful?

4. Verses 3 – 12 are a series of 'blesseds'. What does the word 'blessed' mean?
5. Who are verses 3 – 12 describing? Why is this important?

The Old Testament supplies the necessary background against which to interpret this beatitude.

At first to be 'poor' meant to be in literal, material need. But gradually, because the needy had no refuge in God, 'poverty' came to have spiritual overtones and to be identified with humble dependence upon God. Thus the Psalmist cried out to God in his need, 'and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' The 'poor man' in the Old Testament is one who is both afflicted and unable to save himself, and who therefore looks to God for salvation, while recognizing that he has no claim upon him. This kind of spiritual poverty is specially commended in Isaiah. It is the 'poor and needy', who 'seek water and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst.' The 'poor' are also described as people with a 'contrite and humble spirit', to whom God looks and with whom he is pleased to dwell.

Thus to be 'poor in spirit' is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, indeed our spiritual bankruptcy, before God. We have nothing to offer, nothing to plead. 'Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.' Calvin wrote 'He only who is reduced to nothing in himself and relies on the mercy of God, is poor in spirit.' To such, and only to such, the kingdom of God is given. For God's rule which brings salvation is a gift as absolutely free as it is utterly undeserved. It has to be received with the dependent humility of a little child. Thus, right at the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus contradicted all cont'd

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE POOR

6. What does 'poor in spirit' mean? (Zeph 3:12; Psalm 34:6; Isaiah 41:17—18, 66: 1—2))

7. Why does the Christian life begin with verse 3?

8. How does this contradict the approach to life of the world?

the expectations of the kingdom of God. The kingdom is given to the poor, not the rich; the feeble not the mighty...in our Lord's own day it was not the Pharisees who entered the kingdom, who thought they were so rich in merit that they thanked God for their attainments, ...but publicans and prostitutes, the rejects of human society, who knew they were so poor they could offer nothing and achieve nothing. All they could do was to cry to God for mercy and he heard their cry. The indispensable condition of receiving the kingdom of God is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty. Stott 'Sermon on the Mount'.



THINK THROUGH FURTHER

THINK &
APPLY

9. Those who are 'poor in spirit' receive what blessing? What is this?

10. Is this your experience of where the Christian life begins?

PRAISE GOD that the Christian life begins where it does.

CONFESS that we need a greater conviction of our sin.

ASK GOD to help you to look to Him more and more and to see your absolute spiritual poverty and emptiness.

PRAY ALSO For Scots' Church in our witness in the City. For the preaching of the Word of God week by week.



PRAYER

Praise God for the challenges raised by God's Word through this study.

Praying for others in your group:



COMING UP

We're thinking about a camping trip to Wilson's Promontory. Interested?



FAMILY
DISCUSSION

How does this passage apply to our daily life?



READ AHEAD

For next week's study read Matthew 5:4