

ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY

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Scripture: Mk.10:46-52; Mt. 5:3

“Kingdom Living: The Keys to Unlocking God’s Supernatural Blessing” (part 1)

A BLIND MAN’S FAITH

In this morning’s Gospel, we have the wonderful account of the healing of a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. Upon hearing that Jesus was near, Bartimaeus yells out **“Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on Me!”** After being told by those around him to be quiet, the blind beggar yells out the same words even louder. Jesus responds by acknowledging Bartimaeus’ cry for help, and after asking him what he wants, Jesus heals Bartimaeus and the beggar’s eyesight is restored.

Now it’s easy to get caught up in the awe and wonder of this miracle. But there is something more going on here, something even more important than the miracle, itself. For what does Jesus say after He heals Bartimaeus? **“Go your way, your faith has made you well.”**

You see Bartimaeus demonstrates what true faith is all about. In fact, he presents to us the foundational key to growing in faith, the key that will unlock God’s blessing on our lives. How so you might ask?

THE BEATITUDES

Please turn with me to **Matthew 5:3-12** to the beginning of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus begins His teaching with what are commonly known as the Beatitudes. Taken from the Latin word, *beatitudo*, which means blessedness, Jesus gives us the keys to being blessed by God. Now let’s look at these beatitudes (read verses 3-12).

Although the word, “beatitudo,” has nothing to do with attitude, someone was right when they said, “The beatitudes are the attitudes that ought to be.” They are the attitudes we ought to have. They are the foundation stones for building our homes and lives. They are laws for living. They are the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. We are beginning a series entitled, *“Kingdom Living: The Keys to Unlocking God’s Supernatural Blessing.”*

Now when we talk about God’s blessing we are talking about a state of contentment, joy, and peace. That’s what the word “blessedness” means. It means to be self-contained to have which you need within you, to be happy, to be fulfilled.

Notice in all of these beatitudes, Jesus puts the emphasis not on what we have but on what we are. The world, on the other hand, always puts the emphasis on what you have, doesn’t it? The world says, “Blessed are those who have wealth. Blessed are those who have strength. Blessed are those who have knowledge. Blessed are those who have power, prestige, and popularity.” You know the Big “Bs” - the bucks, the brains, the beauty, and the brawn. Those are the things that people think bring happiness. But the truth is a lot of people have those things and still are not happy. In fact, many are miserable. Why? Such things don’t really bring contentment, happiness or peace.

So Jesus is putting an emphasis NOT on what a man has, but what he is: ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are those who mourn...”*** And then He describes character qualities. And the very first of these is poorness of spirit.

ARE YOU A SPIRITUAL BEGGAR?

This is the first key to the kingdom. Now what’s Jesus talking about when he says ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit?”*** Well, He’s really talking about being a beggar. He’s really saying blessed are the beggars.

You see there are several words in the Bible for being poor. There’s one word that just speaks of poverty like the widow who put her mites in the Temple treasury. She was poor but at least she had two mites to give. That’s one word or poverty, but that’s not the word found here. The word that is found here does not speak of that kind of poverty. It’s another word. It’s a word that means “beggar” – a man who has absolutely nothing, someone who is totally bankrupt.

It’s a word that was used in **Luke 16**. Remember the story of the beggar, who was at the gate of the rich man? How the dogs came and licked the soars of the beggar named Lazarus? And he ate the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. In other words, he was absolutely and completely destitute. Not just a poor man, but a beggar who had nothing. And Jesus calls such a man blessed!

SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY

Now who are these blessed beggars? The world would never say, “Blessed are the beggars, blessed are the bankrupt.” What is Jesus talking about here?

Well, first we need to understand that Jesus **is not merely taking about financial poverty**. The Bible never puts a premium upon being financially poor. Certainly, the Bible teaches we ought to have compassion for the poor. The Bible teaches we ought to give to the poor and help the poor, but never in any place does the Bible teach that material poverty, as such, is a blessing. If Jesus was talking about the blessedness of financial bankruptcy, then it’s our job to get poor. We might as well divest ourselves of our riches and make everyone poor so that we can be one big planet of poor people so that everybody can be blessed. Does that make sense to you? Absolutely not. The truth is Jesus had many friends who were rich, Joseph of Aramithea and Zachaeus to name only two. So Jesus wasn’t talking about financial poverty.

And Jesus wasn’t talking about being poor spirited, either. You know, the attitude that says, “I am just no good, poor ole me.” What some people call humility I call poor posture. Jesus is not talking about some outward expression. You know, going around with faces as long as a saxophone, looking like the cruise director for the Titanic. Jesus said, ***“When you fast, wash and anoint your face so you don’t appear to other people to be fasting.”***

No, Jesus said ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”*** You see human nature is made up of body, soul, and spirit. With the body we know the world beneath us, with the soul we know the world around us and with the spirit we know the world above us. Jesus said, ***“God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.”*** (Jn. 4:24).

But before we can worship and know God in spirit, we must admit, no matter how much we may have in the material realm or in the psychological and social realms, that we are in the spiritual realm

absolutely and totally bankrupt of God; that we are spiritual beggars. If we don't see that we will never enter the Kingdom of heaven.

