

Blessed Poverty

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, for a short while this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the Gospel according to Matthew and chapter 5.

Matthew chapter 5, and we'll just read again from the beginning. Matthew chapter 5 from the beginning.

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now, everyone loves the Sermon on the Mount, but it wasn't Jesus who gave that title to his sermon.

Nor was it the disciples who gave that title to the Sermon of Jesus. It was, in fact, the early church father, Augustine, who gave this sermon its title.

[1 : 10] Because in the third century, Augustine, he wrote a commentary on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, these chapters, chapters 5 to 7 in Matthew's Gospel. And he gave his commentary the title, The Sermon on the Mount.

And it stuck. Now, you'd be hard-pushed to find a copy of Augustine's commentary available today. But what does remain is this well-known title that everybody knows these chapters as, The Sermon on the Mount.

And it's a great title for a sermon, The Sermon on the Mount. But, you know, one commentary that is still in circulation today is the commentary of the late John Stott.

As you know, John Stott, he was a preacher and pastor in All Souls Church in London. And he was there for over 25 years. And he also wrote many Christian books. And one such book was his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

And in his introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, John Stott, he wrote, he says, The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed.

[2 : 21] To my mind, he says, no two words sum up the intention of the Sermon on the Mount better, or indicate more clearly its challenge to the modern world than the expression Christian counterculture.

Christian counterculture. Here in the Sermon on the Mount, says Stott, is a Christian value system that promotes ethical standards, religious devotion, a Christian attitude to money, ambition, lifestyle, and relationships, all of which, he says, are at variance to our modern world.

You know, my friend, the Sermon on the Mount, it turns the teaching, the mindset, and even the worldview of our day and generation, it turns it upside down because it reminds us and reaffirms to us our chief end.

That we were created in the image and likeness of God for the purpose of glorifying and enjoying him forever. Now, God willing, over the coming weeks, I'd like us on Wednesday evenings to consider the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount.

Because in these opening verses, we have nine statements of blessing. There are nine benedictions where Jesus, he says, blessed are, blessed are, blessed are.

[3 : 43] And we've come to know this section in the Sermon on the Mount as the Beatitudes. We all know them as the Beatitudes. The word Beatitude, it comes from the Latin *Beatitudo*, which means blessedness.

Blessedness. And so we're looking at these blessings, the Beatitudes. And so this evening, I'd like us to consider the first Beatitude, the first blessing, or the first benediction in the Sermon on the Mount.

Which you find in verse three. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And I'd like us to consider this first Beatitude under three headings.

The benefactor, the benefits, and the beneficiaries. The benefactor, the benefits, and the beneficiaries. So first of all, the benefactor.

The benefactor. It says in verse one, seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

[4 : 50] Now as we said, everyone loves the Sermon on the Mount. But the reason everyone loves the Sermon on the Mount is because the Sermon on the Mount is a well-rounded sermon.

It follows the pattern of preaching a sermon, which is the pattern of state, illustrate, and apply.

State, illustrate, and apply. Now when I was in the Free Church College and training to become a minister, I read many books about preaching and pastoring.

And one book I read was called Ministering Like the Master. Ministering Like the Master. And as the title suggests, the book was all about learning to preach and pastor just like Jesus.

Learning to minister like the master. Because, as you know, Jesus is our example, not only as people, but also as preachers and pastors. Jesus is the greatest preacher and pastor that ever lived.

And this is the greatest sermon that Jesus ever preached. There's one of my favorite preachers, Dr. Steve Lawson. He often says, he often says, God had only one son and he made him a preacher.

[5 : 59] God had only one son and he made him a preacher. And as a preacher, Jesus followed the pattern of preaching a sermon. In fact, as a preacher, Jesus, you could say, he actually set the pattern for preaching a sermon by what's presented to us in the Sermon on the Mount.

Because he uses the pattern for preaching a sermon. He uses state, illustrate, and apply. And you'll see that if you read through the Sermon on the Mount. And as you know, in the Sermon on the Mount, there are many memorable statements there are helpful illustrations which are also followed by powerful application.

He follows the pattern of state, illustrate, apply. And some of the memorable statements are, judge not, lest you be judged. Another statement, ask, and it shall be given.

Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. Jesus also used helpful illustrations when he said, you are the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth.

He said, look at the birds, consider the lilies. He said, enter through the narrow gate. And then Jesus, he followed his, his memorable statements and his helpful illustrations.

[7 : 15] He followed them all with powerful application. And one of the most powerful applications was what Jesus said at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

where Jesus said, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like the wise man who built his house on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand.

