**Sunday 18th September 2016 Message**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit**

***Matthew 5:-1-10***

**Introduction**

Blessed, blessed, blessed –

Last week we thought about the fact that we each are the dwelling place of the Lord God Almighty. Wonderfully, and fearfully made for His dwelling which requires us to take care of our bodies in all the ways we choose to live. To be able to do that we need to love the beautiful temple He has so carefully and uniquely designed, yet on the other hand we also need to realise how incapable we are of doing that without His help.

Today we start a series on the beatitudes, and we start with the greatest blessing we could ever have, the kingdom of heaven, and it comes from our acceptance and acknowledgement that we need Jesus whose richness makes everything we have look like desolation.

Spurgeon calls the beatitudes a ladder of blessings which are our ours to gain as we progress in our walk of faith.

The object of the Jesus’ sermon – was to describe the saved, not the way of salvation.

Spurgeon 1873 – A ladder if it is to be of any use must have its first step must be close to the ground or feeble climbers would never mount. It would be a grievous discouragement to developing faith if the first blessing was given to the pure in heart.

Jesus begins with the ABC of experience. Tempted by the low step thousands are encouraged to start the journey.

The utmost the law can do for us is to lay bare our spiritual poverty and convince us of it. From that place of poverty in spirit you are lifted as princes and princesses in the kingdom of heaven a far higher place than any earthly position.

This beatitude has to be first because none of the others are attainable without this seed of truth being firmly established and bearing fruit in our lives. How can one mourn one’s state without seeing the glory and holiness of God that reveals our poverty.

Grace would not be grace if we had anything to offer to receive His blessings.

**Calling – Blessed are the poor in spirit**

To be poor – to not have much – to be short of – to realize your need in the spirit, to know your hands are empty, that you do not have much to offer, that you are lacking

Of course you may be multitalented, incredibly gifted, charismatic superstar, but in the presence of God you realise you are nothing

So how do you answer this question at a job interview if you are a follower of Jesus and heard this first step which He tells us leads to blessing. “Why should we give you this job?”. Do you reply I don’t know, there may be better people than me?

Or how do you respond to the call to join the worship group because you are the most brilliant musician in the church? Do you reply, “I’m not really God has somebody better than me for the job?”

You recognise your poverty before God. Jesus is not talking about poverty in relationship to other people

**Poor in spirit is the first mark of a person who genuinely walks with God.**

Mega success in business, music, art, political genius – yet before God you have nothing to offer.

Isaiah 6 – incredible preacher, prophet – millions of followers on Facebook – his testimony

**Slide - *Isa 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 2 Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. 5 And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost,***

***NRSV***

In the presence of God Isaiah with all his gifting was lost – so what about us. Hiss view of himself was changed. Have you come close enough to God to realise you are bankrupt before Him. Or is God so remote that you have never even considered how bankrupt you are

**Slide - PRIDE CAN ONLY LIVE IN THE SOULD OF A PRESONN WHO IS FAR FROM GOD**

Pride makes us run so far from God. Pride cannot exist in the presence of God as Satan found out before the beginning of time.

Presence of God in the Temple was so awesome, the ministers could not minister. You cannot minister in your own strength in the presence of God. Carrying out religious duties in the presence of God is meaningless and if you are performing you are not aware of His presence.

Isaiah could not do it.

Poor in spirit is the first mark of a person close to God. Pride is a mark of person far from God.

Whatever position, or talents, or however celebrated you are, in this world. You are in a completely different position before God.

Learn this now before the final day.

You have lots to offer to family, friends, church, workmates, employers, society. Yet all that you have is the gift of God.

This is your calling – be poor in spirit – encourage one another and study how to be poor – learn how to be poor.

**Slide - The Blessing – theirs is the kingdom of heaven**

These people who are so aware of their need, their lack, their inability to do anything that God calls them too do – these are the very people that receive NOW the kingdom of heaven. The indwelling of Gods presence

All blessings begin with poor in spirit – this is the gateway to ALL Gods blessings, mercy and grace, the first step to all other blessings.

Theirs **IS** the kingdom of heaven – present tense. All the other blessings are WILL. Yet we know so much of heaven is future tense, but the foretaste starts now.

