

# Sermon on the Mount: Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of poverty of spirit as the condition for entering the kingdom of heaven, and highlights the benefits of a humble and contrite heart.*

**Duration:** 50:51

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:1-5, Malachi 3:8, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 6:33, Luke 18:13, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8-9

**Topics:** "Sermon on the Mount"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of looking at oneself in the light of the Word of God. He warns that without this self-reflection, one may believe the lies of men and be outside the kingdom of God. The speaker highlights the need to rely on the verdict of the Word of God, which reveals our true nature and our inability to do anything on our own. He then discusses the significance of Jesus as the king of the kingdom, who came to deliver humanity from sin and Satan. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the limited perspective of modern man, who is focused on material possessions and unaware of the spiritual decay happening around them.

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## Transcript

Last Lord's Day morning we introduced the Sermon on the Mount as our theme of meditation for some time to come in our morning worship. And we come this morning to the first of the Beatitudes, which we have recorded for us in Matthew chapter 5. And we are going to look this morning at the words of verse 3, Prosperity from Poverty. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The subjects of God's kingdom are discernibly different from the subjects of every other realm in history. The people of God in any generation, in every generation, will necessarily be distinguishable from those who owe their prime allegiance to men rather than to God. Our Lord Jesus Christ in whom the life of the kingdom as well as the rule of the kingdom is personified, he transforms his people, he changes the subjects of his kingdom.

And in coming into his kingdom such a massive, such a deep transformation occurs that his subjects are distinguishable. Now as we saw last Lord's Day morning, in these Beatitudes our Lord Jesus Christ is indicating the kind of character, the type of character that should always be fit, indeed is necessary for all his subjects. You will find that the characteristics mentioned in these Beatitudes are such that we can

experience them and indeed should experience them progressively.

For example that which we are going to be looking at this morning, poverty of spirit. It's not something that we experience once for all and then leave behind us and we manifest it, we don't manifest it anymore in life. It's not something that comes into our experience at a given moment and then we forget about it.

But it is something that enters into the warp and woof of our thinking and of our living and should by the grace of God and the ministry of the King of our realm should deepen and enlarge and express itself more and more obviously in the lives of all his people. All these Beatitudes therefore are aspects of, or they point to aspects of the basic Christian character. We act as we do because we are what we are.

Our King makes us into new creatures and because he does that our behavior will sooner or later assume a new characteristic. We shall learn to behave as he requires us. But first of all we have this development and this gift of the basic ingredients of character and of all the Beatitudes.

The one before us this morning is absolutely basic. If the Beatitudes as a whole form the foundation of the Christian's life and living, then it is true to say that this and what we have here is the foundation of the foundation. Until a man or a woman knows what it is to be poor in spirit, he will never mourn, she will never mourn, will never be meek, will never seek hunger and thirst after righteousness and so forth, and will never know purity of heart, and will never become a peacemaker.

None of the others are possible unless we start here. We are dealing this morning with the fundamental of all the fundamentals as far as Christian character is concerned. It is really the most crucial question as to whether you and I are really aware of what this is and know it in experience.

Are you a braggart before God or a beggar? Do you boast or do you beg? Are you proud or are you humble? This is the basic issue in entry into the kingdom over which Jesus Christ is King. His subjects are all humbled men and women. Now there are two main things that we want to look at this morning.

And the first is this, we shall look at the bountiful prosperity that is here announced by our Lord. Listen to the familiar words again, we are so familiar with these words that we probably are in danger of missing the deep truth that they hold. Blessed, says Jesus, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God.

They refer to the same phenomenon. The manner in which Jesus announces this ninefold blessedness to the evidently poor followers before him may at first elicit a chuckle from the sophisticated skeptic. These words have elicited more than chuckles.

The worldly wise would conclude the preacher either mad or blasphemous who says this kind of thing. What blessing has poverty ever brought to anyone? That's the kind of question your modern man will ask. To top the list of his beatitudes with a promise of the spiritual blessedness, the kind of which is envisaged here, and then to say that this poor person has a share in the kingdom of the ages, is a subject of the one kingdom that rules over every other kingdom and outlasts every other kingdom and never ends, the kingdom of God, to say that is the most ludicrous thing to say in the years of the sophisticated man of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, my friends, this is what Jesus said. And this is what we are going to take very seriously this morning. I want you to look at two things that are mentioned here.

