

A HAPPY POOR MAN

Matt. 5:1-3

Introduction:

The Preacher is Jesus and he is power.

The pulpit was up in the mountains.

The occasion was the instructing of his Disciples.

In the previous chapter he had called some followers.

Right at the beginning of the New Testament we come to the Sermon On The Mount. You have heard so often this sermon. Some of you know it by heart. Or at least you are familiar with some of the words. It is undoubtedly the most famous instance of public preaching of Jesus as a whole.

I should like us in the next several weeks to explore this sermon with great excitement and challenge. The sermon has been universally admired. I think we should come to appreciate its deep significance.

Let me first point out to you some of the ideas which I think, and some opinions about the sermon, that may not be 100% true.

First, we hear that the sermon is not real Gospel at all. Many hold this opinion.

Second, there are others who say that the sermon is the only Gospel which they need. Now somewhere between these two extremes, there must be some truth for you. For it must have been for great concern for both the Preacher and the people who were listening. It is obvious that there are people who go to extremes on what we call in theology, "social Gospel". And who would insist that this is really all that is necessary. For example, people with this in

mind, consider the Golden Rule about doing unto others as one would have others do unto one's self. Matt. 7:12. Transfer all of Salvation to the matter of human effort, and thus bypass the work of Jesus. I hope we can probe into this sermon as the weeks and the months go by. I do not think this will be a dull study for I shall attempt to unfold for you the meaning of the Scriptures contained in this sermon.

Many people are confused about God's requirements. And some would boast that this is a sufficient rule of morality. Because it has to do with so many beautiful things. And there are some of the very highest ideals of righteousness suggested.

Others recognize this as just (a high standard) of character. And at the same time assert that such requirements are unattainable. And that they are discouraging to poor sinful men with some many difficulties and temptations. But we fail to understand the real design of the sermon.

Now others have asserted this to be (the substance) of Christianity. That Christ is speaking here. From his own lips - therefore we should discard the doctrine of redemption which Paul preached.

I think there are others who talk about this sermon as (a contrast between two men) and their teaching. This to be the teaching of (Christ) and the law to be the teaching of (Moses). Hence, they say that Christianity is here taught by Jesus on a high plain. And that the (law) of God given to the Jews was by Moses. Of course the mistake here is that both the law of Moses and the teaching of Jesus were identical. And hence they say as (God) came down to Moses on the mountain to give him the law. So now (God) comes down in the form of Jesus on the Mount to give Christians the new law.

But the simple truth is that the law was a schoolmaster and it was to lead men unto Christ.

We are confronted as to what these words mean. What did Jesus, really say. And what is he saying to me. This is a misunderstood document. Books have been written about it and I think the sermon has been cheapen and distorted by some.

Now the (temptation) for us just to say I am a simple Christian - give me the Sermon on the Mount.

There are others who say that this is just a (technical sermon) that it was edited, and that these were collections of sayings of Christ. Some German scholars have held that Matthew took his scissors and clipped the sayings of Jesus from various writings and pasted them together and made them into a sermon.

Why should we consider the Sermon on the Mount at all. Now Jesus felt that he had a message to give. And I know that God's spirit must be led to give this to the Christian world and to the church. Sometimes I think we need to re-think why we have the Bible, and our attitude, and our failure to take it seriously. And we do not let it speak to us. But the Bible is our textbook and as we approach this Bible correctly, then we will discover this truth. I think evil men who were not dishonest were just mistaken men. They did not deliberately set out to go wrong, and to teach something that was wrong, but the trouble was that they took a theory or something that pleased them and then they sought to find and illustrate wherever they could.

We must determine for whom the Sermon on the Mount was intended. To whom did it apply. What is really the purpose of this sermon. Now I have suggested that men thought it was purely social. That it was the mosaic law elaborated. And others have even gone so far as to say that the sermon is in the future, that it

is in connection with the coming age. When the Kingdom of God comes in and Jesus then rules and is King of his Kingdom. So they think it will apply to people later on. In the meantime, it has nothing to do with us.

Clearly our Lord was preaching to those (Disciples) - telling them what they were to do in this world. While he was here and after he had gone.

