

November 2, 2014
Sermon for All Saints Day (Observed)
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Matthew 5:1–12

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 5:1–12 (ESV)

¹ Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

“Four score and seven years ago.” Where are those opening words from? Abraham Lincoln’s opening words at the Gettysburg Address, right? How about, “Yesterday, December 7th, 1941—a date which will live in infamy.” That is Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his opening address following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

One more: “We the People of the United States...” That is an easy one: That’s the opening lines of the United States Constitution.

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

These words, spoken by Christ at His first public sermon, are memorable words. This opening line is the doorway into the rest of Christ’s address to His disciples in Matthew 5.

Like any good opening line, they let you know what the rest of the speech is about. They let you know what the speaker is about.

Christ’s opening words— *“Blessed are the poor in spirit”* —lay a foundation on which the rest of His earthly ministry stands. If we grasp these words, we grasp Jesus. These opening words of Jesus are deserving of thorough consideration.

Blessed.

What exactly does Jesus mean when He uses that word blessed? Does it mean you are going to have a really good day if you are poor in spirit? Or does it mean you are going to find a \$20 in your coat pocket only if you are poor of spirit?

Does it mean that life is always going to be great; that if we are poor in spirit we nor our loved ones will never be sick, will never die?

No. Blessed here does not mean any of those things.

It means MORE than that.

The word blessed, in this context, means saved or redeemed. It means you will have eternal life in Christ. Jesus is saying, “You who are poor in spirit are a redeemed people—You are my people!”

It means being right with the Creator of the universe, being acceptable in God’s sight. When Christ says, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit,*” heaven and hell, life and death, salvation and condemnation hang in the balance. By leading off with this, Jesus is saying,

“Listen up! What I am about to tell you determines everything!”

Then Jesus goes on to tell the crowd gathered around Him to be poor in spirit. Is Jesus telling us to be a bunch of downers? To be a depressed group of people, moping around town being “poor in spirit”? Is Christ telling his disciples to be in a constant state of spiritual pouting?

No, not quite. Poor in spirit is not a matter of being happy or sad, optimistic or pessimistic, spirited or spiritless. Instead, being ‘poor in spirit’ is a matter of how we come before God. Do we come before God rich in our own works or poor in our spirit, longing for his mercy?

Let me use a story to explain what it means to be poor in spirit.

Two men passed away and went to heaven. They were standing in line next to each other with the gates of pearl off in the distance.

One of the men had a big bag slung over his shoulder, full of items. The other man had nothing. The guy with nothing leaned over to the guy with the bag and said,

“Whatcha got in there?” The man with the bag opened it up and began pulling the items out. He said, “Here is the time I volunteered at that soup kitchen. Here is the time that I went on a mission trip. Oh, and here is the crowned jewel of my good deeds: The time that I gave more than 10% in the offering plate!”

The man with nothing said, “Wow, that is quite a collection of good works that you have accumulated!”

Then the man with the bag said, “I cannot help but wonder: How come you have nothing? What are you going to show for yourself when you see Saint Peter?” Smiling, the man with nothing pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket. He showed it to the guy with the bag.

It was his baptismal certificate. He said, “It says here that I am property of God. It says that God claimed me as His own when I was baptized. That is all I need because Jesus’ grace is sufficient.”

This is being poor of spirit. Christ invites us to come before Him empty-handed. We do not offer to God our merits, the great things that we have done in our lives. Rather, we come before God as empty-handed, bare-palmed beggars.

Yet, we do not remain beggars forever. Jesus tells us what the poor in spirit receive: *“For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit!

Those who come to Christ empty-handed are given the keys to the kingdom of heaven! Christ is gathering the poor of spirit around Himself like a mother hen gathers her young. Christ is calling out to the poor in spirit.

The spiritually empty-handed are God's chosen people. Christ began His ministry by telling His disciples that the poor of spirit are His chosen people. Christ went to the cross for the poor in spirit. Christ conquered death for the poor in spirit. That is the kind of God that we have!

And on this All Saints Day, we are reminded of our loved ones who have passed away. We are reminded of our loved ones whom Christ has called to be with Him.

We take comfort knowing that these faithful warriors have come to rest in Christ. And when they did, these sainted brothers and sisters stood before Christ with empty hands. These saints triumphant did not come before Jesus with a pack slung over their shoulder full of good works. Rather, they stood before Christ saying, "I am a baptized child of God and I am yours."

And we take comfort knowing what Christ said to our empty-handed loved ones, "Dear child, the kingdom of heaven is yours!"

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria
To God alone be glory

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

Matthew 5:1–12

1. What exactly does Jesus mean when He uses that word, blessed?
2. Does being poor in spirit mean moping around town, being depressed all the time?
3. Being poor in spirit means coming before God empty-handed on Jesus' merits alone.