



Good Hope Baptist Church

Pastor Josh Franklin

The Beautiful Attitudes pt. 1

Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "My immediate reaction to these Beatitudes proclaims exactly what I am. If I feel they are harsh and hard, if I feel that they are against the grain and depict a character and type of life which I dislike, I am afraid it just means I am not a Christian. If I do not want to be like this, I must be 'dead in trespasses and sins'; I can never have received new life. But if I feel that I am unworthy and yet I want to be like that, well, however unworthy I may be, if this is my desire and my ambition, there must be new life in me, I must be a child of God, I must be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and of God's dear Son."^a

What does an authentic Christian look like?^b The best and shortest answer to this question is: **The authentic Christian is described in the beatitudes.** Moreover, this is the only person who is truly blessed and really happy in the fullest sense of the word. The beatitudes describe Christians in general:

1. Every Christian is meant to be what the beatitudes set forth, not just certain persons who are exceptional. All Christians are called "to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:1)
2. Every Christian is meant to manifest all the characteristics set forth in the 8 Beatitudes.
3. None of these descriptions refer to what we would call natural tendencies. There are many people who are nice and polite and kind but without Christ they do not possess the traits of the beatitudes.
4. The beatitudes indicate clearly the essential, utter difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian and non-Christian are different in what they admire, what they seek, what they do, and what they believe they can do.
5. The Christian and the non-Christian belong to two entirely different kingdoms. This kingdom is the kingdom of heaven. The Jews looked upon the kingdom as being political and even military, but Jesus saw the kingdom as primarily spiritual. The kingdom of heaven is the same as the kingdom of God, which in essence means that it is the realm in which Jesus is reigning. The kingdom was seen in Jesus' own life (Matthew 12:28), the kingdom of God is within the Christian. So the kingdom is come and coming. One day when Christ comes He will establish His reign over the whole world even in a physical and material sense, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6-7.

The Sermon on the Mount should not be understood as, "Live like this and you will become a Christian." It should be understood, "Because you are Christian live like this." It is a description of what we Christians are meant to be.

^a Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 41.

^b Adapted from Mentoring school handout, "Revisiting the Beatitudes," taught by Dr. Bill Bennett.

Matthew 5:3 (NKJV) Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What is meant by “Blessed”? Kent Hughes wrote, “Contrary to popular opinion, blessed does not mean ‘happy,’ even though some translations have rendered it this way. Happiness is a subjective state, a feeling. But Jesus is not declaring how people feel; rather he is making an objective statement about what God thinks of them. **Blessed is a positive judgment by God on the individual that means ‘to be approved’ or ‘to find approval.’**”

What is meant by “poor in spirit”? ^c *Ptōchos* (**poor**) is from a verb meaning “**to shrink, cower, or cringe,**” as beggars often did in that day. Classical Greek used the word to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. As he held out one hand for alms he often hid his face with the other hand, because he was ashamed of being recognized. The term did not mean simply poor, but **begging poor**. The word commonly used for ordinary poverty was *penichros*, and is used of the widow Jesus saw giving an offering in the Temple. She had very little, but she did have “two small copper coins” ([Luke 21:2](#)). She was poor but not a beggar. One who is *penichros* poor has at least some meager resources. One who is *ptōchos* poor, however, is completely dependent on others for sustenance. **The poor in spirit** are those who acknowledge their own helplessness and rely on God’s omnipotence. They sense their spiritual need and find it supplied in the Lord. **The kingdom of heaven**, where self-sufficiency is no virtue and self-exaltation is a vice, belongs to such people. “*“Blessed are those who realize that they have nothing within themselves to commend to God...”*” **Notice these other versions:**

- “*God blesses those who are poor and **realize their need for him...**” (New Living Translation)*
- “*You're blessed when you're at the **end of your rope**. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.” (Message)*
- “*Those people who know they have **great spiritual needs** are happy, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” (New Century Version)*
- “*...who recognize they are **spiritually helpless.**” (God’s Word)*
- “*...**destitute in spirit...**” (International Standard Version)*

Psalm 34:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸ The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Matthew 18:3-5 (NKJV) ³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

Luke 18:10-14 (NKJV) ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men-- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’

¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *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, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Revelation 3:17-18 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-- ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

See also Isaiah 6:1-8

^c Adapted from <http://almondunionchurch.org/sermons/blessed-are-the-poor-in-spirit/>

TEACHING HELPS

How do you put into words the power and beauty, yet simplicity of the Beatitudes? Eight pithy statements combine to express the whole compass of the Christian life. Using language that is quite familiar in the Old Testament, especially the Psalms and Isaiah, each blessing signifies a particular mark of grace upon the lives of those who have received Christ in the gospel. Would we ask for any of these gracious attributes for ourselves apart from Christ? Sinclair Ferguson asks the question, "What eight things do you most want to see developed in your life?" [*The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Life in a Fallen World*, 13-14]. Without the grace of God operating in us we might say, power, prestige, worldly savvy, self-esteem, sexual attraction, and a list of other things valued by the world. But in Christ-as new creations-we seek a different character, that which is set forth for us by Jesus Christ in the Beatitudes.

