Text

Description automatically generated**Lesson 2—Blessed Brokenness**

*Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

***Lesson Notes:***

Imagine: It has been 450 years since the Israelites had heard a prophetic voice in their land. Other than John the Baptist, who declared that he was pointing to someone who would come after him, the nation of Israel had lived in a prophetic silence for four-and-a-half centuries.

And then Jesus showed up on the scene. Word about him spread rapidly with the help of John the Baptist, and early in his ministry Christ made an appearance on a hillside near the Sea of Galilee.

Questions were swirling as to whether this prophet from Nazareth was indeed the expected Messiah the nation had been anticipating for well over 1000 years. Was this the Promised One whom God had sent to deliver Israel from the Romans and restore the glory to the nation of Israel? Was this the conquering King and redeemer of God’s chosen people?   
  
When Jesus spoke, it removed all doubt:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

Wait . . . . What? Maybe not.

That’s right, Jesus’s opening salvo wasn’t filled with religious rhetoric, fiery speech and promises of a political restoration and free lunches for all school kids. Instead, the opening comment by which Jesus identified himself as the Promised One of God was a statement of comfort and hope to the most downtrodden of culture. He basically said if you’re broken, poor, spiritually exhausted and unable to meet the expectations of the religious elite, then congratulations. You’re exactly the kind of person God is looking for.

Welcome to the Beatitudes.

***Questions:***

1. Think about the word *poor*. What type of images does it conjure up? Share some of the things you see when you hear the word *poor*.   
     
   Now, list some synonyms for *poor.* Then use them in verse three. Fill in the blank with your choices: Blessed are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Talk about the obvious irony of Jesus calling the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with your words) *blessed.*

1. The word that Matthew used for *poor* is a Greek word that literally means *to cringe*. It means *to crouch or bow as a beggar would*. It goes way beyond our concept of *poor*. The word that Jesus used pictures a person on the lowest economic rung of society. They were so destitute, so helpless and hopeless, that all that was left to them was to beg.

So, for extra points, anyone want to take a shot at where Jesus might be going with this? How could Jesus ever consider a beggar blessed?

1. Here’s the answer. Let’s add the phrase, *in spirit*. Read the whole thing: *Blessed are the poor in spirit* . . . .  
     
   Go ahead and take a shot: How does the meaning change when we add the phrase *in spirit*? *Blessed are the beggars in spirit*. Or, *blessed are the spiritual beggars* . . . .   
     
   Does that help clarify it? To whom was Jesus eluding? Who are the spiritual beggars?
2. The *poor in spirit* to whom Jesus refers are those who literally cringe at their spiritual condition before God. They’re appalled at contrast between their reality and God’s and they realize they have no leg to stand on and no bragging rights before the Holy God.   
     
   They have come to the crushing and yet liberating realization that the only thing they can do before God is beg. They have no other appropriate posture before him.
3. Talk about that reality, that posture for a minute. Have you ever felt that way? What’s challenging or even offensive about the concept of our being nothing but spiritual beggars before God?
4. Now, to the promise. With every beatitude or blessing statement Jesus offers a condition and a promise. In this verse the condition is *poor in spirit*. The promise is *theirs is the Kingdom*.

The apparent simplicity of Matthew 5:3 is now eclipsed by its obvious profundity: The Kingdom of God belongs freely to anyone who recognizes that they are spiritually impoverished before God.   
  
The Kingdom does not flow to the arrogant, the pompous, the self-important or self-reliant. It flows rather to the desperate, the humble, the broken and the spiritually impoverished. To the group that knows their only hope before God is a gift of grace that they didn’t earn and don’t deserve, the Kingdom flows freely.   
  
Note the inverse relationship between pride and God’s power. The more pride one has before God, the less of God’s power he will experience. But the inverse is true: the humbler and more broken one is before God, the more of God’s power he’ll know in his life.

Now talk about that reality. How does that make you feel? Does anything seem odd or counterintuitive about it?

What are the implications of that paradox for your life? What are the implications of Matthew 5:3 for Jesus’ followers? For leaders? For people who have large platforms like influencers, authors, pastors and “celebrities?” What are the implications for those of us who are control freaks and/or are strivers and achievers?

Finally, imagine that the Kingdom of God was behind a closed door. Access to all of God’s power and blessing was available just by passing through that one door. But the door was designed in the spirit of Matthew 5:3. The door was built so that only the broken could enter through it.

What would the door look like?