Two aspects of this bountiful prosperity. They are brought out, one by the use of the word blessed at the beginning and then by the reference to theirs is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven at the end. Here is a twofold blessedness.

The blessedness that is involved in the word blessed. And then the description of the blessed man as his is the kingdom of God or it belongs to him or he belongs to it, he is a subject of it and he is living within its bounds, heir to all its glories. Let's look at the first.

It is the more subjective aspect of the blessing announced. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Last Lord's Day morning I indicated how one of the last verses of the Old Testament speaks about judgment, about a curse.

And then the New Testament is hardly opened when Jesus comes onto the platform, onto the stage of things. John the Baptist has been put in prison and he has lost his life, he has been murdered. And Jesus comes and he announces blessed, blessed, blessed.

His ninefold blessedness is what he announces in the years of men who are heirs to the curse of sin. It's a remarkable word this. Many of the translators use the English word happy for blessed.

And there is a sense in which it is most appropriate because the word unquestionably carries this subjective aspect of things. The person referred to here is a person who really knows fulfillment, who really is blessed, who really has joy, which is a fruit of the Spirit. But there is something about the word which is very unfortunate, I mean the word happy.

Very unfortunate as the translation of the Greek word makarios which is used here. It falls short of the mark because underlying the English word happy is the word hap, or chance. And the idea is, you see, that the blessedness referred to here depends on what happens to you, on your circumstances.

That is not what the New Testament says. The New Testament thunders at us that the blessedness that Jesus gives to his people and the subjects of his kingdom does not depend upon your circumstances at all. The gift of his grace and the gift of his mercy and the gift of his peace and of eternal life, citizenship in his kingdom does not depend on your outward material circumstances at all.

Daniel in his lion's den, Jeremiah in his pit, Paul and Silas in prison, Stephen and his martyrdom, John and Patmos and Jesus from his cross, loudly tell us there is something about this that comes with us into all kinds of circumstances. Jesus could even speak at the end of his life of my peace I give to you, not as the world gives goodbye unto you, let not your heart be troubled. It is not dependent on circumstances, on what happens to you in this world.

One writer makes the point that in its older form, this Greek word makarios, translated blessed, it used to refer in Greek writings to the bliss of the gods, the pagan gods, the mythical deities of Greek thought. Now the point is of course, it was used thus of the quality of joy or the quality of happiness that only belonged to the gods, not to ordinary mortals. F. W. Boreham I think is the first who said or brought to my notice, and I think to the notice of others from what I read, the fact that a long time ago the island of Cyprus was called Haimakaria, Makaria being the feminine form of Makarios.

Haimakaria, the happy island, the happy isle, why was it called that? Well apparently its soil was so fertile, its climate so perfect, its natural resources and outlook so utterly satisfying, that it was inconceivable that anyone could find a better place anywhere on earth, this was the ideal. Such is the bliss envisaged by our

Lord Jesus Christ, and this reference to it being the bliss of the gods is not unbiblical, twice at least the Apostle Paul refers to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the blessed God. On Timothy 1.11 he refers to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and its the same word that we have here.

And then again in 1 Timothy 6.15, God the blessed and only ruler, the king of kings and lord of lords, the blessed God, what is this blessed then, this blessedness? My friends it is the quality of peace and of joy and of fulfillment and of happiness that belongs only to God as revealed in Christ. And Jesus comes among ordinary men and women like you and myself and he says, I bring you blessedness. And the subjects of my kingdom are the recipients of this divine gift of blessedness, makarios.

That's the more subjective aspect of it, but look at the objective. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. Last time in describing the context in which the sermon appears in Matthew's gospel, we indicated that the kingdom of heaven or of God refers primarily to the rule of God, God's rule, God's reign.

His kingdom as we have already said this morning, supersedes every other kingdom. His kingdom says the psalmist, rules over all and everything. Whatever kingdom of men you may think of, whatever rule, whatever government, whatever rulers, over them all stands the sovereign rule of God.

Even so, God has allowed certain alien elements to enter his kingdom. He has allowed sin to come in, which is an alien element, and Satan who brought sin. And yet God has said that in due course he is going to rid the whole universe of these alien elements and bring the whole thing, the whole cosmos, the whole universe back to its keel, purged of all things that are alien, and in it he will fulfill his eternal purposes of grace.

