**Blessed are the Poor in Spirit**

Matthew 5:1-12

Key Verse 5:3

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

**Introduction**



 The American Revolutionaries had their “Declaration of Independence.” Karl Marx had his “Communist Manifesto.” With today’s passage, Jesus declares what His Kingdom is all about. So today’s passage can be called as “the Constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven.” It is, however, radically different from what the Israelites expected from the Messiah. It does not present political or material blessings. Instead, it expresses the spiritual implications of Jesus’ rule in our lives. This great message tells us how we should live when Jesus is our Lord. It was a simple proclamation of how God expects us to live, contrasting with common Jewish misunderstandings of how lives should be lived. It is clear that the Sermon on the Mount had a significant impact on the early church. The early Christians make constant reference to it and their lives displayed God’s glory as they lived as radical disciples of Jesus. In this new year 2017, may we renew our hearts with this message of our Lord and King, Jesus Christ so that we would follow His footstep continually. Amen.

1. Read verses 1-3. To whom did Jesus give this teaching? (1-2) What does "blessed" mean? What does it mean to be "poor in spirit"? (3) What does Jesus promise the poor in spirit?

1-1, Read verses 1-3.

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

1-2, To whom did Jesus give this teaching? (1-2)

***Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them. He said:***



* As He preached this message, Jesus was seated. He adopted the customary posture of teaching, as any rabbi in His day - the preacher sat and the audience stood.
* His disciples came to Him and he began to teach them - We notice here that Jesus primarily speaks to His disciples. The the crowds could also hear Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, his message was primarily directed towards the disciples.
* May the Lord bless our coming new year conferences among our college-aged children and women coworkers so they might be refreshed to learn Jesus’ sermon.

1-3, What does "blessed" mean?

* Jesus gives 8 specific teachings. Each one begins with the word “Blessed.” However, the NIV Bible calls this section, “The Beatitudes.” Maybe it is a word of conjunction of “beautiful attitudes.”
* In other words, Jesus might have explained who was really blessed. Even though we like the word “blessing,” we often think of it from a human point of view.
* “Give us peace, keep our families safe, protect our soldiers, and give us enough money.”
* While these things may accompany God’s blessing, they are not the essence of God’s blessing. We need to understand what the Bible teaches about God’s blessing upon mankind.
* The first time God spoke to men, it was to bless us as Genesis 1:28 says. This was a general blessing.
* We can find God’s specific blessing on one person in Genesis 12:2-3. God’s blessing was not about Abraham living a comfortable life, or feeling happy all the time.
* God’s blessing was to use Abraham for his eternal purpose. Ultimately, this purpose was through Abraham to send the Savior Jesus who forgives our sins and restores the kingdom of heaven (Gal 3:8).
* The real meaning of being blessed by God is to be used by God for his world salvation purpose.
* Mary understood this when she accepted God’s calling to be the mother of the Messiah (Lk 1:46-48). It is true that she had overflowing joy. But it was a result of her blessed state of knowing God and accepting his great purpose for her.
* Although there was a price to pay to be used as a servant, she was more than willing to pay it. Through this, she became a mother of the living, just like the new name that was given to Eve.
* Our God gave Israel a great purpose to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6). To maintain this blessing, they had to struggle to obey God’s word.
* But many times they were tempted by surrounding idol worshipers. They were deceived into thinking that life without mission was happier.
* They complained to God and tried to abandon God. This repetition of failure and restoration by God’s one-sided grace seems to be the theme of Israel’s history.
* God sent Jesus. In Acts 3:26 Peter says, “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”
* True blessing is to turn from our wicked ways. True blessing is to accept Jesus as our King and live for his great purpose.
* Jesus’ disciples were blessed when they accepted his high calling and followed him.
* America is truly blessed when she serves God’s salvation purpose as a missionary-sending country.
* Each of us is blessed when we are used by God in his gospel work.

