

## BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

In Matthew 5:3-10 we have a total of eight beatitudes. The word “beatitude” comes from a Latin word (beatus) meaning “blessed” or “happy”.

### Matthew 5:3 (NKJV)

**3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

"A fairly accurate description of the human race might be furnished to one unacquainted with it by taking the Beatitudes, turning them wrong side out, and saying, "Here is the human race." For the exact opposite of the virtues in the Beatitudes are the very qualities which distinguish human life and conduct." – **A. W. Tozer**

The word “Blessed” (*Gk. makarios*) means more than merely being happy. It signifies a state of well-being in terms of relationship with God. It signifies the favor of God resting upon a person resulting in a deep spiritual joy.

In the OT the “**poor**”, in a godly sense, were those who were destitute and cried out to God for help in dependence upon Him. Christ here applies it to those who acknowledge they are spiritually destitute and look to God for salvation. This fits the Messianic emphasis seen in Isa. 61:1.

### Isaiah 61:1 (NKJV)

**1** “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me **To preach good tidings to the poor**; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

### Luke 4:17–18 (NKJV) [Christ in the synagogue in Nazareth]

**17** And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

**18** “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me **To preach the gospel to the poor**; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

To be “**poor in spirit**” means to be spiritually HONEST in recognizing that you are “spiritually bankrupt”. It is the opposite of being PROUD in spirit. It humbly acknowledges I don’t have anything to offer God that would make myself right with Him. It is the opposite of being “spiritually self-sufficient” and “self-righteous”.

**Luke 18:11–14 (NKJV)**

**11** 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.

**12** I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’

**13** 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!’

**14** 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.”

The kingdom belongs to the humbled! This is the right place to start because this is where salvation starts. True saving faith acknowledges I am spiritually bankrupt – I am dependent upon God - I need a Savior. I can’t get to the kingdom by what I have to offer – because I am spiritually destitute. This is a very humbling reality, and true believers are “**poor in spirit**” having humbled themselves before God as sinners in need of the mercy and grace of God.

It is the “**poor in spirit**” to whom the kingdom belongs. It is they who will be in the kingdom, not the self-righteous. “**Poor in spirit**” is descriptively characteristic of those who have been saved and are therefore headed to the kingdom.

“The Beatitudes are not primarily promises to the individual but a description of him. They do not show a man how to be saved, but describe the characteristics manifested by one who is born again.”

– **Wycliffe Bible Commentary**