

MATTHEW 5:3

The sermon on the mount is without a doubt the greatest teachings ever given to man. The principles set forth in so very few words, by Christ, are just as meaningful today as when He said them. They give us the highest moral standard known to man. They give us comfort when trials and temptations come our way. They instruct us on to live and treat one another. Truly no one could ever say that the wisdom seen in the sermon on the mount came from a mere man. Jesus, being the Son of God, was inspired to speak such truths. It therefore behooves man to study and learn what Jesus has said that he might improve his life.

Contained in that great sermon are what we call the beatitudes. Within Mt. 5:3-11 Jesus says that certain types of people are "blessed," which means happy. Nine times our Lord refers to qualities of life we are to have if we want to be truly happy. Some of us are happy only for a little while. A hobby, activity, family get-together, or some other past time will for a moment, make us smile, but the happiness spoken of by Jesus is more than momentary satisfaction. It is an ever going, ever present happiness that comes from behavior befitting a human being as God has created it. The word 'blessed' may then be slightly better than 'happy' in describing the feeling one gets by living according to Christ's beatitudes.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (Mt. 5:3). Jesus says two things in this verse about being happy. First, He remarks that we are to be poor in spirit, when it comes to knowing our spiritual condition in life. We are to approach God as a humble sinner, not as a self-righteous Pharisee. We come to God as the publican (with very little to offer), not as one who is proud, conceited, and arrogant. When we think we have control of everything, it is at that point we have little control over anything! To be poor in spirit is to look realistically at life, seeing one's dependence on God, and the inability of self.

An attitude of poverty is required. Even if the follower of God has great wealth, he must view it as relatively unimportant as compared with having the riches of God's spiritual blessings. As Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Secondly, Jesus said that happiness comes from being in the kingdom of Heaven. When those, who are poor in spirit, want to come to God they may do so because "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1Pet. 5:5). True, everlasting happiness is not obtained in this world. Once we have enjoyed the abundant life of this earth in Christ (Jn. 10:10) we can, by a faithful life, be ushered into the eternal reward to be blessed forever.

Developing a Positive Spiritual Attitude (PSA) is what the beatitudes are all about. Knowing what to do and what not to do, makes life fulfilling, fun, and spiritually rewarding. To grow in your PSA, become "poor in spirit" this very day.

More beatitudes next week...