Now when the Lord Jesus Christ came down, it was made evident that God had already stepped into history to start this saving work. When Jesus stepped out to proclaim the kingdom of heaven is at hand, it was evident that God was with him. Have you noticed that? I'll ever be grateful, and I'm sure you will too, to Nicodemus for saying what he did to Jesus.

No man, he says, can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him. We know, he says, referring to himself and other teachers and other leaders of the jury, people in high places, we know, he says, we haven't missed this. No man can do the miracles, the signs that you are doing unless God is with him.

You see what they've noticed? Here is a different kind of life. Here is one who has come with authority, not only in his teaching, but he heals the sick. He touches the eyes of the blind.

He heals the deaf. Indeed, ultimately he will even bring the dead out of their graves, Lazarus, he says, he will say, come forth, and Lazarus will come. Jesus has come into life, and as we saw at the end of chapter 4 of this gospel of Matthew, he's involved in healing all kinds of diseases, indicating, you see, that he comes with the power of a kingdom that rules over all.

And there is no disease, there is nothing in this life that he cannot handle and cannot deal with. And yet, though he gave so much time to heal the symptoms of sin and the fruits of sin and deliver men from them, he was destined and he was pledged to do something deeper and bigger and greater than that. He came not to deliver men simply from the symptoms, but from that which caused the symptoms, from sin, from Satan, and to deliver us from our bondage to the tyranny of sin and Satan and be freed and at last there again the image of God our maker in all its glory.

He came to do that, and on the cross he did it. On the cross he took our curse upon himself. On the cross he took my sin and yours, and he died in our place instead, and he paid the penalty of our redemption, and he procured eternal life for us.

Having raised again from the dead and showed himself to be alive by many miraculous and many amazing episodes, over forty days he finally ascended to the Father, from whence he sent forth the Holy Spirit to bring the eternal life that he had procured by his blood and imparted to men who would believe. Jesus is the King of the Kingdom, pledged to deliver men from sin and from Satan. Now, as the King of kings and Lord of lords, he tells these ordinary men and women who were sitting before him, first of all his disciples, he was ostensibly sitting down to teach them, but there were others that had gathered as we read by the end of the sermon, a whole multitude of them, and he tells them all, and they've all probably here, blessed are the poor in spirit among you, anywhere, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, they share with me in the eternal Kingdom.

The bliss of the first beatitude then is that of being a citizen of that Kingdom whose King is Lord of the universe, Lord of life and death, savior from sin and Satan, and master of destiny. It is to share with him in his kingly program, as he presses the battle to its ultimate conclusion. That is the bountiful prosperity and privilege announced.

And my friends, it's announced this morning. It is a day of grace. And because it is still a day of grace, this is to be announced today, wherever there are those who represent our God and our King.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. You and I may enter the Kingdom and enjoy the bliss and the blessings and the privileges of the Kingdom, and anticipate the consummation of it all, in God's good time. But the question of questions of course is this, how, how? And so we come to our second point, the beneficent poverty that procures what is divinely pledged.

These are words that should take our breath away. Blessed are the poor in spirit of all people. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God.

Now, the very utterance of these words spelt confusion to the people of his day. This is something that is so contrary to common belief, common philosophy. The subjective bliss and objective privilege of citizenship in Heaven's eternal and indestructible kingdom is, is, is nothing that you can buy with money.

You can't pay for it. You can't buy a ticket. And you can't, you can't yourself get into it by dint of anything you can do.

Rather, the condition is not plenty, not prosperity so that you can pay, you can do, you can give, but rather poverty of spirit. This is contrary to everything that the people of his day believed. Contemporary man likewise rises in immediate rebellion when you hear a thing like this and realize what our Lord Jesus is saying.

This is nonsensical, your modern man says. It is sheer madness, turning all the accepted canons of success right upside down. He protests and he thinks he justly protests that blessedness is incontestably linked with opulence and riches, not with poverty of any kind.

When did poverty ever bless anybody, any kind of poverty? The statement of Jesus was no less ludicrous in the estimation of his own contemporaries. One modern writer on this Sermon on the Mount brings this out very clear by referring to the four main sections of people among the Jewry, among the Jews of his

day. And he says how they were all outraged by this kind of thing.

To the Pharisees the secret of blessedness was to be loyal and true to the things of the past. They were the arch-conservatives, the extreme right wing and you mustn't change anything. You've got to be true to the past and this is the secret of blessedness.