My friend, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, he set the pattern for preaching a sermon by using state, illustrate, apply. There were memorable statements, helpful illustrations, and powerful application.

And you know, it's a reminder to us that Jesus, he is the greatest preacher who ever lived. And this, you could say, is the greatest sermon he ever preached. But you know, the thing about Jesus as a preacher is that he always practiced what he preached.

Jesus always practiced what he preached. There was nothing that Jesus said from a pulpit that he didn't practice in his own life and witness.

[8 : 28] Jesus even said, as it is in verse 48 of this chapter, he says, Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.

And of course, as the perfect Son of God, Jesus was the only one who could be perfect, like his heavenly Father is perfect. And as the sinless Son of God, Jesus was the only one who could practice what he preached.

He was the only one who could practice what he preached. Which should be a reminder to us all, not only as preacher, but also as congregation, that as my good friend J.C. Ryle would say, pointing at myself, the best of men are only men at best.

We're only men at best. And you know, Jesus began his public ministry when he began it, it was following his baptism, his temptation in the wilderness, his appointment of the twelve disciples.

And as we read there in verses one and then into verse two, when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a hillside. He went to be above the people to project his voice so that they would hear him when he preached God's word.

[9 : 42] But as Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, we read that he didn't stand as I'm standing this evening. Jesus sat down. He sat down to assume the position of a teacher.

And he taught the people. But then we're told in verse two, an interesting verse, it says, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying. Now, when I read that, I thought, well, why does Matthew even bother telling us that Jesus opened his mouth to teach the crowds?

Why is Matthew stating to us the obvious? Because, of course, the only way that Jesus could speak is if he opened his mouth. But you know what Matthew is reminding and reassuring us in this statement is that what comes out of the mouth of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are words of grace.

Words of grace. Don't you love Psalm 45 where it describes Jesus so beautifully as the king? And it talks about how Jesus speaks and that grace is upon his lips.

He speaks with words of grace. And that's how Jesus spoke when he preached the Sermon on the Mount. He wasn't on his hobby horse. He didn't have an agenda.

[11 : 01] He wasn't trying to get at people. No, he spoke words of grace because grace was upon his lips. He spoke words of blessing all because he's the benefactor.

He's the benefactor who bestows all the blessings and benefits of the Christian life. Which is why I want us to think secondly about the benefits. So the benefactor is King Jesus.

And then the benefits. The benefits. Look at verse 3. It says, Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

As the benefactor who bestows all the blessings and benefits of the Christian life, Jesus began his sermon with this opening statement. And as we said, there are nine beatitudes.

There are nine statements of blessing. There are nine benedictions of blessedness. But what we ought to notice from this opening beatitude in verse 3 is that it's bookended in royal language.

[12 : 10] It's bookended with the language of a king. Because this opening beatitude, it begins with the repeated word blessed, which is a royal word.

And then it concludes with a royal phrase. Kingdom of heaven. So it's bookended with royal language. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

So the opening beatitude is bookended with royal language all because Jesus is king in the kingdom of heaven. And I say that it's royal language because the word bless or blessed or blessedness, it literally means to kneel.

And we've seen this many times before when we considered the Psalms. It uses the word bless. And the word bless, it's used in the sense of kneeling before King Jesus in surrender and submission.

And the image and illustration that this word gives to us is that of King Jesus. He's standing up from his throne. And in the presence of King Jesus is a sinner.

[13 : 20] A sinner who desires to enter the kingdom of heaven. And that sinner is kneeling before King Jesus in reverence and humility and honor of the king.

But more than that, the word expressed that this sinner is kneeling before King Jesus with their head bowed and their hand outstretched. And their hand is outstretched in order to receive from the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of King Jesus something that they don't deserve.

And King Jesus is blessing them. He's giving to them what they don't deserve. He bestows blessing. King Jesus bestows blessing by graciously, lovingly, and mercifully giving to sinners what we don't deserve.

He blesses us. He blesses us because blessing only comes from the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of King Jesus. And the benefits which the benefactor, who is King Jesus, the benefits which this benefactor graciously, lovingly, and mercifully gives to sinners such as we are, these benefits that he bestows and blesses us with is entry and entitlement to the kingdom of heaven.

The benefits that King Jesus bestows and blesses us with is entry and entitlement to the kingdom of heaven. But as you said, this beatitude, it's bookended with royal language because blessed is a royal word and the kingdom of heaven is a royal phrase.

[15 : 01] In fact, the kingdom of heaven is what the ministry and message of King Jesus was all about. It was all about the kingdom of heaven. And that's something Matthew picks up on in his

gospel.