As a matter of fact, the very word for beggar comes from the root word “to cringe” or “to cower.” So what Jesus is talking about is a person who is totally and completely bankrupt to the point of being reduced to being a beggar. It means you are nothing and you've got nothing. When it comes to God we must say, *“In my hands no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.”* That's where it begins. That's why this character quality called poorness of spirit is first.

But what do we often think? We think, “Well, I'm not perfect, but at least I'm not as bad as so and so.” “Sure, I have my faults, but on the other hand, I do some things well.” “Let's face it, I'm really a good person.” Friend, you're not yet bankrupt. When we have that attitude, we will never discover what the Bible teaches: *“Even your righteousness is as filthy rags before a Holy God.” (Is. 64:6).*

SPIRITUAL BROKENNESS

But recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy is not enough. We also need to be spiritually broken. To be poor in spirit means not only are you are spiritually bankrupt, but that you are spiritually broken. **Spiritual bankruptcy should lead us to spiritual brokenness.** It's when you recognize that you not only are and have nothing without God, but that you need to be restored by God.

If we are going to unlock God's blessing, we need to recognize and admit who we are. In fact, what it all boils down to is that man's greatest need is to see his need for God. There must come this realization. And you know how such a discovery comes? When we see who God is and when we understand who we are.

Remember the apostle Peter? St. Peter was a natural born leader. He was a take charge kind of guy. He was always giving his opinion. Frequently wrong but never in doubt. But Peter one day got a glimpse of the majesty, the glory of Jesus Christ and then do you know what he said? *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.”*

Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets of all time, when you read his words in **Isaiah 5**, he is thundering out woes. Woe against this sin and woe to that country and woe to this people. Woe to you! But then you come to **Isaiah 6** and Isaiah says, *“I also saw the Lord high and lifted up and sitting upon the throne,”* and then he said, *“Woe is me, For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the Lord.” (Is. 6:1, 5).* Isaiah had poorness of spirit.

And what about poor blind Bartimaeus? He could have complained and said, “Lord, why did you allow me to be blind? You've got the power, Lord, heal me!” But he didn't say that. No, he cried out, *“Jesus, Son of David, Have Mercy on me!”* He recognized that he was a sinner who needed God's grace and forgiveness.

You see until we see ourselves as beggars in the sight of a righteous and holy God, we will not discover who we really are. And when we see our spiritual bankruptcy and spiritual brokenness then you will stop depending on things we used to depend on. For example, some people depend on their natural birth. They look to their family name, their pedigree, what their parents have done and have. But the truth is you may be from the finest family in this town, but that isn't going to do you any good on Judgment Day. God has children but he has no grandchildren. Or how about your education and knowledge? Someone will say, “Oh, you're being too narrow-minded with all this Kingdom Living stuff.

You need to be open and inclusive to other ideas and concepts.” Not if they go against God’s Word. See what a PHD will get you on Judgment Day? Or how about wealth and riches? Evangelist Billy Sunday once said, “You can’t take it with you and if you could, where some of you are going, it would melt.”

Or how about personality and ability? Mohammed Ali when he was in his prime, got on an airplane and sat down. And the stewardess said to him, “Fasten your seatbelt.” He said to her, “Superman don’t need no seatbelt.” She said to him quick as a flash, “Superman don’t need no airplane either.”

I don’t care who you are, I don’t care what your ability is, when a man sees what he is, that he is bankrupt and broken in the sight of God, then he ceases to depend on all these other things that can’t do him any good. Jesus said, ***“Except your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”*** (Mt. 5:20)

Can anybody here can stand up and say they are as perfect as God? Absolutely not. But that’s the standard that God demands and it can only be met through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And the only way we can receive the righteousness of Christ is to allow Him to transfer it to us. And the only way it can be transferred to us is when we recognize that we are spiritually bankrupt before God and we become spiritually broken before Him.

SPIRITUAL BLESSING

And do you know what happens when we are spiritual bankrupt and broken before God? We are then open to God’s blessing. I mean, how did the Lord respond to Bartimaeus? What did the Lord do? ***He stood still.*** Read it again. Imagine the God of the universe standing still for you? God honors those who turn to Him for help. God exalts the humble. **And it’s the only way you will ever get to heaven.**

Listen again to Isaiah the prophet: ***“For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I will dwell in the high and holy place. With him who has a contrite and humble spirit. To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite one.”*** (Is. 57:15).

There are no peacocks in heaven. All sin is rooted in pride. And until that pride is dealt with we will never be ready and willing to receive Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. That’s why being poor in spirit is the first of the beatitudes. It is the foundation for all the other blessings of God. And that’s why if you don’t have this key, all the other keys won’t make any difference at all. In fact, until we lay our pride in the dust, we cannot be saved. **Jesus said in Mt. 18:3-4 – “Unless you are converted and become like little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”**

Do you know what evangelism is? It’s one beggar telling another beggar how to find bread. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Isn’t it amazing, but every Sunday we come to this altar kneeling and raising our hands like beggars for the bread of heaven, the Body of Christ. There is a reason for this. It is the starting point for walking with God.

Do you want to be blessed? It begins by being poor in spirit. It begins when you are spiritual bankrupt and broken before Almighty God. That, my friends is the key to the Kingdom. It is the beginning of unlocking God’s supernatural blessing in our lives. It is the way to eternal life. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, AMEN!