

The Poor in Spirit Get What?!

Matthew 5:1-12

All Saints Day, November 1, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

First of all, what is the Kingdom of heaven? Heaven is a euphemism for God. It is Matthew's way of talking about the Kingdom of God that Luke and Mark talk about. So we could say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of God." Ok. What is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is anywhere where God reigns. This would seem to imply that there are places where God reigns and places where God does not reign. Inside the Kingdom of God God reigns. Outside of the Kingdom of God, God does not reign. Outside of the Kingdom of God other forces hold sway, the forces of darkness and evil. Inside the Kingdom of God, God's will is done, His name is hallowed. God holds sway in the Kingdom of God.

You may ask, and some of you have done so, doesn't God hold sway everywhere? The answer is no. In spite of the fact that God is almighty and all powerful, He does not hold sway everywhere. If God held sway everywhere then there would be no sin. The fact that there is sin means that God does not always get His way. Those places where God does not get His way are those places outside of the Kingdom of God. Those places where God does get His way are those places inside the Kingdom of God.

What way is God trying to get? In other words when I tell you that the Kingdom of God is that place where God gets His way, what way is God trying to get? What is He trying to accomplish? God wants all people to come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. In other words God wants people to come to a right knowledge of Him and of themselves and God wants them to be saved. He wants them to be saved from their sins and everlasting death.

That means that those inside the Kingdom of God have the knowledge of God. They have knowledge of themselves. Those inside the Kingdom of God are those whom God has saved. He has saved them from their sins and from everlasting death. It is the will of God that they should live forever. Therefore anyone who is inside the Kingdom of God shall live forever. That is the will of God. His will holds sway inside of His Kingdom.

Outside the Kingdom of God there is darkness. That is to say that there is no knowledge of God. Because the people outside of the Kingdom of God have no knowledge of God, they do not properly understand themselves. Such people are not saved from sin and everlasting death. Such people are facing everlasting condemnation. Such people are lost unless they turn to the light.

Now that we understand what the Kingdom of heaven is let us return to the beatitude. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Who are the poor in spirit? Because whoever they are they have all of the blessings of the Kingdom of heaven that we have just discussed.

When our Lord says poor in spirit, He means poor in regards to their spirits. He is talking about people who are poor in regards to their spirits. Therefore He is not talking about those who are poor in money or possessions. He is talking about those who are poor in spiritual things. He is talking about those people who have nothing whatsoever to offer God. He is talking about those people who have sinned so much that there is nothing that they can do to make up for their sins, there is nothing that they can do to atone for their sins. Such people cannot earn anything in front of God. Such people are totally unimpressive in front of God. They have violated God's will and impoverished themselves in regards to

their spirit. They have made themselves slaves of sin and of death. These are the people who are poor in spirit.

They are blessed because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Let me say that again, those who have nothing to offer God are the ones upon whom He bestows His kingdom. They are blessed.

Blessed are the ones who mourn because they will be comforted.

Those who mourn are those people who are grieving some kind of loss. The most obvious kind of loss is death. When someone close to you dies you grieve. For all who have experienced this kind of grief, it does not go away. It is constant. It may not always be in the forefront of your mind and heart, but it will always be there. If you have lost a spouse to death, you may eventually remarry, but the grief of the first spouse will not go away.

Many of you mourn the loss of children. Many of you mourn the loss of parents or grandparents. Many of you mourn the loss of others whom you have loved. Celebrate this day of all days, All Saints Day, because you will be comforted.

Notice that the Lord does not say that you are comforted. He does not mock your grief. He does not make your grief less than what it is. He does not try to pretend that your pain is not so bad so that He feels better. No. The Lord suffers with you. You are not comforted now. You grieve now. But you are blessed because you will be comforted in the future. You will be comforted in the future when our Lord raises the dead and restores to you those whom you have lost who have preceded you in the faith.

Blessed are those who are yielding.

Who are the yielding? The King James calls them the meek. Others call them the gentle. Blessed are the gentle for they will inherit the earth.

The yielding are those who like their Father in heaven do not always get their way. They are the ones who allow others to use them because their Lord got used. They are the ones who are in service to their neighbor each and every day because their Lord is constantly in service to them. They are the ones who do not assert their own way because they are constantly on the look out for the way of their Lord. If they assert anything, it is always His way. These are the yielding. These are the meek. These are the ones who do not resist an evil person just as their Lord did not resist evil people. And when the Lord did not resist evil people the gentle received their everlasting salvation.

The yielding are the ones who know that the Kingdom of heaven is theirs. They know that everlasting life is theirs. They know that even if nothing goes their way in this life the life to come is theirs. Because they are confident of their everlasting salvation it does not bother them when things do not always go their way. These are the yielding.

They will inherit the earth. That is not a euphemism. Our Lord is not speaking a parable when He speaks the beatitudes. The beatitudes are to be taken seriously and literally. They will inherit the earth. When the Lord returns at the end of time the old condition of the heavens and the earth will be burned away. God will then renew the heavens and the earth and make them to be without death. I imagine He will also make the earth bigger to hold all of the saved. This is the earth that the meek will inherit. It is the earth upon which you walk except renewed without death.

Blessed are the ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness because they will be filled.

Who are the ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They are the ones who hunger and thirst for anything. That is to say that someone who hungers for food is someone who does not have food.

And someone who thirst for drink is someone who does not have drink. Therefore the person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness is someone who does not have righteousness, but he wants it.

This is why our Lord says that anyone who loves his life in this world will lose it, but anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Because some of you have bought into the lie of self esteem, it seems strange to you that the Lord would give eternal life to someone who hates his life. Surely we are meant to love our lives and enjoy them.