To be a theological conservative and conserve the things of the past, don't miss anything. Of course they did add an awful lot to it, but that was nevertheless their pledged view. Their pledged view.

As far as the Sadducees, the other main section was concerned, they thought the exact opposite. That blessedness depended on being able to change and keep up with the times. To be liberal, not to take everything for granted or everything that your fathers told you or that God allegedly told your fathers before you.

Don't believe all that junk, change it a little and become, get up to date and just accept modern ideas and imbibe them, you know. But the Essenes, another main group that our Lord had to encounter, particularly his apostles more than our Lord personally. They insisted that the secret of blessedness was to get right away from the world.

And they went into their communities and they went apart, as if they were going into a monastery. And they said this is the secret of blessedness, you've got to get away from this world. And the Zealots, the fourth group, they said exactly the opposite.

To them the only way to have blessedness is to have a revolution politically. To change the structures of society and particularly to get away from under the yoke of Rome. Liberty, let's fight for it.

And that's what they wanted to do and they were prepared to do it. And here comes Jesus into the midst of them all and he says look. Blessed are who? The poor in spirit.

For theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God. Now part of the basic human tragedy is that because of the effects of sin.

Ancient man and modern man alike has built the ceiling of his life so low. You see because we have lost the consciousness of God. All life as far as we are concerned is bounded by time and sense.

There is a mall like quality to our spiritual experience. We live in a little tunnel. Do you have malls here in Canada? You do, ok, thank you.

Well we certainly have them in the UK. And they live in their little dark tunnels and of course they don't see anything. Look up and the tunnel comes right down.

There's nothing above as far as they're concerned. And man in his spiritual condition is very much like that. He's bounded by space and time.

And even modern space explorations doesn't seem to have awakened man to the realization that there may be a little bit more than he can see. That his ceiling perhaps is a little bit too low. And therefore he seeks all his prosperity in material things.

Now that's the truth about modern man. Man seeks his prosperity in material things and he cannot conceive that there is genuine blessedness outside of the things that you can buy with money. And since

riches are apparently what supply the key to everything that really matters well this is what we must seek first.

And if the kingdom of God happens to come our way let it come. But we must have this kingdom first. Let's possess as much riches as we can and by means of riches we can do everything.

We can have better homes to live in. We can have better food to eat. Better drinks to consume.

Better cars to drive in. And a better standard of living generally. But you see the sadness of it.

Modern man like his ancient counterpart is blind to the fact that his material kingdom is already in process of crumbling. And that he himself, the material part of him that can be fed and that drinks and that lusts and that eats, he is in process of dying. The whole universe says the apostle Peter, the whole universe.

The present heavens he says on earth are reserved for fire. Did you know that? The present heavens on earth are reserved for fire being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly man. Let me put it to you like this.

Man's most palatial home can only give him limited comfort for a limited time. Because you have to leave it. You have to leave yours, I have to leave mine.

His most luxurious limousine can only give him a little more comfortable ride on his way to the grave and to judgment. And I tell you the most important thing is not the measure of comfort I have on the few miles I am moving towards the grave, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, but the direction of my life and the end of it. Your material man has nothing to say to this.

Superior cuisine and more sparkling drinks lose their taste as death draws near. Your material universe in total, as Peter says, is to disintegrate and to go up in flames one day. Now Jesus was here speaking about the blessedness of the eternal kingdom of God.

Spiritual and indestructible in its nature. And the citizens of that kingdom of heaven or of God, according to its sole king and unqualified ruler, are none other than the poor, the poor in spirit. What did Jesus mean? What does it mean to be poor in spirit? I guess we ought to say one or two things that it doesn't mean.

Because many people do get mixed up with this. This must not be confused with being poor spirited. Jesus wasn't saying the folk who inherit my kingdom or who share the blessings of my kingdom are those who are deficient in vitality, in vigor, in venture, who have no spirit in them.

Who are like corpses with no life. You know there are people like that. They have no life, they have no vigor, no verve, nothing at all.

They are half dead. Nothing excites them. Jesus wasn't talking about that kind of thing.

It is not a repressed spirit nor is it a denial of one's gifts and their operations. That's not what Jesus was concerned with. And it was certainly not a reference to self-hate.

On the other hand, it's the very opposite of self-sufficiency, of pride and egomania. It's the very antithesis of the spirit which sees no need of real help from God or from man. I can cope myself, thank you, and I don't want help from anybody.

