



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
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November 1, 2009

Theme: The Path to True Happiness - Blessed are the poor in spirit

Text: Matthew 5:3; Luke 18:9-13

Today we begin a new series called, "Blessed Beyond Belief." It's a series that will be based upon the eight beatitudes of Jesus as we find them in the Sermon on the Mount. The beatitudes are a description of the kind of spiritual character that is required of a person in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We studied them before when we went through the Gospel of Matthew. But this time we will take a closer look as we examine them one by one.

The first beatitude is this one: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be poor in spirit is to have a realistic view of ourselves. Often we do not have a very realistic view of ourselves. We can compare ourselves to others whom we know and conclude that we're not too bad after all. Or we can focus upon our accomplishments and decide that we've done quite well. But we can only recognize our true spiritual status when we compare ourselves with God's standard, who is Jesus. That is when we see our true spiritual poverty.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector who went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee was proud of his spiritual status. The tax collector was very aware that he fell short of God's standard. Jesus says that the tax collector went home justified before God, rather than the Pharisee. We can learn three truths from this parable: (1) Our earthly status in life does not impress God. Here we have two men who had very different positions in Jewish society: Pharisees were respected; tax collectors were hated. Jesus does not take their religious or social status into account—only the condition of their heart. (2) Doing the right things does not make us acceptable to God. The Pharisee was doing the right things; yet, Jesus' parable tells us that he was not acceptable to God because of His spiritual pride. (3) God accepts only those who know that they are not worthy of Him.

When we become aware of our spiritual poverty we must embrace the wealth of God's grace. God's grace is given to us through Christ. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. God continues to search for us through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works to make Christ known to fallen, sinful people. When we respond to the work of the Spirit by repenting and receiving Christ, we receive God's grace as the Spirit comes to dwell in our body. When that happens, God's spiritual wealth makes up for and covers our spiritual poverty. Scripture says that the Great God of the universe comes to live with those who are poor in spirit. He replaces our spiritual poverty with His infinite spiritual wealth.



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Let's return to Matthew 5:3 for a moment: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The word, "blessed," can be translated, "happy." But our modern age had cheapened the meaning of that word. People often think of something that will cheer them up for a little while or make them laugh for a moment. It would be better to understand this word as pointing to a life of deep-down satisfaction; of knowing who we are; of knowing what our purpose is; and of knowing where we're going. Few people in our world have acquired true satisfaction. To those who are poor in spirit, God offers a life of security and satisfaction through trust in Him that far outweighs anything this world has to offer.