

Spectral Holiness

August 24, 2020 | Matthew 5:1-3

This Fall we're examining Jesus' Beatitudes, but I hope you'll let them examine you because the word beatitude comes from *beatitudo* meaning blessing, flourishing, favor. How do you get the flourishing of God? Electromagnetic waves exist in a variety of frequencies from gamma waves to radio waves. In the middle, there's visible light, the wavelengths we can see. Visible light refracts to into seven different colors, from purple to red, each with its own brilliant hue. But together they make a greater impression, *a spectrum of light*. In a similar way, the beatitudes belong together. They aren't one-off moral frequencies but an entire spectrum of Christological light to be refracted through the church to heal the world. We're pursuing *full spectrum holiness*. Requires more than a lone activist, preacher, or prayer warrior. Whole church refracting whole gospel to whole world. How do you get into the spectrum: *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

The Poor

How does kingdom light refract? It refracts through whoever has the kingdom. Who's that? Jesus says it's *the poor in spirit*: Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom not will be. So who are poor in spirit? [Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and sat down](#). He looked out at people from all over the region (Jews, Syrians, Gentiles, 4:25). Matthew describes many of these people as those afflicted by disease, pains, seizures, oppressed by demons, paralytics (4:23-25). Afflicted by disease. A number of you have contracted COVID-19, and thank God you have survived. But some of our family members have not. We've all been affected. When Jesus looks at us, he knows the virus has been oppressive, and he sympathizes with us. But, *he also knows we have it good compared to many*. Isaiah 61 tells us the poor are the *anawim*: the Hebrew word meaning "bowed down." The poor are those bowed down by life, afflicted, oppressed. Those suffering injustice like Jacob Blake. Injustice is unevenly distributed weighing heavily among the poor, who can't afford good legal counsel; who experience more crime, who are more powerless than the upwardly mobile. *They are bowed down not only by life but by an imbalance of power*, which is why God has a special affection for them, [Seek justice](#).

Encourage the oppressed. Defend the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow” (Isa 1:17). What’s the implication? The poor in spirit *are people in touch with humbling circumstances*. Are poor or care for the poor. In a word **generous**: giving our words, *time*, finances, love. This week our friend Yolanda died. She used to drag her oxygen tank to our gatherings in our M2 mercy ministry, what she called *Church in the Park*. She was so well loved by those CGs, her son called Peter Craig to tell him she passed, how much she loved Craigs, and to ask if Peter would speak at her funeral. *Poor in spirit*: Yolanda/Peter. When the King brings the kingdom, its light breaks in on the *anawim*. Jesus gave up his comfort, his riches, his rights, and his life to lift up those who are bowed down. You know what? They *flocked* to him. In touch with their weakness, they ran, limped, crawled to Christ! How bout you? Are you in touch with your weakness? It’s easy to cover it up, make excuses for not loving the poor. They flocked to him—why?—because they *knew his power*. See, you have to acknowledge your weakness to experience his strength. You have to confess your powerlessness to enjoy his power. Will you? Confess it to your fight club. Start a fight club. Will we be poor in spirit?

In Spirit

While all of this is true, being in touch with the poor can’t be *the qualification* for the kingdom because Jesus says, Blessed are the poor *in spirit*. The poor, like the rich, can actually be quite proud. When Jesus healed twelve lepers, only one came back to thank him. Isaiah dials in the poor in spirit when he says, *But to this one I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word* (66:2). The poor in spirit are **humble**. They tremble at God’s word. They don’t scoff at it, neglect it, judge it. They shiver before it. *Even* submit to it. Why? Because, the Word *is God opening his mouth*. That’s why when *Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him* (5:1). The humble come to Christ and sit at his feet when he opens his mouth. They say: teach me, correct me, change me. The King’s face shines on *the contrite of heart*. He blesses the humble. We all enjoy being around humble people because they focus on us, ask us questions. The challenge is *to be one of those people*. We need humble people right now. How? The verse just before it, “*Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my*

rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD” (66:1). Here is someone truly great. His house? The heavens are this throne and the earth is his ottoman. Every person, every atom, every thing, dependent on him. How do we become humble? By getting around someone truly great. Ever get the jitters before meeting a famous person? Feel small when you compare yourself to a great athlete? We’re humbled in the presence of greatness. This is how you become poor in spirit. You have to get around something truly great. And there is no one greater than God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You want the kingdom of God, the reign of Christ to break in and through your life?—compare yourself to God. There’s no room for grandstanding, political hatred, or cancel culture. When you really get next to God, you become humble and generous. A lot of things we read that give us a big view of ourselves, social issues, cultural commentary. *But what reading is giving you a big view of God? Job 38-42; Isa 6; Rom 11; Take our Theology for Life class. Read The Holiness of God (Sproul). Ask God to show his glory to you. Make PIS a prayer.*

Blessing

Why is it *blessed* to be poor in spirit? Because of the Blessor, the King of the kingdom. The thing about *this* King is he’s not only greater than us; *he’s more gracious than us. Though we should have come to him, he came to us; though he merits trembling, he trembled for us. Though he deserves to be bowed down to, he is bowed down.* Jesus Christ, with earth as his footstool, climbs down from his cosmic throne to be crucified on a manmade cross *for our pride*. Our evil, our sin (lib, cons, all), oppressed the only truly innocent person and put him on a cross. Yet, he willingly died to pull us out of the grave. No room for boasting, for shouting others down, cancelling them out. Only *contrite hearts*. He is bowed down, that he might lift us up. The gospel is humbling and thrilling all at once. This King blesses the poor *in spirit*. Every summer when I head out to Colorado, and walk out on that mountain top to take in the stunning rocky mountains, I am humbled by their immense, jagged peaks. I feel tiny. *But* it doesn’t crush me. Quite the opposite. It thrills me. I am lifted up, filled with awe and wonder. That’s what gospel of the kingdom does: thrills and flattens, humbles and lifts. Jesus preached this message to the poor *and* his disciples. He wasn’t merely generous; he said follow *Me*. He didn’t just heal them; he said sin no more. The blessing of the kingdom is *to have this kind of King*. Every other king, politician, and master will eventually oppress



you in some way, manipulate you for a vote, an agenda. But this king *dies* for you. Will you compare yourself to him? He's greater and more gracious than anyone or anything. Let's be a church through which full spectrum holiness can shine. Humble and generous...through hurricane season, pandemic season, election season. This beatitude is good for all seasons: a humble, generous people, who let the light of the King and his kingdom break in.