I'm proud of my powers and of my capacities and I can cope, thank you. It's the exact opposite of the so-called positive thinking of the 20th century. Which, however much you baptize it with Christian chivalry, is pagan and contrary to the teaching of the New Testament.

I can do it, chum. I believe I can do it, I'm going to do it, therefore I will do it. You know, that's pagan.

Jesus said, blessed are the poor in spirit. Poverty of spirit arises from a real self-knowledge that can only come from God and is communicated by His Spirit through His Word to a man or a woman in the presence of God. It is nothing less than the awareness that in spiritual things I am a bankrupt soul.

You ever discovered that? Now Jesus' language implies exactly that. The Greek word for poor means more than mere poverty. It means the extreme, the frightening bankruptcy of having nothing.

There are two Greek words for poor. The one, penes, means that someone is barely able to make ends meet. Perhaps he can manage to get through the week, but he's certainly got nothing to spare.

Now that's poverty. That is, one word represents that kind of poverty. But there is another, the one that Jesus uses here, which is quite different.

It isn't that a man has got enough to cope with for the time being, but he's got no reserves. It is that a man has got nothing, he's got a bag. It's the one used of that dear woman in the temple.

And she puts her two little coins in the treasury which were only the equivalent of less than half a penny. And having put these two little coins in the treasury, she's got nothing left, because she gave her all. She was tokos.

That's the poverty Jesus is speaking of. My friend, have you ever seen yourself like that? Utterly dependent upon God. Lost without Him.

That you can do nothing to save yourself. That you are not capable of saving your soul. That you cannot leave sin, and you cannot go in heaven, and you cannot do anything apart from Him.

If you have not seen yourself to be that poor and bankrupt in spirit, I say to you, you have yet to cross the borders into the kingdom of God. It's for beggars only. You remember the tax collector? Jesus refers to him in his parable.

He and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray. They happened to be there at the same time. Dear old Pharisee, he had such a lot to say.

Thank you, Lord. He says, I'm not like other people. I fast twice in the week.

I give tithes of all that I possess. I'm not this, and I'm not that, and I'm certainly not like this guy there in the back. And this tax collector wouldn't lift up his eyes from the ground.

You see, he couldn't look anybody in the eye. He knew that he was guilty. He was out of his element in the house of God.

What if he had a vision of God like Isaiah of old? What if the glory of the Lord filled the temple? What if God spoke to him? That's the last thing he's looking for. He doesn't want to look God's people in the eye. But smiting upon his breast, indicating his awareness of lostness and sin, he says, God, be merciful to me,

a sinner.

And Jesus shocked him. He says, look, he says, this man went down to his house justified, saved, forgiven, a child of my kingdom, a rather than the other. That's just it.

Oh, my friend, have you ever seen yourself as such? I'm sorry, I have to ask this question this morning. I have no doubt that there may be someone here in Knox Church this morning. You've never seen yourself as a beggar, and therefore you've never cried to God to have mercy on your dying soul.

Pray God will show you today what you are in his sight. What is it that brings anyone to this lowly view of himself? Well, clearly, not modern learning, because modern learning tells us that we really can cope. And we really can get on very well without God, thank you.

And certainly without atonement, and without the Holy Spirit, and without the Bible, and without the church. You don't find humility in our places of learning per se. Some of the most arrogant men and women I have ever met, I met in the university, and in the theological colleges where I studied.

Learning, modern learning does not make men and women poor in spirit. It gives you a false comfort that you can manage all on your own. And it sends you out into the world to break your heart, and to have your first ulcer, and your first nervous breakdown, and your first tragedy.

And it lives on a lie, and it feeds the communities with lies upon lies, and you can cope when you're a beggar, and you can't cope. How is it then, how do I come to know myself in this way? How did that Arch-Pharisee Saul of Tarsus come to say such a thing as this about himself? He came to say, I know, he said, that nothing good lives in me that is in my sinful nature. I'll tell you.

He came to see himself when God revealed himself to him. In Jesus Christ. It was the vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus ascended at God's right hand, whose glory was greater than the glory of the sun at midday.

It was the vision of the glory of God in his son that brought him down from his perch. Do you know it's exactly the same today? It takes the deity, it takes the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity to show a man or show a woman the real depravity of his heart and the real need of his or her soul. God himself must do it.

That is why, of course, the Lord Jesus sent forth the Holy Spirit. He will convince the world, he said, of guilt with regard to sin and righteousness and of judgment. No one else can do it.