He was preaching to people and he meant for them to practice this. And to use it. And if you really consider the Sermon on the Mount - there is no teaching here but what you can find in the New Testament. These great teachings, and you can varify them. Therefore, I want to suggest to you that you are in danger if you say that this sermon has nothing to do with the modern Christian. It has something to say and it is meant for all Christian people.

It is the perfect picture of the life of the (Kingdom man) and I have no doubt in my mind that this is true. And I will seek to say more on this a little later. Why should we study it. Why should we try to live it. That we might be perfected and a peculiar people and zealous of good works as the Apostle says in Titus 2:14.

We need this because we need the absolute new birth. The Holy Spirit working within. These (Beatitudes) pull a man down, from his high perch. They helped me to see how utter helpless I am.

And another reason I think that we should launch into a study of this is that if we will live and try to practice these things, (we will be blessed people.)

✓ V. 1 - The crowds followed, the multitudes. And Jesus is going to speak into the (ear) of his Disciples. Not to the world, he is not giving (a charter for a better world). He is speaking to his own.

He comes to talk about the kingdom man. His nature, the principles of that kingdom that he is to rule in the hearts of men. He will take a Kingdom man, give his nature, his character, and the principles which operate in this man's life.

Put down in your memory now that Jesus is going to paint a picture - he is going to draw a portrait of the kingdom man. It is up in the mountains, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The audience consists of twelve Disciples whom he has just appointed and a large number of other Disciples who had been instructed somewhat on the principles of the Kingdom. Here is a message that has life in it - it has fire in it. He has selected 12 and now he commences the organization. And the 12 men were to labor in the Kingdom and it is necessary for them to understand these fundamentals. You remember many people who followed Jesus were looking for physical and temporal relief from the woes of the day. Even, somehow, we today - it is difficult for us to see that we must be more spiritually minded and not be blinded by the things of the world. Now Jesus does not start off with regeneration - justification by faith, as we hear many people say. But he gives the principles of the Kingdom - which is Spiritual. And it is given in the form of a paradox. This is something that seems to be contradictory and yet, for instance, happy are the unhappy. Happy are the poor. Now we see things just the opposite.

V. 2 - He opened his mouth. He had something special to say. This is the King's manifesto. He turns the world upside-down. Now the key word is blessed. There are two words in the New Testament - one in Eph. 3:1-3 - where it blesses the churches. And then there is the word that means to speak a good word to a person - but the other word used is a word which means happy. We have the word of happy life - looking for that which is true.

Now there is danger which comes from the word happy - which may come from that which happens. Now that is not what Christ is saying. He is not dealing with circumstances. Happiness does not depend upon circumstances, possessions, etc. It is what you are. It is not how you live to bring in the Kingdom - but this is a MUST - how you must live in Christ. And that is why he says, (congratulations.)

V. 3 - The poor in spirit. Let me ask, what does this mean. What does it not mean, may be a better way to approach it. Now it does not mean a poor man. We must get the (distinction between circumstances.) It does not speak of a man's poverty. He does not say for a man to cast away all of his wealth, and the treasures of his life. You know a man may strip himself of all that belongs to him and still his heart can be in a sad condition.

It does not mean that life is shortened by the wants of physical existence.

A man may give his body to be burned at the stake and yet have not love - he is nothing.

So we would not regard this as (commending) poverty. That would surely be entirely wrong. The poorer a man is - the nearer the Kingdom of God than the rich man. There is no merit or advantage in being poor. So the passage cannot mean that.

Now (many poor people) rely upon riches exactly the same way as many rich people do. (If) only I had so and so - and they are jealous of those who have it. And it is right at this point that one group of people interpret this statement - they regard the Scriptural authority for the assumption of voluntary poverty. And so, a man may become a saint if somehow he will deliberately make himself poor and turn his back upon wealth. Now being poor does not signify one in the condi-

tion of want. But rather one who is aware of the condition and seeks relief.

He is not speaking of a beggar. A poor man in that regard. A French leader once said if he had the whole world, had enough to eat, money to spend, security from the cradle to the grave - that they would ask for nothing more. That that would make people happy. And yet there are people who are rich, and (yet are miserable.) They have everything that money can buy. And yet they are bewildered and miserable. You know, we have heard people say, if I had a little security - if I had this or that, or a good automobile, or a big house - however, Jesus made it plain. Happiness and contentment are not found that way.

