

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

1. What does it mean for a Christian to be poor in spirit?

2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who did or did not exhibit this attitude?

3. Why are believers like this?

4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?

5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian’s desire to be poor in spirit?

6. What is the result of being poor in spirit?

7. How was Jesus perfectly poor in spirit?

8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: *“Blessed are the spiritually poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
He speaks of the glory theology of both the Pharisees of Jesus’ day and the Muslims (Turks) of his day and how this beatitude would have struck them to the heart! He also makes it clear that the words “spiritually poor” discount the notion of earthly poverty being a sign of Christian faith.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. “

1. What does it mean that a Christian mourns, i.e. what kind of mourning is this?
2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who did or did not exhibit this attitude?
3. Why do believers mourn?
4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?
5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian's proper mourning?
6. What is the result of being poor in spirit?
7. How did Jesus mourn perfectly?
8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: “And he wants to teach his Christians, when things go badly for them and they have to mourn, to know that it is God's good pleasure and to make it theirs as well, not to curse or rage or despair as though their God did not want to be gracious. When this happens, the bitter draft should be mixed and made milder with honey and sugar. He promises here that this is pleasing to Him; and He calls them “blessed,” comforting them here, and hereafter taking the sorrow away from them completely.”

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

1. What does it mean that a Christian is meek?
2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who did or did not exhibit this attitude?
3. Why are believers meek?
4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?
5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian’s attitude of meekness?
6. What is the result of being meek?
7. How was Jesus perfectly meek?
8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: “There stands the decree: “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Just take a look for yourself at the queer characters who are always arguing and squabbling about property and other things. They refuse to give in to anybody, but insist on rushing everything through headlong, regardless of whether their quarreling and squabbling costs them more than they could ever gain. Ultimately they lose their land and servants, house and home, and get unrest and a bad conscience thrown in. And God adds his blessing to it, saying: “Do not be meek, then, so that you may not keep your precious land, nor enjoy your morsel of peace.” But if you want to do right and have rest, let your neighbor’s malice and viciousness smother and burn itself out. Otherwise you can do nothing more pleasing to the devil or more harmful to yourself than to lose your temper and make a racket.”

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

1. What does it mean that a Christian hungers and thirsts for righteousness?
2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who did or did not exhibit this attitude?
3. Why do believers hunger and thirst for righteousness?
4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?
5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian's hunger and thirst for righteousness?
6. What is the result of hungering and thirsting for righteousness?
7. How did Jesus hunger and thirst for righteousness perfectly?
8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: Luther puts strong emphasis on the righteous life that we live by faith, not focusing so much on the righteousness we have in Christ. He disparages the monks who run to the monastery for worldly reasons (not wanting to make a living, can't stand to see the world's sin, etc.) and not because of a hunger or thirst for righteousness. He notes that we ought to have *"a hunger and thirst for righteousness that can never be curbed or stopped or sated, one that looks for nothing and cares for nothing except the accomplishment and maintenance of the right, despising everything that hinders this end."* His focus is really on doing that as we serve God and seek to make righteous the world around us. The "being filled," to Luther, is seeing that our work in the Lord is not vain.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

1. What does it mean that a Christian is merciful?
2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who did or did not exhibit this attitude?
3. Why do believers show mercy?
4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?
5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian's merciful attitude and actions?
6. What is the result of being merciful?
7. How did Jesus exhibit perfect mercy?
8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: "As St. James also says (James 2:13): "Judgment without mercy will be spoken over the one who has shown no mercy." At the Last Day, therefore, Christ will also cite this lack of mercy as the worst injury done to Him, whatever we have done out of a lack of mercy. He Himself will utter the curse (Matt. 25:41, 42): "I was hungry and thirsty, and you gave Me no food, you gave Me no drink. Depart from Me, therefore, you cursed, into eternal hell-fire." He warns and exhorts us faithfully, out of sheer grace and mercy. Whoever does not want to accept this, let him choose the curse and eternal damnation. Think of the rich man in Luke 16; daily he saw poor Lazarus lying before his door full of sores, yet he did not have enough mercy to give him a bundle of straw or to grant him the crumbs under his table. But look how terribly he was requited; in hell he would gladly have given a hundred thousand guildens for the privilege of boasting that he had given him even a thread."

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

1. What does it mean that a Christian is pure in heart?
2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who did or did not exhibit this attitude?
3. Why are believers pure in heart?
4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?
5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian's pure heart?
6. What is the result of being pure in heart?
7. How did Jesus exhibit a perfect pure heart?
8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: "What is meant by a "pure heart" is this: one that is watching and pondering what God says and replacing its own ideas with the Word of God. This alone is pure before God, yes, purity itself, which purifies everything that it includes and touches."

"But so long as he sticks to these two—namely, the Word of faith toward God, which purifies the heart, and the Word of understanding, which teaches him what he is to do toward his neighbor in his station—everything is pure for him, even if with his hands and the rest of his body he handles nothing but dirt."

"Therefore be on guard against all your own ideas if you want to be pure before God. See to it that your heart is founded and fastened on the Word of God. Then you will be purer than all the Carthusians and saints in the world."

"Now you have the meaning of "pure heart": it is one that functions completely on the basis of the pure Word of God. What is their reward, what does he promise to them? It is this: "They shall see God." A wonderful title and an excellent treasure! But what does it mean to "see God"?...if you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then you see immediately that you have a gracious God. For faith leads you up and opens up the heart and will of God for you. There you see sheer, superabundant grace and love. That is exactly what it means "to see God," not with physical eyes, with which no one can see Him in this life, but with faith..."

