**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 9-6-20 – Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit**

On this Back-to-School Sunday, all of us probably remember many significant moments and experiences through our years in school. While I am sure I could share on numerous things, today I would like to reflect on something that happened when I was in 9th grade Spanish class.

I recall sitting about halfway back what seemed like a long classroom and realizing that I am struggling to see what was written on the board up front.

And it wasn’t just because it was in Spanish. That was difficult enough. But it was because I was beginning to realize that it wasn’t very easy for me to read at a distance. I was squinting and straining to see and this led to me getting my eyes checked and getting glasses. And boy did they make a difference. Not so much with Spanish, that was still a struggle for me. But by simply being able to see clearly again, it enhanced my perspective of the world around me.

And so, we as people sometimes just need a pair of spectacles to see from a different perspective. Whether it is glasses or contacts or Lasik eye surgery – sometimes we need a different perspective in order to see more clearly. Sometimes brail is the tool that God provides to help us to see more clearly as our brother Chris can attest to.

The same could be said with hearing. Sometimes we need our hearing checked and may need to have help in order to hear clearly. There are hearing aids that God has provided to help people in this way.

Christ offers the world His spectacles. His hearing aid. He invites us to see and hear from his perspective. And that makes all the difference in the world.

***And this is important, because the more we can see and hear like Jesus, the more that we can live like Jesus.***

**One of the most powerful ways that Jesus invites us to see through His eyes is what has become known as the beatitudes. The beatitudes are the statements of what a blessed life really is from His perspective.**

Jesus gives statement after statement about how to live a truly blessed life. The Greek word mar-kar-eos can also be translated as happy. Sometimes translators use happy or fortunate in these statements of Jesus. But blessed is the best translation. For people can be blessed even when you do not feel happy or fortunate. For being blessed is a state of a spiritually healthy heart, which is not dependent on circumstances.

These statements of blessing are kind of like the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. They lay the necessary foundation for the rest of the Constitution of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

In other words, if we can grasp these beatitudes – these statements of blessing – and then truly seek to live them out, we will be seeing and hearing and living from Jesus’ perspective on life. And this, friends, is what we were created for.

So let’s dive into this important part of Jesus’ most famous sermon.

Please turn with me to Matthew 5:1-3

**5:** 1**Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2and he began to teach them. He said: 3“Blessed are the poor in spirit,   for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Typically today, when people teach, they stand. But when Jesus walked the earth, when someone would teach, they would typically sit. And so Jesus ascends this maintain and a large crowd of followers and potential followers sit down around and listen.

And again, Jesus speaks about the kingdom of heaven. The Kingdom of heaven is central to Jesus’ teaching. And teaches in so many different ways what the kingdom of heaven is like.

But in this beatitude, and in the ones that follow, Jesus highlights the traits or characteristics of people that are a part of His Kingdom of heaven.

And the first one is probably the most important. But if people do not get this one right, they are unlikely to get any one of the others right either.

**BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT.**

What does that mean? What does it mean to be poor in spirit? Think of a beggar. A beggar is poor. A beggar recognizes their need for help. A beggar realizes that without the kindness of others helping to meet their needs, their tomorrow is not guaranteed.

Those that take part in the kingdom of heaven are poor in spirit. So to be poor in spirit is to recognize one’s complete need for God and His grace. This doesn’t mean that Christians aren’t royalty in Christ. We are His children and part of his household. We are not beggars in that sense, so we are daughters and sons.

But we are beggars in the sense that we are totally dependent on Him in all things.

Let’s pause and consider our next breath. (pause). Without his grace we would not be able to breathe.

**15The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**

These verses tell us that Jesus not only created all things, but it is by Him that they are held together. He sustains us. We are all dependent on Him, whether we realize it or not.

It is also important to note that people can be poor in spirit and also be wealthy. Some of the great heroes of the faith were very wealthy people. Think of Abraham and Sarah. Think of David. But with wealth comes the temptation to trust in stuff rather than in God.

Now before considering some practical ways that we can live out being poor in spirit, it is important to think about how Jesus always practiced what He preached. He always lived out what He taught. In fact, as we will see, when we look at the gospels, we can find example after example of Jesus living out his own beatitudes.

Jesus lived the most blessed life ever. He embodied what a life of blessing is to look like. So how was Jesus poor in spirit? How did he recognize His complete dependence on God in all things?

Even though Jesus was God as He walked the earth, He chose to live as fully human and fully dependent on God the Father and God the Spirit to lead and empower Him through His life and ministry.

We see Jesus being led out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. We read of Jesus getting away to pray in quiet to His Father before choosing His 12 apostles.

We discover Jesus saying “**The Son can do nothing by himself, he can do only what he sees his Father doing.”**

In contrast to Jesus, the Pharisees were not poor in spirit. They pridefully rejected their Messiah. They missed the hour of God’s visitation among them in Jesus.

This was because being poor in spirit leads to hands and hearts and minds that can receive. But being rich in spirit leads to blocking help in all of these ways.

As Christians we must embrace the truth that as new creations in Jesus Christ, we are called to live out lives of being poor in spirit. This and each of the other beatitudes describe our new identity in Christ which we must learn to live out every day.

So as followers of Jesus Christ today, what does living out this beatitude look like practically for us? What is Jesus looking for in us?

Applications - Simply this. He is looking for humble, teachable people who constantly are mindful of their dependence upon God. God can do so much with that. God can pour into our lives so much easier when our hands are open to receive from Him and when we are looking to Him each day.

The Great Christian reformer, Martin Luther, once said **“I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”**

In other words, Luther’s busyness did not lesson his dependence on the Lord. Instead, it strengthened it. Sometimes in our busyness, we can miss what is most important.

Prayer is one way that we can express dependence towards God. I know that there have been so many Sunday mornings that I have found myself praying for God’s powerful anointing to speak through me. I recognize that without Him guiding and inspiring and empowering me, my words cannot touch hearts and minds for the glory of God.

One great example of being poor in spirit was displayed by Dr. Robb Palmer, one of my seminary professors. He said, **“Always a student, sometimes a teacher**.” To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a student. In fact, the very word “disciple” means student.

Our Triune God is looking for people that are hungry to know Him better. He looks for people that recognize their complete dependence on the Lord in all things.

Apart from the Lord, we can truly do nothing. He is the One that sustains every one of us. Without His grace, we couldn’t think, we couldn’t speak, we couldn’t learn.

We are very needy people indeed – whether we realize it or not. And it is critical that we realize it.

Jesus said “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In the original Greek, Jesus is literally saying “for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.” Heavens is plural. In the Jewish understanding, the heavens exist in three levels. The first is our sky. The second is the stars and planets. And the third is the abode of God.

And Jesus is saying that the poor in spirit are given all of it. In other words, for those that humbly recognize their complete need for Him in all things, He gives everything to them and access to everything that they need. He is truly an extravagant God.

In our world today, having a blessed life is often understood as having as comfortable and easy a life as possible. A blessed life is typically defined in the size of one’s bank account or the number of one’s friends. Or perhaps it is equated with finding a spouse that is pleased with you. You may have heard the saying “Happy wife, happy life.” While there is some truth to some of those views, the reality is that they are the best that people can come up with when they are spiritually squinting to try to see life clearly.

But a blessed life is a life that is poor in spirit. And I am excited in the weeks to come to share with you other ways that Jesus invites us to see and hear clearly on how to live a truly blessed life. Let’s pray.

<https://twitter.com/desiringgod/status/828408365487423489?lang=en>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3A15-17&version=NIV>