1-4, What does it mean to be "poor in spirit"? (3)

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

* The poor in spirit recognize that they have no spiritual “assets.” They know they are spiritually bankrupt.
* With the word poor, Jesus uses a more severe term for poverty. It indicates someone who must beg for whatever they have or get.
* Basically, these are people who are humble before God. They realize that they are sinners who have nothing to offer God but their repentance.
* They admit that they are totally dependent on God’s mercy. They stand before God they do not claim any self-righteousness.
* In Luke 5, Simon Peter confessed, “Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinner!” This was a major turning point for Simon Peter, when he could truly follow Jesus as a disciple.



* We see a great contrast in Jesus’ parable of a Pharisee and a tax collector (Lk 18:9-13). The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men–robbers, evildoers, adulterers–or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”
* But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Jesus said that one of them went home justified before God. It was the tax collector.
* God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1-5, What does Jesus promise the poor in spirit?

* When we humbly ask God’s mercy, he will give us the kingdom of heaven by his grace.
* “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus says, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
* They can experience the kingdom of heaven while on earth. Jesus comes into their hearts to reign as king.
* Jesus gives heavenly peace and joy, even though their situation may not be easy. Then they can see what God is doing in them, in others, and in their nation.
* Husbands can love and respect their wives, and vice-versa. Parents love and care for their children; children obey their parents with a thankful heart.
* They are hopeful and positive in Jesus, even though they face hardships.
1. Read verses 4-6. What kind of sorrow makes men happy? (4) Who are the meek? (5) What blessing is promised to them? What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? (6) What does Jesus promise those who do?

2-1, Read verses 4-6.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. **5** Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. **6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

2-2, What kind of sorrow makes men happy? (4)

* We don’t usually associate mourning with blessing. But Jesus did. Mourning is a sensitive sorrow that pierces the soul, bringing unbearable pain.
* Why are those who mourn blessed? It is because it brings repentance.

**2 Corinthians 7:10 says,**

 “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”

* Jesus’ disciples had to confront their own sin as they followed Jesus. Sometimes they would feel miserable. Regardless of their feelings, it’s a blessed time.
* One young man frequently mourns over his sins when he shares his Bible testimony. He is really blessed.
* There is another kind of blessed mourning. It is to mourn over the lost state of others.

**John 11:35 reads,**

 “Jesus wept”

* Jesus wept over the people who were sorrowful due to sin and the power of death. Those who mourn for others are sharing Jesus’ heart and they are the blessed.
* There is a blessing given to those who mourn. It is the promise of comfort. This comfort comes from the forgiveness of sins and the purification of our souls (Isaiah 40:1-2).
* Sometimes we feel that our eyes were made only for weeping. But someday Jesus will comfort each of us personally. He will wipe every tear from our eyes (Rev 21:4). Jesus’ comfort is certain. Let’s not avoid the time of mourning.

2-3, Who are the meek? (5)

2-4, What blessing is promised to them?

According to a dictionary, ‘meek’ is defined as:

1. Enduring injury with patience and without resentment(mild)
2. Deficient in spirit and courage(submissive)
3. Not violent or strong(moderate)
* The meek are patient, gentle, and submissive. Spiritually speaking, the meek are those who recognize God as the sovereign ruler of creation.



* So the main idea behind this word ‘meek’ is strength under control, like a strong stallion trained to do the great job instead running wild.
* They submit to God. So when a conflict arises, they pray instead of fighting or suing others; they share the word of God instead of getting into a boxing match.
* They let God’s will be done through their total submission. God is pleased with these kinds of people and he blesses them to inherit the earth.
* Jesus submitted himself to the point of death on the cross. (Philippians 2)
* Moses is also a good example (Numbers 12:3). God had raised Moses as the spiritual leader of the Israelites.
* But Moses did not try to exercise strong leadership from his own will power. Moses depended absolutely on God.
* When there was a leadership crisis, Moses did not fight politically. Instead, Moses fell face-down before the Lord in total submission (Num 14:5; 16:4; 16:22; 16:45; 20:6).
* When Moses did so, God upheld Moses and used him. The meek inherit the earth

2-5, What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? (6)

2-6, What does Jesus promise those who do?