As you know, all the gospel writers, they all portray Jesus from a different angle. They all look at Jesus from a different angle. Mark, in his gospel, he sees Jesus as the suffering servant who gave his life as a ransom for many.

Luke considers Jesus as the perfect son of man who came to seek and to save the lost. John, he begins in eternity and he tells us that Jesus is the eternal son of God who became flesh and dwelt among us.

But Matthew, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is king and he's king in the kingdom of heaven. In fact, from the very outset of his gospel, Matthew, he reminds us that Jesus is the royal descendant of King David.

The opening words of Matthew's gospel, they begin with the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David. And Matthew, he's telling us straight away that this person is royal, he's regal.

[16:18] But Matthew then tells us as he goes through his gospel that the arrival of this king, the arrival of this royal person didn't take place in a palace. It didn't begin with a royal coronation and his exaltation to the throne in Israel.

No, the arrival of King Jesus was marked not by his exaltation, but by his humiliation, by being born in a stable in Bethlehem. But as we said, the ministry of King Jesus, it was a ministry and message about the kingdom of heaven.

And that's what Matthew is emphasizing to us all the way through his gospel. When he records the first statement that Jesus makes, Jesus says, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

When Jesus preaches and proclaims this sermon and the sermon on the mount, he teaches what it means to live in the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus speaks in parables, he reveals what the kingdom of heaven is like.

That's how he always begins his parables. He says, the kingdom of heaven is like. But you know, the amazing thing when you look at this and how Matthew presents King Jesus, the Jews didn't want King Jesus.

[17:35] King Jesus wasn't the king the Jews wanted. They thought that their Messiah would be a savior who would overthrow the oppression of the Romans and take control of the nation of Israel again.

They thought that Jesus was going to be an earthly king with an earthly kingdom and possess political powers. But the thing is, King Jesus, he may have been a descendant of King David, but he wasn't going to be this conquering, warring king like King David.

He wasn't going to shed the blood of others in order to be exalted to the throne of Israel. No, the amazing thing about King Jesus is that he was going to shed his own blood for sinners.

Sinners such as we are because as Paul reminds us, it's through the blood of his cross that the benefactor, King Jesus, was going to graciously, lovingly, and mercifully give to sinners what we do not deserve.

So the benefactor was going to bestow and bless us with benefits, the benefits of entry and entitlement to the kingdom of heaven. And that's why after the crucifixion and death and resurrection of King Jesus, we're told that he was highly exalted.

[18:56] Highly exalted. And as the king in the kingdom of heaven, as he says at the end of Matthew's gospel, he has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. And with that authority, this is the thing, with the authority of heaven and earth, Jesus commands everyone, everywhere, to repent.

Because he is the king in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus commands everyone, everywhere, to repent. therefore, the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven and experience entitlement to the kingdom of heaven, the only way to experience the benefits and blessings of the benefactor, King Jesus, the only way to encounter and enjoy the promise of eternal life, is by coming before the king of the kingdom of heaven and kneeling in humble submission with your head bowed and your hand outstretched.

because, my friend, as you know yourself from your own experience, it's when you kneel in faith and repentance that you receive from the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of the king, you receive from him what you do not deserve.

You receive the promise of eternal life. You come to know and experience the blessing of entry and entitlement to the kingdom of heaven.

And the reason Jesus says all this to us is because that's what it means to be poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit is to come on your knees with your head bowed and your hand outstretched to receive from the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of the king what you do not deserve.

[20 : 44] That's what it means to be poor in spirit. And that's why the opening statement in the Sermon on the Mount is blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And so as we consider this opening beatitude we see the benefactor who is King Jesus.

We see the benefits which are the blessing of entry and also entitlement to the kingdom of heaven. But then lastly we see the beneficiaries, those who come to Jesus in poor in spirit.

Those who come in that poverty that position and poverty of spirit. So the benefactor the benefits and the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

You know as those who desire entry and entitlement to the kingdom of heaven. King Jesus says that there's a position and there's a posture that we must first of all adopt.

[21 : 56] And what King Jesus makes clear is that it's not a position and posture of pride but it's a position and posture of poverty. Not physical poverty or financial poverty but spiritual poverty.

entry and entitlement to the kingdom of heaven by the gracious loving and merciful hand of King Jesus it's given and granted to those who acknowledge before him that they are spiritually poor.

That they have nothing. Therefore the Christian character conduct and conversation that belongs to the kingdom of heaven is one that exercises a position and posture of poverty.

Which as you know my friend is the complete opposite to the way the world thinks. It's a complete opposite because as you know the world seeks to promote a position and posture of pride.