You do not have streets of gold yet, you do not have a world untainted by sin and decay, you do not have a world without famine or war now, yet right now, this week you can have a taste of heaven.

**Slide - *Isa 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:***

***"I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. NKJV***

God lives, dwells, with those who are poor in spirit. Dwells – makes His home

Heaven is to live with God. You get a taste of it when you recognize how poor you are in His presence.

**Slide - Heaven is in the humble, before the humble are in heaven**

This is the blessing for anybody who has come this morning and is facing challenges to which they have no answers, no ability to overcome, no resources at hand, you are poor and God is with you.

If you have tripped up in your sinful habits, failed to overcome again, wondered if you will ever make it, you know how poor you are and God will dwell with you to make all things possible. Overwhelmed by temptation, stumbled again, you are bought to the place of realising you cannot do it, and Jesus says I will dwell with you and walk with you through these things. If you have messed up, and the enemy who told you there is no harm in what you done, is now telling you that there is no hope, he is a liar he has taken you to a low place and forgotten yet again when you realise how low you are that is where you will find God.

Your circumstances have bought you to the place where you are poor in spirit and God will dwell with you, not just draw near and then depart after you leave the service.

**Application**

**Slide - People who are poor in spirit give up the idea that God owes them.**

How many times have you come to God and said I have done, now its Your turn. I deserve the reward You promised.

We know in our heads we have a duty to God, but our words and heart so often betray the fact that we think He has a duty towards us.

Did you write Gods job description this week in your prayers, expecting a level of health despite your neglect of the body, expect blessings on your family, expect an income to do what you want to do to serve Him??? Do you expect Him to insulate you from the pains that others suffer.

We all slip into the mentality that God owes us something because we have given to Him. Those expectations will lead to disappointment, bitterness, harshness of heart, and frustration – all far away from the blessing that God has for those who are poor in spirit.

Blessings come to those with open hands.

**Slide - People who are poor in spirit are not afraid to ask.**

The poor are always begging. The person poor in spirit will be much in prayer.

The church that thinks it has everything, the Christian that thinks they have everything, will not be in prayer.

Pharisee and the tax collector – both prayed – but there was big difference in their prayers. The Pharisee focussed on himself and how good he was comparison to others. A religious man who never asked for anything because he had no sense of poverty of spirit, miles from God. ***Luke 18.*** The tax collector, in the corner, head bowed in shame, praying but knew how needy he was of Gods mercy.

It was the tax collector went home justified, forgiven, at peace with God, why, because he was poor in spirit.

***Luke 14:11For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." NIV***

Test:- What’s your prayer life? Do you really know your own need?

**Slide - People who are poor in spirit are in a position to receive.**

Not just to ask. They have empty hands to receive.

If you come before God with something to offer, come with full hands. Here is what I have to give you God. Here is what I do for You. Here is what I have done.

How can you receive the gold from heaven when you come with hands full of pebbles.

How can you cling to the cross with your hands full of your treasured possessions.

Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to your cross I cling. You cannot cling to the cross of Christ with hands full. You cannot receive the kingdom of heaven with full hands.

**People who are poor in spirit, boast in the cross.** Gal 6:14

The Apostle Paul was a brilliant academic, incredibly talented person, had a fantastic career ahead of himself before he came to Jesus said.

***Gal 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. NIV***

The more a person sees in themselves the less you will see of Jesus. That is the purpose of worship to focus on Him.

The distinction between the hypocrite and the genuine child of God, the fake and the true believer, the religious person and the humble penitent with whom God dwells.

People who are far from God make much of themselves, people who are close to God make much of Christ. Make much of what they do for God, rather than what He has done for them.

Isaiah saw the emptiness of his position before God and said I am a man of unclean lips and God seals his lips with hot coals and God says your guilt is taken away and your sins forgiven. The coal came from the altar of sacrifice. These are incredible words before the atonement of the cross.

He was wounded for our transgression ….

**A life and ministry of lasting usefulness to God is in those who are poor in spirit.**

**Cell Groups**

Discuss how to develop an awareness of your poverty in spirit.

How do you remain poor in spirit when you are so blessed by God?

What does Proverbs 3:5 tell us about remaining dependant on God?

How does humility go against the trajectory of religion?

How does growing in humility nourish your love for others?

How does growing in humility strengthen you to overcome temptation?