

## ***Blessed are You***

Our text, often called “The Beatitudes” – are a horrible way to market the Church. Such words are rejected out of hand – after all – who wants to live like that? And so Christians turn the tables, sit Jesus down, and teach Him how He should do things.

If you want to appeal to the masses – then tell people that if they really believe in you, if they are really committed to you – then they will be healthy, wealthy, and wise. That will work! That will sell!

There is a long history of God’s children not listening – but telling God how it is. Adam & Eve didn’t listen. God said don’t eat – but they said – it sure looks good. God warns Israel about “whoring” after the false gods when they enter the land flowing with milk and honey – but they didn’t listen – they went astray, like an unfaithful bride.

That’s why God sits you down today – like a father having an important, though hard, conversation with his child. God opens His mouth to teach you the life that He wants for you. On Mount Sinai, it was words to live by as they prepared to enter the Promised Land – and now, on the mount with Jesus – words of blessing, that actually bless all who hear and believe.

“And He opened His mouth and taught them saying: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’” Poor in spirit – destitute – standing before God with nothing to give – but desperate to receive. And boy, does He give – He gives the poor in spirit the kingdom of heaven.

On Mount Sinai the Lord opened His mouth and blessed His children with the First Commandment – teaching them to fear, love and trust in God above all things. That blessing governs, and runs through all the other commandments.

So also, with this first Beatitude – it runs the show. The blessing of being “poor in spirit” flows into all the blessings that follow. What a blessing to be poor in spirit – to know that I am nothing, but Christ is everything!

Blessed are the poor in spirit who mourn, “for they shall be comforted.” Mourning and blessing don’t seem to go together – but Jesus says they do. I will comfort you – literally, Paraklete you, or Holy-Spirit-you.

When your loved one has died – I will send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter to you – to direct your faith to me – so that you might find refuge in my forgiveness, my promise of the resurrection of the body, my promise of life everlasting. How blessed are the poor in spirit – to be comforted by Christ and His victorious resurrection!

“Blessed are the meek,” Jesus says, but the world says that the strong, the powerful, the aggressive and mean-spirited are the ones who inherit the earth. But the poor in spirit see the earth for what it is – a gift of God that will one day pass away.

Rather than scrap and scum for worldly treasures – the poor in spirit know the true and lasting riches are found in Jesus Christ alone – so even though they take “our life, goods, fame, child and wife, though these all be gone, our victory has been won, the Kingdom ours remaineth.”

The poor in spirit are blessed because they know they have no righteousness of their own – that who they are, and what they’ve done – have no standing before God. To be right with God is impossible for man, but not for God – for He has given His Son to be our righteousness.

The poor in spirit cannot conceive of standing before the Father without Jesus by our side – His obedience covering our disobedience – His bloody death taking the place of the death we deserve.

And that is why the poor in spirit hunger and thirst to hear the life-giving Word of Christ – to live in Holy Baptism which covers them with Christ’s righteousness – to eat and drink Christ’s Body and Blood, that we might live in peace with our Father.

The world uses power for selfish purposes – using the sins of others as leverage, as weapons against them – to hurt and harm. God could easily have done that with Israel in the wilderness – giving them what they deserve – leaving them to perish.

But He is a merciful God, and shows mercy to Israel, His unfaithful Bride, and to you. Blessed are you who are poor in spirit – for you have received the Lord’s mercy – and by that mercy, are gracious to those who are equally unfaithful and undeserving – forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

The “pure in heart” are blessed because they are poor in spirit – they know their sin, confess their sin, and trust that Jesus Christ alone cleanses them from all iniquity. The blessing is not just that you will see God face to face one day, and for eternity – but that even now, you live in communion and fellowship with Him.

“Blessed are the peacemakers” – but the enemies of God are anything but peaceful. The devil, the world, your own sinful nature are all about deceiving, dividing, and death. They sow seeds of chaos in God’s good creation – to despise His good gifts, His authority, His working in this world to “still take care of us” – so that we might despair, believing that God does not love us, or desire us to have His peace.

The “sons of God” however – the poor in spirit – know that God is present and active in their world – working all things for the good of those who love Him – blessing them with a peace that surpasses all human understanding.

Blessed are YOU when you are persecuted – when you suffer – all because of Jesus. Blessed are YOU – because this shows that you are poor in spirit – and that you are united to Christ, living in communion with the one, true God. You are persecuted, reviled, attacked – along with all the saints – because you are a child of God.

You are poor in spirit – but your reward is great – for you live with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – in the kingdom of God – now and forevermore. Blessed are you. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.