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

1. What does it mean that a Christian is a peacemaker?
2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who were/were not peacemakers?
3. Why are believers peacemakers?
4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?
5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian's desire to be peacemakers?
6. What is the result of being a peacemaker?
7. How was Jesus a perfect peacemaker?
8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: "St. Augustine boasts that when his mother Monica saw two people at odds, she would always speak the best to both sides. Whatever good she heard about the one, she brought to the other; but whatever evil she heard, that she kept to herself or mitigated as much as possible. In this way she often brought on a reconciliation. It is especially among womenfolk that the shameful vice of slander is prevalent, so that great misfortune is often caused by an evil tongue. This is the work of those bitter and poisonous brides of the devil, who when they hear a word about another, viciously make it sharper, more pointed, and more bitter against the others, so that sometimes misery and murder are the result."

"Be a reconciler and a mediator between your neighbors. Carry the best to both sides; but keep quiet about the bad, which the devil has inspired, or explain it the best way you can. If you come to Margaret, do what is said of Monica, Augustine's mother, and say: "My dear Margaret, why are you so bitter? Surely she does not intend it so badly. All I notice about her is that she would like to be your dear sister." In the same way, if you meet Catherine, do the same thing. Then, as a true child of God, you will have made peace on both sides as far as possible."

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1. What does it mean that a Christian is persecuted?
2. Can you think of biblical examples of people who were or were not persecuted?
3. Why are believers willing to be persecuted?
4. How is this different for believers as opposed to unbelievers?
5. Can you think of examples of how the sinful nature encroaches on the Christian’s willingness to endure persecution?
6. What is the result for those who are persecuted?
7. How did Jesus perfectly endure persecution?
8. What does that mean for us?

Luther: See to it, therefore, that you have a genuine divine cause for whose sake you suffer persecution, and that you are really convinced of it so that your conscience can take a stand and stick by it, even though the whole world should stand up against you. The primary thing is that you grasp the Word of God firmly and surely so that there can be no doubt or hesitation there. Suppose that the Emperor, the bishops, or the princes were to forbid marriage, freedom in the choice of food, the use of both

kinds in the Sacrament, and the like, and were to persecute you for these things. Then you would have to see to it that your heart is convinced and persuaded that the Word of God has made these things free and unprohibited, that it even commands us to take them seriously and to stake our lives upon them. Then you can have the confidence to say: "This cause does not belong to me but to Christ, my Lord. For I have not concocted it out of my own head. I have not assumed or begun it on my own or at the advice or suggestion of any man. But it has been brought and announced to me from heaven through the mouth of Christ, who never deludes or deceives me but is Himself sheer Truth and Righteousness. At this Man's Word I will take the risk of suffering of doing and forsaking whatever I should. All by itself, His Word will accomplish more to comfort and strengthen my heart than the raging threatening of all the devils and of the world can accomplish to frighten me."

Who cares if a crazy prince or a foolish emperor fumes in his rage and threatens me with sword, fire, or the gallows! Just as long as my Christ is talking dearly to my heart, comforting me with the promises that I am blessed, that I am right with God in heaven and that all the heavenly host and creation call me blessed. Just let my heart and mind be ready to suffer for the sake of His Word and work. Then why should I let myself be scared by these miserable people, who rage and foam in their hostility to God but suddenly disappear like a puff of smoke or a bubble, as the prophet Isaiah says (Is. 51:12,13): "I am He that comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, and have forgotten the Lord, who made you, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?" That is to say: "He who comforts you and takes pleasure in you is almighty and eternal. When it is all over with them, He will still be sitting up there, and so will you. Why, then, let the threatening and fuming of a miserable, stinking bag of worms concern you more than the divine comfort and approval? Be grateful to God and happy in your heart that you are worthy of suffering this, as the apostles went forth (Acts 5:41) leaping for joy over the fact that they were disgraced and beaten down.

Conclusion to the Beatitudes of Matthew 5

Think of the Beatitudes not a list of blessings, but a circle of blessings that begins with the kingdom of heaven and ends with the same. They are filled with paradoxes. They encompass the Christian's life: the first four beatitudes speak of the Christian's relationship with God and the last four deal with the Christian's relationship with others. All speak of blessings that are already possessed by the Christian. Believers do not do these things in order to be saved; they do them because they have been saved by Jesus. In these Beatitudes, Jesus shares with us what happens as we live our faith in these particular ways. The follower of Christ experiences the happiness, the blessedness described here by the Savior. Jesus describes a heavenly happiness, a happiness of the highest kind that comes from having a relationship with our God in Christ

We began our study asking "What can we gain from a study of the Beatitudes?" By the grace of Jesus and the Spirit's power, we now enjoy those things:

- 1) A deeper appreciation for the blessings we enjoy as a child of God
- 2) Personal growth in holy living (sanctification)—out of love and thanks to God
- 3) Experiencing blessings from God in even greater measure

Other “Blessed Are...” statements of Jesus

Look at each of the beatitudes here in context to find the meaning of Jesus’ words when he spoke them and the application for us today.

Matthew 11:6 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

Matthew 16:17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

Luke 10:23-24 Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

Luke 11:28 He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

John 13:17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”