**The Sermon on the Mount, session one**

 **“Blessed are the poor in spirit”**

**1) Overview**

The sermon on the mount is probably Jesus’ most famous sermon, and probably one of the most famous speeches in the whole of human history.

Jesus gives it in the early days of his ministry, after his baptism (Matt. 3) and temptation, when large crowds start to follow him (Matt. 4).

 “Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them saying; ….” (Matt. 5, 1)

**2) Why did Jesus go up a mountain?**

People give at least 3 possible reasons;

2,1) Mountainsides make good amphitheatres for large crowds.

2, 2) Jesus always seemed to want to make it difficult for people to follow him. Mountains were difficult to climb and would have discouraged those who are only half interested.

There were several times in his ministry when he seemed to go out of the way to put people off from following him. (eg. John 6, 66-68; Matt. 8, 18-22, Matt. 10, 34-39, etc).

2, 3) Jesus was fulfilling the Old Testament promise found in Deut 18, 15 which says that God would raise up for Israel a prophet like Moses.

Moses went up the mountain to get the law of God and to unveil the teachings by which God’s people had to live. Jesus likewise went up the mountain to unveil the new law of God, the teachings by which God’s people had to live by in the New covenant era.

**3) The Sermon on the mount is Jesus’ manifesto**

The Sermon on the mount is “The Constitution of the Kingdom”. Just like a political party lays out its agenda before an election, Jesus laid out what he wanted His kingdom to look like and how he expected those who followed him to live.

**4) The Beatitudes.**

The Beatitudes are like 8 beautiful flowers that God invites us to cultivate in the “garden of our heart”. They are 8 beautiful attitudes that God wants us to nurture and develop in our lives.

**5) Happy**

In the original greek, the word is “Makarios” means “Happy, Fortunate or Blessed”. It was a common name given to Greek boys.

**“How can I be happy?”** is one of life’s biggest questions.

a) Some say the answer is to be found in **what you have**. Wealth, health, friends, education.

b) Others say that the answer is to be found in **what you do**. A satisfying job, lots of interesting hobbies, if you travel widely.

c). In the beautitudes, Jesus told us that it is **who you are on the inside.**

**6) Blessed**

The word “Makarios” also means Blessed (by God).

The blessing of God makes a tangible difference in your life. That’s why the priests used to “put God’s blessing on the people” with these words (Num. 6, 27).

“May the Lord bless you and keep you,

May He make **His face shine upon you** and be **gracious** unto you

May He **turn His face towards you**, and give you **peace**”. (Num 6, 24-26)

**7) What does it mean to be poor in spirit?**

a)Jesus **doesn’t say;** “Blessed are the **poor spirited**” – we are not called to be weak, lacking in strength, energy and backbone.

b) Jesus also doesn’t say blessed are those who are **spiritually poor**. There is no blessedness in a poverty stricken prayer life, in a poor understanding of the bible or a faltering walk with the Lord.

c) To be poor in spirit means that you acknowledge the gap between where you are in your spiritual life and where God calls you to be.

**8) Mind the gap**

What you do with the gap is the important thing. Feeling poor in spirit can lead to several different outcomes;

a) Some people see that they fall short, and so they **condemn themselves**.

I could never live like that. God can never love me as I am. I will never be used by God. But the Bible says; “There’s no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8,1)

b) Many **compare themselves to others in the church**. They think, “Well, I’m doing better than him. I pray more than her so I must be ok. The Bible tells not to compare ourselves with others (2 Cor. 10, 12; Gal. 6, 4).

c) Others try to close that gap by **lowering their expectation** as to what a Christian should be or do. They emphasise the grace and forgiveness of God and accept a weak, fruitless walk with God as the normal Christian life. But Jesus tells us to “Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect” (Matt. 5, 48).

d) What “poor in spirit” should cause us to do is **To Mourn our spiritual state and to seek for more of God.** Jesus said; “Blessed are those who mourn. They shall be comforted”. And “Blessed are those who Hunger and thirst for righteousness. They shall be filled”.

e) We need to always **cultivate that gap**. We should only be satisfied with our faith if we are dissatisfied with our faith. We need to “**press on** to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Phil. 3, 12).

**9) How do you see yourself?**

a) In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable “To some who were **confident of their own righteousness”** (Luke 18, 9). One prayed with confidence, thanking God for all that he had been given. The other prayed with humility, repenting for the little he had done with God’s gifts.

b) There’s a difference between your **“Legal position”** in Christ and your **“actual position”**. In Christ we have freedom, wholeness and power. That doesn’t mean that we are living in the really of it. We need to strive to close the gap between our actual position and our legal position.

**10) Theirs is the Kingdom**

a) The second half of the beatitude says; “For Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”

Andrew Murray, one of the leaders of the East African revival says this; “Just as water ever seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment God finds you abased and

empty, His glory and power flow in”.

If you can become truly poor in spirit, God will give you the fullness of His Kingdom.

10 b) There are two stories in the Bible about those who went about trying to get the Kingdom in opposite ways.

Lucifer, the great archangel, sought to get the kingdom by growing in greatness and power, until he wanted to establish his throne above the throne of God. His ambition brought about discord, a change in the heavenly order and great evil.

“Where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” (James 3, 16).

He also discovered that “God opposes the proud, but shows favour to the humble” (James 4, 6), and that “He who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23, 12).

**The Kingdom does not belong to the ambitious but to the poor in spirit.**

**11) The opposite of ambition - humility**

a) Jesus Christ is the one who was ultimately given the kingdom. He was truly “Poor in Spirit”.

b) He deliberately chose to take more steps down the ladder of greatness than anyone else would ever do in all of history.

c) The one who from eternity past had co-habited the throne of God chose to step down into the earth, not into a palace but into a stable to a poor peasant woman.

d) He spent his childhood being known as the illegitimate child of a poor peasant family from no-where-ville.

e) When he started his ministry, he wasn’t even given any special powers to help him. “The son can do NOTHING by himself. He can do only what he sees his Father doing” (John 5, 19)

f) The King of Kings chose to become a humblest servant of the lowest people in the land. The poor, the illiterate, the prostitutes, the despised tax collectors, the lepers.

g) Instead of receiving the praise and adoration of the nations, he was was unfairly judged by the crowds, rejected by the Sanhedrin, sentenced to death by the Romans.

h) The giver of life was executed by the most painful, humiliating death of all.

i) As he hung naked on the cross, he allowed all the sin of the whole world to be placed upon him, all of the world’s sickness and the heart-ache and pain.

j) Because he chose that path of humility, “God exalted Him to the highest placeand gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2, 6-11).

**12) Will you drink this cup?**

Today, this great Jesus is looking for a partner with whom he can share the kingdom and to whom he can give all power and authority.

He chooses those who are poor in spirit.

“The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over people, and their high officials exercise authority over them. It mustn’t be like that with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20, 25-28)