**The King’s Sermon: Blessed are the Poor Mourners**

(Matthew 5:1-4)

3/12/17

Kingdom living is not about what we do, but who we are. It is not about following a bunch of rules, but being involved in an intimate relationship with God. The more we understand who God is, the more we understand how sinful we are. Happy are those that are broken and are in desperate need for God. Happy are those that mourn over their sin.

INTRODUCTION

It is common to hear someone end a conversation by saying, “God bless you.” Sometimes, I end my emails by using the word, “blessings.” What does that mean to be blessed by God? Does it mean we want God to give us good health? Wealth? Prosperity? Security? Comfort? Peace?

As we study the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about blessings. He identifies eight groups of people that will be blessed. It was not what the people expected to hear. This word blessed can be translated “Happy.” It was not the smart one or the courageous one or the caring one that are blessed, but it was the poor in spirit and those who mourn that were blessed. It seems to be a paradox. How can you be happy and be poor in spirit or be one of those that mourn? It doesn’t seem to make any sense.

According to the context, Jesus is inviting people to join His Kingdom. It definitely does not reflect what the world’s idea of happiness is. Jesus said that those who are poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peaceable, persecuted, and reviled are happy. Most of us would say, “I am not sure I want that kind of happiness.”

The book of Matthew introduces Jesus Christ as King. Here in Matthew 5-7, we have the King’s Sermon, where Jesus is instructing his followers to join Him in a new kingdom with a new standard of living. The Jews had been waiting for a Messiah/ King to rule over themand set them free from the bondage of the Romans. Jesus did not come to be their earthly king at this time; he came to save them spiritually so that they could enter into this new heavenly kingdom.

What is required to be saved or to enter this new kingdom? According to the O.T. one needs to be righteous before God. The standard of righteousness was taught by the scribes and Pharisees to follow all of therules according to the Law. Then they would be accepted. There were250 commands to keep and 365 prohibitions to observe. That was a lot of rules and regulations to keep. But the Pharisees were the best in keeping the Law religiously. However, Jesusconfused the people when he said in (Mt. 5:20) “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Is this possible? If what the Pharisee does is not enough, then is there a chance that anyone else could enter into the kingdom of God.

Unfortunately, the Pharisees had distorted the intention of the Law. They thought that they needed to follow it to be acceptable before God. In reality, Scripture teaches us that the Law is to show us that we are sinners and we stand guilty before God. (Rom. 3:20) “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” Jesus was teaching that their righteousness was external. They mistakenly thought that through their righteous performance, they could be acceptable before God.

ILLUSTRATION: That is also a common mistake of ours. We have been deceived to believe that if we go to church, attend fellowship, sing in the choir, and do good, then God will save us because of our righteous deeds. That is totally false.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount shows us that it is not about what we do, but who we are. It is not about a bunch of rules, but about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God does not require external righteousness, but inner righteousness. Jesus is saying here that our righteousness has to be a different quality than the Pharisees. What we are is more important than what we do because who we are, determine what we do. Our righteous acts must be based on righteous attitudes. The question before us is what is expected of us as the king’s children?

ILLUSTRATION: In the Tow family, there are expectations. Tell the truth, always give your best effort, live a life of integrity, and be generous. These are some of the core values of a Tow. Being a Tow, you have two choices: 1) Live by what your name stands for or 2) Change your name.

In the same way, as a child of the Heavenly King, we are to reflect who He is. We should live by what our name stands for or change our name. Unfortunately, one of the greatest hindrances to people coming to know Christ is Christians. Because of their hypocrisy, others do not want to follow Jesus. Yet at the same time, people are attracted to Christ when they see Christians living a consistentselfless life. They are curious to see what make Christian tick because it cannot be done by their own effort. Jesus in the Sermon of the Mount introduces a new kingdom with a new standard of living. It cannot be done by our effort. We need the Spirit of God to empower us. What is this kingdom living all about? The Beatitudes spell out the inner characters, which provide the base for their kingdom living. Jesus was saying that one kind of righteousness came from keeping the rules and another kind came from a relationship with God. Inward righteousness was what should characterize kingdom citizens.

We will cover the first two inner characters this morning. Let us turn to Matthew 5:1-3, “Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit

The word “blessed” is used nine times from verses 3-12. What does it mean? The modern translation is happy. It is conditional. In order to be happy, it is based on certain circumstances. Happiness for the Greeks was related to the physical and material world.

ILLUSTRATION: That is also so true today in our society, where it claims the one with the most toys win. When I was growing up, my dad would tell me to make as much money as you can. Then you will be happy. Ironically, those that have the most money are the most insecure people around; they are unhappy. Definitely, money cannot buy you happiness. However, so many people are still deceived by this lie of equaling happiness to money or material things.