STORY - She was beautiful, she was charming, she was gifted, she was the talk of the town. A lovely, gracious, talented girl. She sat at the piano and played. The crowds came and they told her how sweet and how beautiful she was. But there was a preacher there that night. His name was Cesar Milan. And Cesar Milan approached this young lady and said, you have charm, and you have grace, and you have beauty. But if you don't get saved, if you don't see your need, and give your heart to Jesus Christ, you're just as lost as the worst harlot in London. She was insulted a little bit. She was shocked by the rudeness of this preacher. I think God the Holy Spirit knew what she needed though. Because she went up to her bedroom and tried to sleep. She tried to laugh it off, but she couldn't laugh it off. And at three AM in the morning, Charlotte Elliot gave her heart to Jesus Christ, was born again, she was the one who wrote a song that we sing here so often. Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. That's the way she came.

A story is told about a church that reached out to a wide variety of people. They had witnessed amazing conversions. On one occasion the pastor saw a former burglar kneeling at the communion rail beside the very judge who had sent him to jail where he had served seven years. This burglar had been converted and become a Christian worker. As they knelt there, the judge and the former convict seemed to be unaware of each other.

After the service, the judge said to the pastor, "Did you notice who was kneeling beside me at the Communion rail this morning?" The pastor replied, "Yes, but I didn't know that you noticed." The two walked along in silence for a few more moments, and then the judge said, "What a miracle of grace." The pastor nodded, "Yes, what a marvelous miracle of grace." Then the judge said, "Where did you see that grace?" And the pastor said, "Why, to the conversion of that convict." The judge said, "I was not referring to him. I was thinking of myself." The pastor, surprised, replied: "You were thinking of yourself? I don't understand." "Yes," the judge replied, "it was natural for the burglar to receive God's grace when he came out of jail. He had nothing but a history of crime behind him, and when he saw Jesus as his Savior he knew there was his hope salvation and joy. He knew how much he needed that help.

"But look at me. I was taught from earliest infancy to live as a gentleman; that my word was to be my bond; that I was to say my prayers, to go to church, take Communion and so on. I went through Oxford, took my degrees, was called to the bar and eventually became a judge. I thought I was doing well. Pastor, it was God's grace that drew me; it was God's grace that opened my heart to receive it. I'm a greater miracle of his grace."

APPLICATIONS:

1. The Sermon on the Mount should not be understood as, "Live like this and you will become a Christian." It should be understood, "Because you are Christian live like this." It is a description of what we Christians are meant to be.
2. The Sermon on the Mount was written to the disciples. It is not to be enforced as a societal ethic or a national ethic. To expect Christian conduct from a person who is not born again is impossible.
3. The Sermon on the Mount is a description of character, not a code of ethics or of morals.

4. The Sermon on the Mount shows everyone the need of the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.
5. The Sermon on the Mount should attract a lost world to our churches because our lives reflect the glory of God.

Adapted from “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit” by: D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- 1. Being “poor in spirit” is the fundamental Beatitude.** This beatitude is the key to the rest that follow. There is a definite order in the beatitudes. There is no one in the kingdom of God who is not poor in spirit, that is why this is the crux. It is the fundamental characteristic of the Christian, thus it is first in the list.

- 2. Being “poor in spirit” is against the grain of the world.** It is ultimately a man’s attitude toward himself. The world tells you to believe in yourself. The world says to express yourself, believe in yourself, realize the powers that are innate in yourself and let the whole world see and know them. Self-confidence, assurance and self-reliance.

- 3. Being “poor in spirit” is looking face-to-face with God.** In the Christian life, we are not looking at men confronting one another, we are looking at men face-to-face with God. If anyone feels anything in the presence of God except an utter poverty of spirit, it ultimately means that you have never truly faced Him. That is the meaning of this Beatitude.

- 4. Being “poor in spirit” is not popular in the Church today.** I have noticed at times a tendency to fail to appreciate what is regarded by the Bible as the greatest virtue of all, namely, humility. I have heard people on a Committee discuss a certain candidate and say, “Yes, very good; but he is rather lacking in personality (meaning, lacking self-confidence, self-reliance and self-assurance),” when my opinion of that particular candidate was that he was humble. You read of the Christian workers of yesteryear and you observe how self-effacing they were. But, today, we are experiencing something that is almost a complete reversal of this. Paul said, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” He did not step up onto the platform with confidence and assurance and ease, and give the impression of a great personality. Oh, how the Church is allowing the world and its methods to influence and control her outlook and life.