* Blessed people have an appetite for spiritual life, not just physical life. Physical life consists of enjoying the things of the world.
* We may often hunger for power, authority, success, comfort, and/or happiness but how many hunger and thirst for righteousness?
* This is hunger is for complete righteousness, not just enough to soothe a guilty conscience for a while.
* For they shall be filled - This is a filling that both satisfies us and keeps us longing for more.
* Physical appetites are never permanently satisfied as long as we dwell in the body.
* This desire is an intense longing for Jesus, our righteousness from God

**1Co 1:30 reads,**

 “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

* This drives us to study the word of God and to spend time in prayer. This is a blessed life.
* Instead of wasting time on the perishing things of the world, we seek the immortal God and eternal blessing.
* Jesus is pleased to bless those who long for him. Jesus satisfies our souls completely. Jesus forgives our sins and gives us the kingdom of heaven.
1. Read verses 7-9. How can we be merciful? Why should we be pure? What can we learn from Jesus about being peacemakers?

3-1, Read verses 7-9.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. **9** Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

3-2, How can we be merciful?

* Those who have Jesus become merciful. Out of overflowing gratitude to God, they open their hearts to others.
* They are willing to forgive others and to help others. Then mercy begins to flow among them like a river.
* Those who practice mercy toward others can find God’s mercy to help them in their time of need.

3-3, Why should we be pure?

* When our heart is pure and clean, we have great joy and peace. We can love God and love others and we are happy to live life to the fullest, doing the work of God.
* The problem is how to have a pure heart? Since the fall of man, there has been the stain of sin on man’s heart.
* This has corrupted our motives and ruined everything we do with selfishness, arrogance, and wickedness.
* How then, can we have a pure heart?

**1 John 1:5-10 says,**

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1John+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30548b)] sin.

**8** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

3-4, What can we learn from Jesus about being peacemakers?

* Jesus is the best peacemaker. Jesus made peace between God and man (Rom 5:10a). To give us peace with God, Jesus died for our sins.
* Jesus took the full measure of God’s wrath that we deserve. Since God’s justice has been satisfied, we have true peace with God.
* Jesus also gives us peace between people (Eph 2:14-16). The gospel brings true peace.
* We can be peacemakers when we share the gospel of Jesus with others. The gospel can bring peace on our campuses, and peace in the world.
1. Read verses 10-12. What kind of persecution results in blessing? What can you learn from the Beatitudes about how to be truly happy and blessed?

4-1, Read verses 10-12.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. **12** Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

4-2, What kind of persecution results in blessing?

***10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

* For what sake are these blessed ones persecuted? For righteousness’ sake and for Jesus’ sake, not for my own selfish end.
* Peter recognizes that suffering comes to some Christians for reasons other than their faithfulness to Jesus ([1 Peter 4:15-16](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Peter+4:15-16&t1=en_nas)).
* Persecution is not only physical opposition or torture. It can take other forms such as insults and malice in spoken form.
* Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: Literally, we could translate this phrase to say that the persecuted should “leap for joy.”
* It is because the persecuted will have great reward in heaven, and because the persecuted are in good company: the prophets before them were also persecuted.
* Why will the world persecute them? Because the values and character expressed in these Beatitudes are so opposite to the world’s manner of thinking.

4-3, What can you learn from the Beatitudes about how to be truly happy and blessed?

**Conclusion**

 This passage teaches that when we accept and practice Jesus’ teachings, we can taste and experience heaven even while living in this world. As a matter of fact, Jesus is the embodiment of all 8 blessings and 8 beautiful attitudes as a citizen in the Kingdom of God. So in this new year 2017, we are eager to learn from Jesus, for He is the ultimate source of joy and meaning of life. We must seek Jesus until we are hungry and thirsty. Jesus wants us to seek first His kingdom and his righteousness. He promised that all these things will be given as well. May God bless us to reveal Jesus’ light to this dark world by living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

**One word: Blessed are the poor in spirit!**