However, the Greek word used here for blessed is “makarios.” This word speaks of a divine joy, an inner satisfactionthat doesnot depend on outward circumstances for happiness. This special happinessor divine joy can only come from God. Verse3 says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

* 1. What does it mean to be poor in Spirit?

Before we look at why a Christian should be poor in spirit, let us understand what it is. Before I explain what is poor in Spirit, I want to explain what poor in spirit is not. Jesus is not saying, “Blessed are the poor spirited.” He is not referring to those that do not have a backbone, or those that promote passivity or those who are literally poor financially.

Being poor in Spirit has to do with our relationship with God. There are two Greek words that are translated poor. The first word refers to the poor that lived day by day with nothing left over for a rainy day. The second word refers to the poor that did not have anything at all. In another word, they are totally bankrupt. They were beggars. They are totally dependent on others to help them.This is a very humble state to be. “Poor in spirit” is the second usage. Let us answer the question: Why must a Christian be poor in Spirit?

* 1. Why must a Christian be poor in Spirit?
     1. Humility leads to a right knowledge of self

Being poor in Spirit should be a key character of every Christian. No one will enter Christ’s kingdom based on what they have done. What God required is recorded in Mt. 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The sooner we realize that we cannot enter into God’s Kingdom by our own effort, the sooner we will reach out to the one who canhelp us attain the standard. Being poor in Spirit focuses on humility. Humility leads us to a right knowledge of self. In addition, humility leads us to a right knowledge of Christ.

* + 1. Humility leads to a right knowledge of Christ

­­­Christ does not become valuable to us until we are humble. Until we realize how lost we are, we cannot understand Christ’s love for us.

APPLICATION: One of the biggest lessons that I have learned in life is having a proper view of myself and a proper view of God. It is like an image of a seesaw. When one is up, the other is down. If we have a high view of self, then we will have a low view of God. When we depend on ourselves, then we will not depend on God. This is also true the other way around. When we have a high view of God, then we will have a low view of self. When we depend on God, then we will not depend on ourselves. That is a no brainer, but if we truly practice it, then we will be blessed or happy. How much I trust God is dependent on my relationship with Him. The closerrelationship I have with God, the more I recognize how strong He is. As a result, I recognize how weak and inadequate I am. It drives me to my knees seeking His help. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

When we recognize that we are spiritually bankrupted, we realize that there is nothing that we have doneto deserve God’s acceptance. One is totally helpless and is dependent on God. We are blessed when we are just a beggar coming to the door of the kingdom without anything to give to get in. It is only because of God’s grace that we can enter into God’s kingdom. If you have never trusted Christ as your savior, I invite you to trust Him today.

Application: May we pursue a closer relationship with God. Let us not rob ourselves of the happiness that we can have in Him.

1. Blessed are those who mourn

The first Beatitude speaks to our mind stating that we are poor in spirit. We are bankrupt spiritually. The second Beatitude speaks to our heart stating blessed are those who mourn.This is the emotional expression of the first. The poor in spirit are those that sense their need for the Lord and who mourn over their sins. As a result, God comforts us.

* 1. What does it mean to mourn?

Verses 3-4 go hand in hand. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” When we recognize the weight of our sin and our spiritual bankruptcy, we can only respond in deep sorrow. When we think about mourning, we think of a funeral, where people are grieving over the loss of a loved one. What are we grieving here? This has nothing to do with “feeling badly” over some unhappy event. What are we mourning over?

* 1. What do we mourn over?

It speaks of us mourning over our sin or the sin of others. The more we come to know God, the more we realize his holiness and our filthiness. As a result, we mourn over our sin. We despise our sin.

ILLUSTRATION: I had a vivid memory that I wish I could erase it from my past. I was upgrading my cell phone. The representative promised me several perks, but I did not purchase it. I slept on it and called back the next day to buy it. But those perks were no longer available. I got so mad that I chewed out the salesman. I screamed and yelled at him. I felt good for a short moment feeling that he had been dishonest with me. Then I felt terrible for my wicked tongue. I called back to apologize. I mourned over my sin. I hated myself.

Christ said blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. We are comforted knowing that God is a forgiving God and He will forgive our sins.

A story was told about a couple who took in a messed-up young girl. She lived with them for a year and went through all kinds of problems. Every evening after supper they did something that ultimately made a difference in the girl’s life. They had her repeat, “God does not love me because I am good. He loves me because I am precious, and I am precious because Christ died for me.”Kingdom living is not about what we do, but who we are. It is not about following a bunch of rules, but having an intimate relationship with God.

Application: Our walk with God is greatly affected by how we view sin. Too often we do not take sin seriously. May we regularly confess our sins beforethe Lord. He is faithful to forgive us. The more intimate relationship we have with Jesus, the more we realize how strong and holy He is and how weak and sinful we are. May we come before Him as one who is helplessknowing that God will bless us and give us true happiness.