The problem with our lives is that they lack righteousness. Therefore if you are satisfied with your life, you are satisfied without righteousness. If you are satisfied without righteousness, you do not hunger and thirst for it and you will not be filled with it.

Only those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. That is to say that they will receive righteousness such that they will be satisfied. If someone hungers and thirsts for righteousness, that means that they acknowledge that they don't have any. They hate their life in this world and they seek a better one.

The Lord promises that if you lack righteousness and hunger and thirst for it, He will fill you with righteousness. In other words there will come a day when the Lord returns and He will make you righteous. On that day, you will be satisfied.

Blessed are the ones who show mercy because they will be shown mercy.

Many of you have misinterpreted these statements from our Lord as works righteousness. In other words some of you read this and similar statements from our Lord as if our Lord is proposing a deal: if you show mercy, I'll show mercy. If you don't show mercy, I won't show mercy either. If you are such a person you are going to have to quit praying the Lord's Prayer. After all in that prayer you pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." If that is a deal that you are making with God then the Lord's Prayer condemns you to hell and the beatitudes do as well.

Such a reading of the beatitude is incorrect. After all those who are poor in spirit will have the Kingdom of heaven. The reason that you show mercy is because you have already been shown mercy. After all you would not show mercy if it were not for the fact that you have been shown mercy.

Your Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven you of all of your sins. He has released you from an eternity in hell that you would have to endure in order to pay for your sins. Since eternity never ends, you would never get out of hell. You would always be there. So when Jesus forgives you of your sins, He is releasing you from an eternity in hell. He is forgiving you of everything. He holds nothing against you.

If you believe this, then the most natural thing in the world is to go out and be merciful to others. After all how can you hold something against someone else when they wrong you, when the Lord does not hold things against you when you wrong Him? If you have been forgiven of hell itself, then you forgive the offenses of others. If you don't show mercy in this way, then do you really believe that our Lord has forgiven you of all of hell for all of eternity?

This is why you show mercy. You show mercy because you believe. Blessed are those who show mercy. They will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart because they will see God.

Again this is easy to misunderstand in a works righteous manner. Most of you hear this beatitude and you think to yourself that you have to make your heart pure in order to see God. But that is not what the rest of the beatitudes have said.

Those who are pure in heart are those who do not deceive themselves in regards to God and those who do not deceive themselves in regards to themselves. In other words a person who is unrighteous, but

who claims to be righteous, is not pure in heart. Such a person is duplicitous. A person who claims that God does not require righteousness even though God does is not honest about God. They are not pure in heart. Someone who is pure in heart is someone who acknowledges that they are not righteous. A person who is pure in heart is someone who does not lie about their sins to themselves or to their God. A person who is pure in heart will confess his sins when confronted with them. A person who is pure in heart is not perfect, but someone who is honest about their imperfections. They lead no double life. They simply are who they are.

These people will see God. Again that statement is to be taken literally. They will rise from the dead and look God in the face and not die.

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

Wherever forgiveness is employed there is peace. So take for example our Lord Jesus Christ. He dies on the cross and forgives you of your sins. By doing so the wrath of God is laid aside. God is no longer angry with you for the things that you have done. Because God is no longer angry with you for the things that you have done there is peace between you and God. Because Jesus has brought about this peace, He is the Son of God. After all blessed are the peacemakers because they will be called sons of God.

That means that wherever forgiveness is employed there is peace. I grant peace to the congregation when I grant the forgiveness that Jesus won for you on the cross. You grant peace when you grant to each other the forgiveness that Jesus won for you on the cross. When you confess your sins to one another and forgive one another you bring peace among yourselves.

That is what the sharing the peace during the Divine Service is supposed to express. It means that so far as you know there is no sin between yourself and the people with whom you share the peace. All of us ought to be able to share the peace with everyone in the room before eating Christ's body and drinking His blood. The reason is that His body and blood are the source of forgiveness for all of us. They are therefore the source of our peace. That peace is placed upon us for use in our daily lives so that we may live at peace with the other members of the congregation. That forgiveness is placed upon us for deployment in our daily lives.

I think this is why some of you don't want to address the sins of others. The reason is that you do not know what to do with them. You should know what to do with them because Jesus knew what to do with yours. We know what to do with sins, forgive them. Therefore there should be no fear in addressing the sins of others. After all, you are only going to wind up forgiving them in the end. If they are offended by such forgiveness, it is because they do not believe in Jesus. After all only a person who believes that they are justified by their works believes that someone else should justify themselves to them by their works.

Therefore those who know that they are justified by grace offer grace to others. Those who are forgiven forgive. Those who forgive are peacemakers. They shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are the ones who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness because theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

And now we have come full circle in the beatitudes. The poor were blessed and so received the Kingdom of heaven. Now those who are persecuted receive the Kingdom of heaven. I guarantee you that if you are poor in spirit and if you are gentle the world will hate you. The world hates poor and gentle people. It admires the wealthy and the successful and the strong. If you are one who grieves, the world will avoid you. The world despises pain and those who suffer from it. The world despises those who

desire righteousness because it desires no righteousness for itself. The world despises the pure in heart because the pure in heart condemn the world for its duplicity. The world despises peacemakers because there is so much to be made of war. And so when the Lord makes you these things and promises you these blessings the world will persecute you. It will revile you. Its minions will say all kinds of evil things against you. They will make up lies about you and tell lies about you. When it does rejoice and be glad because great will be your reward with God. After all that is how their fathers treated the prophets who were before you.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.