

Morning Sermon January 5, 2020

“The First Step Toward Happiness: Down” Matthew 5:3

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Matthew 5:3 (NKJV)

*We live in a world, and in a day and age, that exalts SELF! The world’s teachers teach self-esteem, self-confidence, self-image, self-love, self-worth... even self-actualization!*

*I remember in high school and in college reading, and learning about Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs -*



*What the graph was meant to show was what people NEEDED in order to be HAPPY! You could say: You need to eat, you need to drink, you need your clothing and housing, these Maslow considered the foundation. You need sweet love and self-esteem that came from applause and respect of others. You need to reach that place in life, that gives you inner fulfillment ... The lowest level he would say was easiest to reach. This would maybe bring a low level of happiness, but it was also considered the foundation for the higher levels – According to Maslow, no food meant no Heaven! In schools now things are worse! Self-esteem, self-actualization are not just one course ... These ideas pervade our society and yet -*

I. *Jesus is our Authority on Blessedness / Happiness –*

1. *Jesus implied about Himself that He was / is a physician, and indeed He is –*

<sup>16</sup> **And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, “How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?”** <sup>17</sup> **When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”** Mark 2:16–18 (NKJV)

*Though Jesus healed every kind of disease, His specialty was spiritual / moral disease, sin, which is at the root / heart of every other disease, including death!*

2. *He is my / our expert on Blessedness / Happiness, Matthew Henry hints that He is our High Priest of happiness, as He came into this world to bless us, even with a blessing of repentance –*

<sup>26</sup> **To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”** Acts 3:26 (NKJV)

3. *The blessing of Abraham, not Maslow, but the Abraham of Genesis, who is known as the Father of our Faith, this blessing comes through Christ, so He is not just an expert, but He is our source of Happiness –*

<sup>3</sup> **I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”** Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

4. *Jesus begins His sermon on the mount with “Blessings” and the first and foundation of these is <sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit It has the same blessing connected to it as the last beatitude does –*

<sup>10</sup> **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** Matthew 5:10 (NKJV)

*This means all of the Beatitudes are a unit and all concern the Kingdom of Heaven, which Jesus discusses throughout His Sermon on the Mount, if we want to be blessed, truly and eternally happy, the Kingdom of Heaven is our goal, poor in spirit is our first step toward it!*

## II. What does Jesus mean by being “poor in spirit?”

1. *It is a descriptive quality, it describes who and what we are as much or more than what we do, it implies a knowledge of our heart –*

<sup>19</sup> For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. Matthew 15:19 (NKJV)

*This is opposite of the scribes and Pharisee who earned Jesus’ woes rather than blessings –*

<sup>27</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Matthew 23:27–28 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)

- A. *The applause of men for their outward, seeming righteousness, made the religious leaders among the Jews to neglect their hearts –*

<sup>6</sup> They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ Matthew 23:6–7 (NKJV)

- B. *We are by nature, by birth, sinners –*

<sup>10</sup> As it is written: “*There is none righteous, no, not one;* <sup>11</sup> *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.* <sup>12</sup> *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.*” Romans 3:10–12 (NKJV)

*We are poor in spirit because we understand this to be the case!*

2. *Being “poor” can be part of this –*

<sup>20</sup> Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: “Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. Luke 6:20 (NKJV)  
*There is a literal poverty connection in this verse, but it does not mean all poor people go to Heaven, or opposite that, all rich to Hell, but there is a spiritual / moral advantage to poverty, you will*

*remember Jesus said -*

<sup>24</sup> And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Matthew 19:24 (NKJV)

*“If the hand be full of pebbles, it cannot receive gold.”*

*Thomas Watson*

*This seeming best, Nicodemus, need conversion -*

<sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ John 3:7 (NKJV)

3. *Being poor in spirit is a realization of NEED –*

*Jesus illustrates what this means in a parable -*

<sup>9</sup> Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: <sup>10</sup> “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ <sup>13</sup> And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 18:9–14 (NKJV)

4. *The poor in spirit person recognizes sin / self is a destructive force – Preaching against it is positive ...*

*The person who is poor in spirit cannot trust SELF / this person despises self, but values Christ, to the poor in spirit person Christ is God’s indescribable Gift as He meets this person’s moral / spiritual needs -*

<sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15 (NKJV)

## III. The Kingdom of Heaven / Salvation / Eternal Life is the Reward for being “poor in spirit” -

Revelation 21:1-7; Mark 8:34-36 - *It is more about self-denial than self-fulfillment ...*

*Arnold Brevick*