The world loves self. Self praise self promotion self publicity. As I know what drives social media it's driven by the promotion of self.

[23 : 10] Even in schools nowadays children are often encouraged promote yourself believe in yourself be proud of yourself and the world encourages us to be proud of who we are and also what we are and what we've done whether it's our sexuality or our gender with gay pride parades like the one that took place in Glasgow last weekend all these things are in order to promote a posture of pride even achievements in sport how often do you hear sportsmen and women saying after they've won I'm so proud of myself I'm so proud of my own achievements now there's nothing wrong with achieving there's nothing wrong with doing well but the question that Jesus is asking us as those who seek entry and entitlement into the kingdom of heaven the question Jesus is asking us is who's getting the glory who's getting the glory who is who is it that's been praised who is it that's been promoted who's been publicized and Jesus says if you desire entry and entitlement to the kingdom of heaven then you must surrender and submit your life to the king of the kingdom of heaven you must praise and promote and publicize no one else but

King Jesus you must praise promote and publicize no one else but King Jesus you must adopt the position and posture of poverty not the position and posture of pride because as the Bible asserts in James's letter the Bible asserts and affirms that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble he gives grace he gives to the humble what they do not deserve my friend you know there's no room for pride in the kingdom of heaven there's no room for pride in fact I would go as far as to say that the word pride shouldn't even be part of the Christian's vocabulary because pride is the root of all sin pride is the root of all sin which is why as those who are beneficiaries as those who are poor in spirit we are beneficiaries of these blessings and benefits from the benefactor

Jesus Christ we're to we're to humbly acknowledge that without Jesus Christ we are completely and utterly deprived and destitute of all these blessings of the kingdom of heaven we're poor in spirit we're poverty stricken we're spiritually broke and bankrupt we have nothing and no one to claim or cling to in and of ourselves except Jesus except him as we know we cannot work we cannot earn our salvation except believe it and receive it by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone Jesus is saying to us blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven and that's the attitude we need to adopt it's an attitude or a position and posture of poverty humility before the king in the kingdom of heaven you know as we begin a study on the beatitudes from the sermon on the mount we're being reminded and reassured tonight that our benefactor is still king Jesus he's the one who bestows all the blessings and benefits of the kingdom of heaven because when we come to him on bended knee

whether in private or in public whether when we come to him on bended knee with our head bowed beneficiaries we are the beneficiaries because we receive from the gracious loving and merciful hand of the king what we don't deserve we deserve none of it and yet he graciously lovingly and mercifully gives to us what we do not deserve he opposes the proud my friend but he gives grace to the humble you know that's why our testimony should always be 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 eye to the fountain fly wash me savior or I die that's why Augustus talked lady he said rock of ages cleft for me let me hide myself in thee blessed says Jesus blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven may the lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh lord our gracious god that we would know and experience that blessing in our lives not only the first time we bow our knee but every time we bow our knee before thee that we would know and experience the blessing of god and that we as thy people as those who have received entry and entitlement to every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in christ that we would know that when we come before our king that he graciously lovingly and mercy fully continues to give to us what we do not deserve or that we would never be proud in our salvation or proud of what we have in christ but realize that our boast must only be in the lord all lord we pray that that thou would give to us that grace and that we would be humble in thy sight realizing that we are nothing and that we are nothing without thee but that with thee oh lord we have everything bless us then we pray bless us lord as thy people that thou would build us up as a spiritual house holy and acceptable unto thee cleanse us we pray take care of us we ask for we ask it in jesus name and for his sake amen we're going to sing again this time in psalm 1 psalm 1 in the scottish psalter we're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 4 psalm 1 it's on page 200 in the blue psalm book psalm 1 we're singing from the beginning psalm 1 it presents to us two types of people who come to church or two types of people who watch online the blessed man or the cursed man the one who receives blessing by sitting and meditating upon the law of god day and night or the one who stands in the counsel of the ungodly that man of perfect blessedness who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men nor stands in sinner's way nor sitteth in the scorner's chair but placeth his delight upon god's law and meditates on his law day and night we'll sing down to the verse marked four of psalm one to god's praise might guard h vulnerability is that man hath perfect blessedness who walketh

God astray, Him comes above a godly man, nor stands in sinners' way, nor sitteth in the scorers' chair, the place of His delight.

[32 : 01] Upon God's low and men it pays on His low day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in His season yields His fruit, and His leaf faded never.

And all the dust shall prosper well, the wicked are not so, but like they are unto the shell, which wind rise to our throne.

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