

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 22 Aug 2021

Sermon Title : Poor in Spirit

Speaker : Rev Peter Koh

Text : Matthew 5:3

INTRODUCTION

We cannot determine how we die but we can determine how we live our lives. How can we as Christians live in this world in the presence and power of God in our everyday life – Do we compromise? What is the core of our being? Do people recognize us as a child of God?

Although Jesus was surrounded by sinners from all walks of life who came to listen to Him, He went up a mountain and spoke to all those who followed Him. Being tired after climbing the mount on foot, the disciples were probably grumbling and Jesus took this teaching moment to help His disciples develop their character and receive blessings. Hence, He expounded on the reality of being a disciple living in the presence and power of the Kingdom of God in their everyday life; being Christ-like. This 'sermon on the mount' is also known as "The Beatitudes". (Matthew 5:1-12)

The Beatitudes

There are '8 blessings' found in 'The Beatitudes' and the first four lay the foundation for the rest. These blessings lie in being a part of the Kingdom of God that exists both in the present and in the future. Each 'beatitude' begins with a blessing, followed by the reason for that blessing, and all the blessings are in the future tense ("shall be" or "coming soon"), except the first and last which are in the present tense ("now"). The verbs "are" and "shall" indicate that God is at work in the present world, bringing the Kingdom to completion. Those within the present Kingdom of God who "are" in difficult circumstances "shall be" blessed when God brings about the new creation.

What it means to be "blessed"

- Blessedness is a state of well being in relationship with God
 - Many people struggle with their relationship with God as we cannot see God.
- Blessedness is not found in its pursuit
 - Though we do what Christians are supposed to do, we may feel emptiness inside us and may look for acceptance from people based on what we do.
- Blessedness is the product of pursuing God

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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- When we are touched by the Holy Spirit, it is blessedness, as it enables us to truly internalize God's word.

Blessedness is knowing God, not about the gifts, nor the talents God gives us. Knowing God is a sign of a wealthy relationship with God. The situation can be bad, but we are blessed for God is with us. That is the kind of blessedness that Jesus is preaching about.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3, ESV)

A) What is poor in spirit?

- It is not "blessed in spirit are the poor" – Christ is not commending poverty because poverty does not mean spirituality.
 - It is about being spiritually bankrupt
 - Not about being poor financially but spiritually
- Attitude towards oneself
 - Poor spiritually means not having a personal relationship with God. We need to change our attitude towards ourselves and God; to realize that it is not doing things in our way because we do not know the way, but we know the way to God is through Jesus.
 - Not something we do ourselves; it is something God did for us. We need to recognise that it is not our effort but God's effort that brought us to Him through Jesus Christ; this is key to being a good disciple by exercising His strength in our daily life.

(i) What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

- Poor means not having much
- Poor in spirit means that you realize what you lack – that it is impossible to experience the Kingdom of Heaven on our own
- The absence of: Pride, Self-assurance and Self-reliance – it is not about I, me and myself, it is about God.
- Lost without God – we are nothing in the presence of God

Poor in spirit is a willingness to let God lead us beyond where we are, to where we can be

Just like how the 'Prodigal Son' who at the lowest point of his life after he had squandered all his inheritance from his father, realised that his father provided much better conditions for his servants at home than what he was experiencing taking care of pigs. He returned home to his father who restored his full status as son in his home.

This is like what our heavenly Father does in restoring us into the Kingdom of Heaven and providing for us. It is about coming to a place of acceptance by God

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when we are most unaccepted by ourselves, recognizing our need for God and knowing that there is nothing we can do to earn His love.

(ii) 4 impacts of being poor in spirit:

1. Cause us to give up the idea that God owes us – God is not a vending machine that provides us with whatever we ask for. God is a loving God who sacrificed His son Jesus Christ for us.
2. Not afraid to ask – God is our Saviour and Lord who loves us.
3. Be in a position to receive – like the ‘Prodigal Son’ who returned to his father.
4. Testify about the goodness of God – tell about the wonderful works God has done for us which only He can do.

These 4 impacts will change our lives as it will be seen in our actions and being

B) For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

- A taste of heaven – when we encounter God.
- Heaven is in the humble before the humble are in heaven.
- God dwelling in us - We can experience heaven right in us because God the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us.

Every Beatitude is a Movement: Our failure should lead us to humility before God and our sin should lead us to be poor in spirit so God can use the sin that would bring us down to hell to help us find the path to heaven – by His grace.

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|---------------------|--------|-----------------|
| • Empty of self | —————> | Full of God |
| • Heart Preparation | —————> | Useful Ministry |
| • Transformed | —————> | Serve |

Application: How does one become poor in spirit?

- By seeing ourselves in the light of the Lord – *When Peter saw Jesus he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Depart from me Lord for I am a sinner.” (Luke 5:8)*
- With open face beholding the glory of the Lord, and is changed from glory to glory even by that same Spirit. God wants to change us but we need to set our gaze upon God and especially the cross for what God has done for us.

CONCLUSION

As we go through difficult times, let us pray for a personal encounter with God so we may realize how spiritually poor we are in the light of God and set our gaze upon Jesus and what He has done for us on the cross. May we realise that God has never forsaken us but will always provide a way for us to return to Him, to be fully restored in His Kingdom. When we realize our lack and need for God, we will be in a position to receive His blessings that will enable us to face whatever situation or circumstances in our lives.

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A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Matthew 5:1-3 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God's word was read, how have these verses spoken to you?

- b.
 - (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “Poor in Spirit”?
 - (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a Why would a disciple of Christ be blessed when he/she realizes he/she is spiritually poor?
- 2b. Which of the 4 impacts of being poor in spirit do you find evident in your life and which are lacking?
- 2c. How has knowing that you can become poor in spirit by seeing yourself in the light of the Lord and beholding the glory of the Lord to be changed from glory to glory by His Spirit, impacted you?
- 3a. Poor in spirit is a willingness to let God lead us beyond where we are, to where we can be. Do you desire to be poor in spirit?
- 3b. What change in attitude do you need in order to be poor in spirit?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b above, for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on an encounter you had coming face to face with your spiritual poverty that led to a closer relationship with Christ, transformed to serve and testify of His goodness to you.

OR

Give thanks to God for being your good and loving Saviour and the blessings you have received from Him in and through Christ.

5. With a prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 3b and 3c above, committing to support one another to be willing to let God lead you beyond where you are, to where you can be.

As a group, pray also for God to grant each of you an encounter with Him that will transform you to be full of God as you empty yourself so you be useful in ministry and serve God's Kingdom purpose in your lives.

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