

# Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Isaiah 61; Matthew 4:23-5:12

Theme of Matthew: "Behold your King is coming to you" (Zech.9:9; Mt.21:4-5)

Theme of the Beatitudes: Christ's Portrait of His People (John Stott)

Theme of the Sermon on the Mount: Life Styles of the Rich and Famous

## INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 61

- A. The first three verses of Isaiah 61 were foundational in the mind of Jesus as He began teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. These three verses contain the best Old Testament synopsis of our Lord's three years of teaching and healing.
- In the Gospel of Luke, the physician records Jesus beginning His public ministry within the synagogue at Nazareth when Jesus read from the Isaiah scroll (Luke 4:18).
  - The first two beatitudes are rooted in Isaiah 61.
  - In Matthew 11, when John the Baptist was languishing in Herod's prison, John sent disciples asking Jesus if He was the "Expected One." Part of Jesus' response to the greatest OT prophet came from Isaiah 61 (Matthew 11:46).
- B. One of the fascinating things about Isaiah 61, written about 700 years before Christ, is that Jesus Himself speaks these words!
- The child born of the virgin, Named Immanuel, is now speaking in Isaiah 61 (Isa.7:14).
  - In Isaiah 61 the One speaking is the son upon whose shoulders the government would rest (Isa.9:6).
  - The "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace is now speaking!
  - Isaiah 61:1-3 contain the words of the son Isaiah had prophesied earlier about, saying, "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness" (Isaiah 9:7).
  - In Isaiah 61, we hear the voice of the One who "with righteousness He will judge the **poor**, And decide with fairness for the **afflicted** of the earth" (Isa.11:4).
  - The lamb of Isaiah 53 who was led to slaughter, like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, is now speaking!

## I. THERE'S A GREAT CONTRAST BETWEEN WHAT JESUS BLESSES AND WHAT THE WORLD BLESSES BECAUSE THE BEATITUDES ARE ROOTED IN THE "FOOLISHNESS OF THE CROSS" (1 Corinthians 1:25; cf. Philippians 2).

- A. The world tends to bless the "proud in spirit." J.R.R. Tolkien brings out this contrast nicely in his book, *The Two Towers*.
- Eowyn:** "Too often have I heard of duty." "But am I not of the House of Eorl, a shield maiden and not a dry-nurse? I have waited on faltering feet long enough. Since they falter no longer, it seems, may I not now spend my life as I will?"
- Aragorn** answered: "Few may do that with honour."
- B. "For He has had regard for the **humble** state of His **bondslave**; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me **blessed**" (Luke 1:48).

## II. ILLUSTRATING POVERTY OF SPIRIT

"I always wanted to be the first woman to carry out a martyr attack." --Palestinian suicide bomber Reem Raiyshi, a 22-year-old mother of two, in a Hamas video she recorded before an attack three weeks ago in which she killed herself and four Israelis in Gaza (*World*).

- A. Childlessness in the Old Testament illustrates "poverty of spirit" (cf. Gen.18:12; 30:1; Psalm 113:9; Luke 1:25).
1. Hannah (1 Samuel 1).
  2. "Shout for joy, O barren one" (Isaiah 54:1 with Isaiah 53:10; cf. Gal.4:26). The blessings of Jesus Christ are so great that even the barren will need to build bigger mansions to accommodate their offspring!

Isaiah 53:10  
10 But the LORD was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;  
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
**He will see His offspring,**  
He will prolong His days, And the good  
pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

Isaiah 54:1  
1 "Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child;  
Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not  
travailed;  
For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous  
Than the sons of the married woman," says the LORD.

- B. "Woe is me..." (Isaiah 6:5)
- C. "I have need to be baptized by You" (Matthew 3:14).
- D. The healing ministry of Jesus illustrates what of spirit.
  1. Sick people, blind people, paralytics, epileptics, and lepers knew that they have a **need** that cannot be met by anyone other than the King (Matthew 4:23-24).
  2. Bartimaeus the blind beggar: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:46-52).

"He has a deep sense of the loathsome leprosy of sin which he brought with him from his mother's womb, which overspreads his whole soul, and totally corrupts every power and faculty thereof."  
-John Wesley

Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.

### **III. POVERTY OF SPIRIT IS NOT A ONE-TIME CONDITION BUT A WAY OF LIFE**

- A. Poverty of spirit is a conscious recognition of our need of God's grace in Christ Jesus. It is a conscious thankfulness for God's mercies that are new to us every day (**Luke 7:41-43**).
- B. The church at Laodicea had lost her poverty of spirit (**Revelation 3:17-18**).

**NOTE:** Give careful consideration to the relationship between the material contentment of the Laodiceans and her spiritual self-satisfaction (Revelation 3:17)! We must always be content with what we have materially (Philippians 4:11,12), but we must never become self-satisfied with where we are at spiritually (Philippians 3:8-14).

Isaiah 66:2b

"But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

## **QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH DISCUSSION & MEDITATION:**

*Take what you have learned this morning and make it into a prayer. Are you poor in spirit? Have you and do you recognize your desperate need for Jesus Christ? Is your need of Jesus today any less than your need for Jesus when you were first converted? Pray that God would give you the grace of poverty of spirit.*

*What Old Testament text is the best Old Testament summary of our Lord's three years of teaching and healing? How is it related to the beatitudes?*

*What is our working theme for the beatitudes? For the Sermon on the Mount?*

*How would you define or describe "poor in spirit"?*

*What was a worse sin: Simon the Pharisee's lackluster/indifferent reception of Jesus or the immoral life of the woman who anointed anointing Jesus' feet? (Luke 7:36-50)*

*Is poverty of spirit a one-time condition or a way of life? Explain.*