In the second place - I don't think it means poor spirit - such as the Pharisees, and the Scribes - they claimed they were in poverty of spirit.

*Preacher, Elmore, TEXAS, Pastor, Three 9 yrs - Every time met this man - How do you feel? "I feel like the Lord has walked off and left me!" - How was this walk? Bro. The Lord has tried me in every particular this walk!*

In the third place - I don't think it means self depreciation. Many people say, I am nothing, I am nobody. And they insist on taking a back seat. They may feel just as proud and desirous of the first place. In other words, it does not mean that a man who acts humbly because he is proud of his reputation and may take pleasure in it.

The next thing - what does the world think. Now we have just concluded what some men think of truth. It emphasizes self-reliance. Self-expression, as we look at the literature of the world. It controls the whole life of man. If you want to impress your customer, that is the way you do it. If you want to succeed in a profession, you must impress men that you are a success. So you suggest that you are more successful than you actually are. And that is a principle of life.

Charles Wesley once wrote a hymn. And he admitted that he was vile and full of sin. There were people who ridiculed him and said, who wants to sing such a hymn and admit this. They did not understand Christianity. It was a complete misunderstanding - and you see they were not looking at man face to face with God. They were thinking about facing each other. And so they would not have this poverty spirit.

There is nothing so unChristian in the church today as this foolish talk, self-confidence, and self-expression. The Bible names virtues as humility, people advertise themselves. You read the record of some great evangelists - and it is the complete reversal of what the Bible says. A man advertises with his photograph. He picks himself in- the foreground.

Paul says we preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ.

In the third place, the positive meaning of the poverty spirit.

First, we must be conscious as a spiritual pauper. We come now to see that this means the emptying while others may be manifesting fullness. We must be emptied. You cannot fill the new wine in a vessel which is partly filled already with old wine, until the old wine has been poured out. The first thing that you must realize when you look at this is that you cannot do it yourself. We perhaps are more aware of this than Sampson - when surrounded by the enemies, he really did not know, that the Lord had departed from him.

Jesus told a story about a man who talked about his soul and all his goods. And it occurred to him that his soul could exist on just goods and that his heart could not be nourished by food - and God said, Thou fool.

Now (lots of people) think, here is a man who hasn't any goods. And blessed are these poor folks. And you got to go out and beg and that makes you happy. Now, is that so, when you don't know hardly where the next meal is coming from - or you don't have a coat to put on your back. Somebody comes along and says to you - (why you are happy.) Therefore, that's blessedness. Now that doesn't make sense. Always remember this, that the Scripture makes sense - if you look at it in a senseless way, then you are going to find something false in the Scripture. You are just blessed because you haven't got anything. You have to rake and scrape - and you are so concerned - but you are happy people.

Now the word translated - happy - is <sup>Not</sup> because they are poor. But that is applied here because (they have the Kingdom.) It says because they are poor. Do you want to go back and put yourself in their place.

Well, (they thought) a rich man was rich because he was under the favor of God. God prospered him with riches and some of them did not have it. It all goes back to the idea when the Jew was in disfavor, then God's favor was not upon him. Because he is not keeping God's law. But when he prospered, God's favor was upon him, because he was keeping God's law.

So their positions showed their possessions. And when John the Baptist came preaching repentance, they said, what have we got to repent for. We are standing in good - because we are getting what is coming to us. You see, the psychology here that it is hard for rich men to understand and that is why Jesus had a hard time with that fellow that was rich. Poor men, you say, is not under that handicap. He is not under that condition.

Jesus is not saying, "Holy el've got a secret club" - Bro you are not poor, can't get in, Haven't had The Baptism so you can't get in our club - you can't sneak in tomorrow, start join our club & that some young people sixty weeks ago, they act

(Congratulations) because you have been in a condition where you know what you are - that you are not worthy of any merit of God. And they were conscious of their poverty and they could not reach God. Matthew is here giving the foundation of consciousness of spiritual poverty.

