

## Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

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**Matthew 5:3** - "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This verse begins the section of Scripture commonly called "the Beatitudes." This term comes from the Latin word, "beati," which means "happy, rich, or blessed." Beginning in Matthew 5:3, as an introduction to His sermon on the mount, Jesus pronounces eight spiritual blessings of those who are in His kingdom. True happiness comes not by seeking earthly pleasure, but by true spiritual attainment.

Jesus begins with the poor in spirit. The Greek word translated as "poor" is "ptōchos," meaning "... a beggar (as cringing), that is, pauper ..." (Strong's). Thayer describes this word as meaning "(1) reduced to beggary, begging, asking alms, 2) destitute of wealth, influence, position, honor."

Jesus seems to be indicating that the Kingdom of heaven will be made up of mostly the poor. This is in agreement with statements from Christ and Paul, such as these: "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven," (Mat. 19:23); "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9). It is not that it is IMPOSSIBLE for the rich to enter heaven, but rather that the rich find themselves entangled with so many distractions that it makes it very DIFFICULT for them to do so.

In contrast to the spiritual difficulties that come more easily with riches, Jesus here highlights the blessings of the poor. Throughout most of human history, the poor have been looked down upon and ignored and mistreated, but the Bible highlights that the Gospel was preached unto EVEN THEM (See Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18). Jesus begins His sermon on the mount by giving them hope!

When Jesus says regarding the poor, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," He is not saying that the kingdom of heaven belongs EXCLUSIVELY to the poor. To teach this would be to teach that it is impossible for the rich to enter heaven. We know that not to be the case, for 1 Tim. 6:17 commands those who ARE rich — it is implied here that they are Christians — to USE their riches responsibly for the cause of Christ! No, Jesus is not saying that it is IMPOSSIBLE for the rich to go to heaven; He is simply highlighting the fact that PROPORTIONATELY, it is much more likely that the poor will accept Christ and live faithfully to Him than the rich, because of the distractions of riches that can so heavily pull one away from Christ.

By beginning "the Beatitudes" with such a hopeful verse for the poor, Jesus embarks on a sermon that "cheers on the underdog," if you will, and encourages people to not allow bad circumstances in life to relegate them to spiritual death; rather, the difficulties of life ought to propel us even further in looking for the blessings of heaven!