- 5. Being “poor in spirit” does not mean...**
 - ...that we should be diffident or nervous.
 - ...that we should be retiring, weak or lacking in courage.
 - ...standing in the background.
 - ...to say, “I am a nobody. I am unimportant. I do not count.”
 - ...that you suppress your personality.

All of these behaviors impress the world, and much of the Church, for they believe these are wonderful examples of humility. These simply aren’t biblical humility.

- 6. Being “poor in spirit” truly means**
 - A. Old Testament Examples –Isaiah 57:15 (NKJV) 15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.** That is the quality of spirit, and you have endless illustrations of it in the Old Testament:
 - 1. Gideon** – It was the spirit of a man like Gideon, for instance, who, when the Lord sent an angel to him to tell him the great thing he was to do, said, “No, no, this is impossible; I belong to the lowest tribe and to the lowest family in the tribe.” This was a man who shrank from the very thought of greatness and honor, and thought it was incredible.
 - 2. Moses** – It was the spirit of Moses, who felt deeply unworthy of the task that was laid upon him and was conscious of his insufficiency and inadequacy.
 - 3. David** – You find it in David, when he said, “Lord, who am I that You should come to me?”
 - 4. Isaiah** – You get it in Isaiah in exactly the same way. Having had a vision, he said, “I am a man of unclean lips”. That is to be “poor in spirit”, and it can be seen right through the Old Testament.

B. New Testament Examples –

1. **Peter** – you see it in a man like the apostle Peter who was naturally aggressive, self-assertive, and self-confident – a typical modern man of the world, brimful of this confidence and believing in himself. But look at him when he truly sees the Lord. He says, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Look at him afterwards as he pays tribute to the apostle Paul, in 2 Peter 3:15-16. But observe that he never ceases to be a bold man; he does not become nervous and diffident. No, he does not change in that way. The essential personality remains; and yet he is “poor in spirit” at the same time.
2. **Paul** – Or look at it as you see it in the Apostle Paul. Here was a man, again with great powers, and obviously, as a natural man, fully aware of them. But in reading his Epistles you will find that the fight he had to wage to the end of his life was the fight against pride. That is why he kept on using the word “boasting”. Any man gifted with powers is generally aware of them; he knows he can do things of which he can boast. But having once seen the risen Lord on the road to Damascus all that became “loss”, and this man, possessed of such tremendous powers, appeared in Corinth “in weakness and fear and much trembling.” He felt insufficient because he was “poor in spirit.”
3. **Jesus** – Look at Jesus Himself. He did not come as only Divine, but human, as well. He said, “I can do nothing of myself.” It is the God-Man speaking. “I can do nothing, I am utterly dependent upon my Father.” That is it. And look at His prayer life. It is as you watch Him praying, and realize the hours He spends in prayer, that you see His poverty of spirit and His reliance upon God.

7. **Being “poor in spirit” is being absent of pride.** It means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. It is the tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face-to-face with God. It is to feel that we are nothing, we have nothing, and that we look to God in utter submission to Him and in utter dependence upon Him and His grace and mercy. What a poor thing it is to boast of things that are accidental and for which I am not responsible.

8. If we are “poor in spirit” we will not...

We will not rely upon our natural birth.

We will not rely upon the fact that we belong to certain families, nations or nationalities.

We will not believe in and rely upon our natural position in life, or any powers that may have been given to us.

We will not rely upon any wealth or money we may have.

We will not boast in the education we received, or the college to which we may have been.

We shall not rely upon our natural gifts, intelligence, personality or special gifts.

We shall not rely upon our own morality, conduct or good behavior.

9. 2 Questions to see if we are truly “poor in spirit”

A. How do I really feel about myself as I think of myself in terms of God, and in the presence of God?

B. As I live my life, what are the things I am saying, what are the things I am praying about, what are the things I like to think of with regard to myself?

10. **How does one become “poor in spirit”?** The answer is that you do not look at yourself or begin by trying to do things to yourself. The more you do that, the more conscious you will be of yourself, and the less “poor in spirit”. The answer is to look at God. Read the Book about Him – the Bible. Read His Law and what He expects of us. Contemplate standing before Him. Look at Him; and the more we look at Him, the more hopeless shall we feel about ourselves, and in and of ourselves, and the more shall we become “poor in spirit.” Look at Him and keep looking at Him! Look at the saints, look at the men who have been most filled with the Spirit and used. But above all, look again at Him, and then you will have nothing to do to yourself. You cannot truly look at Him without feeling your absolute poverty, and emptiness. **Then you can say to Him, “Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked come to Thee for dress, Helpless look to Thee for grace: Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior, or I die (Rock of Ages Cleft for Me, Verse 3).”**