They were congratulated, (you think), because the church was made up entirely of poor folks. No, I don't think that's the record. Dr. Hershey Davis once said that the church really wasn't poor, except the church of Jerusalem, and that was because of a famine. James, Mark, or the people - so many people have the idea that all the church folk are in poverty. But Matthew is trying to get across here the message of Jesus. (You) are ready to step into a Kingdom when a man realizes that in himself, he cannot get anything or create anything, or build up any goodness - he is without goodness. And in reality a Spiritual pauper.

Then a man in that condition is willing to take God's grace, God's favor, and Spiritual favor. It is the condition as a matter of fact.

Do you get the idea, (You) must vacate yourself is another meaning and that is the meaning of the Christian life. You get rid of yourself and then Jesus becomes the source. That is the trouble with this generation which produces so many drug addicts, criminals, alcoholics, and broken homes.

To (understand) this further, you must place the riches of Christ above the riches of the earth. Many people today hold that if science really in its progress, can handle anything in the world.

Let me suggest to you that a shot in the arm by a Doctor can immediately dissolve the hatred in your heart, the greed in your heart, and the discontent-

If this were possible, we could cure all of our mistakes. The present, and straighten out all the future. Some people's lives are so tangled up. But we must esteem the riches of Christ, above the riches of this earth. We must know that sin comes between man and God and that we cannot be happy apart from God.

Now this is where the real rub comes in - you have to confess your spiritual poverty, renounce your sins, and turn in a poor and a contrite spirit. Rev. 3:17, Isa. 66:2. Because Thou sayth I am rich, increased in goods. But Thou art wretched and miserable, blind, and naked. This is what Jesus said to the church. They didn't have poverty of spirit. Therefore he couldn't congratulate them.

A wonderful illustration you all know - the prodigal son. He left his father - he had external things. But in his spirit, he was actually poor. But he didn't recognize it. He thought he was the richest man in the world. And it wasn't until he said, I have sinned. I will arise and go back home, confess to my father. I want to be a hiredservant.

We need to sing, I need thee (every hour) most gracious Lord. Oh how sweet that hymn is, and how so few of the spiritual gifts that we receive because we do not recognize the riches of Christ.

We say, if I could just have a million - I'd be the happiest man in the world. Why, I do not need anything in the world. I am rich, I am proud. But how long do you think that would last. The rich man followed that path. And hear him as he says, dip the tip of your finger and feel my tongue.

The next thing I suggest to you is - there must come a consciousness - total dependence upon God. This is what I think he means.

You know the Disciples were asked on one occasion for help - silver and gold we do not have they said. But there are some things we have, and we'll pray for you. And we'll offer you to God because God can meet your needs. This is the way all of us, as little children, must enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Like as a father, piteth his children, the Lord pitys them that fear him.

Now in the last place, how do we become poor in spirit.

It is not inherited. You are not born into a Christian family. We really do not get into the Kingdom by walking into a church.

We must come to know the son of God.

Someone has said earthly thrones are usually built with steps going up. The remarkable thing about the throne of eternal God is that the steps are always down. We must descend if we are going to rise. Like Jesus, who girt himself and washed the feet of the Disciples, we must turn our lives inside out. And every vile spot must be washed. Be assured that there are worthy examples for us to follow. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up. Gideon had the angels to come and tell him the great things he was to do. No, no, this is impossible. I belong to the lowest tribe and the lowest family in the tribe.

Moses felt this same spirit when he said that he was unworthy for the task that God wanted him to do. He was inadequate.

David said, Lord who am I. Thou shouldst come to me. The thing was incredible.

Paul was a great man with many powers. And he waged his fight until the very last - but he never had anything to boast of within himself. And he

always talked of that Damascus Road experience. Time and time again.

If we are truly Christians, we will not rely upon our natural birth. We will not rely either on belonging to a certain family, or to a certain nation or nationality. We will not rely upon our money, or our education, or even our personality. We will not even go off unto a monastery to be by ourselves to suffer hardships. But we shall look unto the Lord Jesus Christ, in poverty, nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling. Poor in spirit, one comes to see himself before God. He is helpless. And he first excels that he cannot help himself.

Now this is hard for the alcoholic to see. It is hard for any human being to accept their own poverty.

But this is the man who has seen himself truly. And Jesus said, you have entered the gate.

And therefore, he answers, you who have a home, a family, etc. He answers - what you must do to be saved.