We don't realize that we're lost unless the Holy Spirit brings us there. And that's why the Holy Spirit has given us the Scriptures. We are told that we have the Holy Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit inspired them to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

We're not wise to trust Christ until the Holy Spirit shows us what an awful lot we are. But when the Holy Spirit reveals to us who we are and what we are and our real peril, then we begin to appreciate John 3,16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.

No one will trust Jesus Christ as Savior or receive from his hand the gift of pardon and entry into the kingdom who has not been thus humbled. I beg of you then, read God's Word and learn your soul's true

condition. Look into it as into a mirror that is infallibly true in its judgments.

It is not warped. It doesn't show a false image of you. It will tell you exactly what you are and what you need, the Word of God.

And there is no other. This book will tell you that the soul that sinneth it will die. That the wages of sin is death.

And it will tell you some very, very, very unpalatable truths about yourself. And all your righteousnesses are a filthy rag. There is nothing you can do to save your own soul.

But this is the Word of God. And those that are humbled by it and receive its verdict upon themselves get into the position and condition where they appreciate the intervention of God in Christ by his Spirit as outlined in his Word. And I beg of him, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I'm closing. The most horrible monstrosity known in Europe in modern times was a man so grotesque in his features that you will know he became known as the Elephant Man. It is said that he had a head the size of a normal man's waist.

He had what appeared to be the beginnings of a trunk, an elephant trunk and one abortive tusk. Only those of iron nerve could look at him. Sir Frederick Treves, the distinguished author and surgeon of his day took him into his home and cared for him.

But Sir Frederick Treves had one rule that no one under any condition would leave a mirror in the room of the Elephant Man. He says, if you leave a mirror, he said to the servants in his room, he will be dismissed immediately. For he had discovered that behind that grotesque figure there was a most sensitive soul and he dared not see himself.

Now, I do not criticize Sir Frederick Treves. In those circumstances, grim and trying, I'm quite sure he did the right thing. This was on the level of the physical.

But my friends, on the level of the spiritual, you dare not be without the mirror that tells the truth. If you go through life without looking at yourself in the light of the word of God, you will believe the lies of men and you will die and you will be outside the kingdom of the ages forever and ever. That's the gospel as I understand it.

Only when you receive the verdict of the word of God as it comes to you by the Spirit of God do you come to know yourself and you begin to see that you can do nothing and then with Toplady you're prepared to say, nothing in my hand I bring. Simply, notice that, simply to thy cross I cling. Naked, come to thee for dress.

Helpless, look to thee for dress. Foul, I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Savior, or I die.

Now with Charlotte Elliot, of very familiar words, many have crossed the borders into the kingdom singing these words, just as I am without one plea. But that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come. Just as I am poor, wretched, blind, sight, riches, healing of the mind, yea, all I need in thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come.

Have you seen yourself like that? You may have some visiting friends here this morning and this kind of sermon has been like a bombshell to you. Like something from another world. Because we're not

accustomed to this.

Will you take it as the Word of God? It isn't mine. And I tell you, when I first heard it and understood it, I didn't like it. It's humbling, isn't it? But it is only from that place of humility where I see myself utterly dependent on God for grace that I have to lift up my empty hands and say, God be merciful to me.

It is only from there that I can receive my citizenship of the kingdom of the ages. And it is only on the basis of that poverty of spirit that the church can be built. The church will be torn in two if men come into it who are not brought low first of all.

I beg of you this morning, if you have not crossed that borderline, if today you have a sense of your need that you never had before and you hear the Word of God speaking not only to us as a body of people but to you as an individual, come down on your knees if need be and cry to God for mercy. Blessed, said Jesus, contrary to all popular philosophy and psychology and theology. Blessed, says the Son of God.

Blessed, says the incarnate Lord of all the ages. Blessed, says the King of kings and Lord of lords, are the poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Let us pray. O Lord, our Father, we bow in the solemnity of your presence and we find it difficult to acknowledge that we are what your Word says about us. Difficult even though there is something in us which knows it is true and accurate.

Grant us your Spirit to the end that we may all frankly and honestly thus conclude and thus be able to put out our empty hands for you to fill them so that you who dwell in the high and holy place whose name is holy will come and dwell also with us who are of a broken and a contrite spirit. Save those who cry to you today, here, elsewhere, to the uttermost parts of the earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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