

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3)

What is Jesus talking about?

Being poor in spirit does not mean “*poor spirited*” – poor spirited people tend to lack drive and have no enthusiasm for life, and therefore have no motivation for life. Jesus means “poverty of spirit” – that is to have no earthly spirit, to empty ourselves, which allows us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This means an absence of pride and self-reliance, that we are in fact nothing without God.

Our attitude

There must be an emptying of our lives before we can begin to fill our lives – we must become poor in spirit before we can become rich in God’s blessings. The kingdom of heaven is theirs because they seek it.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5:4)

What is Jesus talking about?

Some have said that “*mourning*” may refer to mourning one’s own bitter experiences in life, or perhaps mourning over the world circumstances (e.g. poverty, war), but mourning here is rather mourning over the loss of one’s spiritual health via sin. Sin takes away our life. The message of Christ was about repentance, and we cannot repent without sorrow and sorrow is a form of mourning. Jesus was filled with sorrow over our sin – he mourned our sin, our separation from God. “*Mourning ends in comfort only when it leads one to Christ!*”

Our attitude

Mourners are happy because they are the ones who are forgiven, the rest of the world has to live with that endless guilt. Confess your sin and see the freedom and the joy that comes in forgiveness. Eg. Being able to sleep because you have a clear conscience.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt 5:5)

What is Jesus talking about?

Jesus was trying to convey the importance of inward strength and gentleness – this does not mean to be weak, cowardly or passive, but to possess such great strength that outward circumstances do not distract you from your purpose. Jesus wanted everyone to understand the power of being meek. E.g. The zealots used military power to revolt against the Romans, but Jesus’ way of gentleness and kindness in the face of adversity rendered the actions of others obsolete.

Our attitude

Unlike aggressively insisting on your own rights, true meekness is sign of strength. It is a quality of the strong, those who could assert themselves but choose not to. The idea of inheriting the earth as a result of this strength is not about ownership of land or property, but inheriting everlasting life – a life greater than any available here on Earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt 5:6)

What is Jesus talking about?

Hunger and thirst means great desire – think of a man from Jesus’ time, trekking through the desert and a violent sandstorm sweeps through, the sand filling nostrils and throat and the only thing he has is a scarf to cover his face and shield the wind. In this situation today, you would dart for cover and wash your mouth out with a readily available tap with water. Those that possess great hunger and thirst have to work to have it satisfied – we all do what is right every now and again, but Jesus here is talking about a strong, passionate and unyielding desire to do right.

Righteousness is a positive virtue, it is an attribute motivated by love for God and a desire to please him. Righteousness is also being in a state of forgiveness for your sin.

Our attitude

Often, we make mistakes. We are human, it is in our nature to make mistakes. What puts us in a state of righteousness is our desire to make right our mistakes – makes amends, confess our sins, be truly sorry for them, be forgiven and learn from them.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7)

What is Jesus talking about?

Mercy is the moral quality of feeling compassion and especially of showing kindness to someone in need – it is not an emotion, but a response. We understand that we desire our sins to be forgiven and so we must extend our mercy to those who sin against us. We have genuine compassion to all men.

Our attitude

Though the world may sometimes be ungrateful, and may return the very worst reward to those who have done acts of kindness – it ought to be enough that through God’s grace we can be humane, so that they, in their turn, will find him to be gracious and merciful.

“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8)

What is Jesus talking about?

The heart represents the inner person, the centre of our personality. It’s more than just emotions, it’s our entire thinking process and our will – what makes you think and act the way you do? Jesus emphasises the need for a good heart to be acceptable to God. To be pure means to be free of dirt, filth and contamination – so a pure heart is one that is not tainted by our world, the heart repents sins regularly and understands the influence the darker side of human nature can bring to our thinking.

Our attitude

We will “see God” because we are not tainted by evil – we will see God in nature (the universe is evidence of God’s handywork), we will see God in history, we will see God through the eye of faith, we will see God in our experiences and finally we will see God in heaven. It is only the pure who can see God – a man can look at the stars and see thousands of lights whereas an astronomer can see stars, constellations and the names of planets. We train ourselves to be pure of heart so we may see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God” (Mt 5:9)

What is Jesus talking about?

Peace is one of the greatest words in the world. It is one we all long for but few truly experience. Peace among nations begins with peace in the heart of the individual. Peace comes when we replace greed, distrust, and hatred with compassion, faith and love. It is not the absence of war that makes peace, but the presence of God. Reconciling with God and each other are the only true ways to experience peace.

Our attitude

Things that destroy peace are all commonly identified sins – greed, anger, gluttony, pride, lust, sloth and envy. All of these things create an unbalanced mind and heart and lead to thoughts, attitudes and actions that separate us from God and our love for one another. The Golden rule is a great place to start this practice.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:10)

What is Jesus talking about?

This beatitude is a series of warnings from Christ – it acknowledges that one is living out the previously listed beatitudes, and then explains that our Lord’s earthly ministry is filled with hardships. The crowning feature of being blessed by God is persecution – people of God’s Kingdom are rejected people, they pay a price for living righteously.

Our attitude

All the virtues of the beatitudes character are intolerable to the world. The world cannot handle someone who is poor in spirit because the world lives in a state of pride, self-promotion and ego substantiation. The world cannot tolerate mourning over sinfulness – it wants to bypass sin altogether and convince itself that it's alright. The world cannot tolerate meekness, it honours pride. The world knows little about mercy, about purity and about making peace – these characteristics flagrantly are against the system.

It is too easy to react negatively to persecution – grumble and complain, seek vengeance, become discouraged and give up – but what is more fulfilling, now and with God, is the rejoice and be glad.