LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 5 (Part 1) :1-3

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Matthew 5. I think as we get into this tonight, you're going to see the beauty and the depth of what this single verse that we're going to be looking at here has here tonight. Because this verse is the first step to truly changing our lives. Whenever we get toward the end of the year, everybody's always thinking about their New Year's resolutions. And that's all bound up in the idea of how I want to change.

You know, the whole issue is how we're going to change. I want to change my life. Whether it's my weight or my... well, whatever. You know what people do.

And when it comes to changing our lives in Christ, there is a first step that we must take in order to move on with God. And that's what we're going to be looking at here tonight. So this is the root of real change. If you've looked at your life and you've thought to yourself, I want things in my life to change. Buckle up.

Here we go. We're going to be reading here Matthew 5. And we're going to read the first three verses. I'm going to obviously again here reading from the ESV. It says this, Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That's how much we're going to read there. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, open our hearts to hear Your voice and to receive from You today what You want to say to us. Lord, this is just a small section of Scripture, but we believe that through the ministry of Your Spirit, You can open up our lives to a huge amount of information and insight. And we pray that You would do that tonight.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, what we notice in this passage is that this beatitude is one of a series of statements that Jesus makes where He pronounces a blessed or blessed condition upon a certain attitude or action. We call these again the beatitudes. We're only looking at the first one here.

But that repetition that Jesus gives us here is blessed are, and then whatever that attitude or action is, and it is followed by a promise. And by the way, the reason that these are called the beatitudes is because in Latin, the word blessed or blessed is beatus, and that's where it comes from. Interestingly enough, though, the Greek word that's used here in the text that appears very often is translated happy. And because it's translated happy, there have been a lot of people over the years who have looked at the beatitudes and they have assumed that what Jesus is giving us here is a roadmap to happiness. In other words, here's how you can be happy.

You know, do all these things and you're going to be a happy person. But that is not what Jesus is talking about here. The beatitudes are a roadmap, but they are a roadmap to finding God and then growing in God. And I think you're going to see that here tonight. So the blessed condition that Jesus speaks of here is a joy and a delight that comes from knowing and growing in Christ.

It's a joy-producing thing in our life when we find God and then we're growing in Him and begin to reflect Him in our lives. There's nothing worse, I think, in the life of a Christian when we recognize that we're not growing. That we've just kind of stagnated. But when we know we're moving on, and the beatitudes are all about moving on, but this first beatitude is critical for us to understand because if you miss this first beatitude, you can't go on to the second one, and you can't go on to the third one, or the fourth one, and so on. You've got to see this one, you've got to understand it, and you have to apply it in your life.

And so that's what we're going to see here, hopefully this evening. And that is, of course, the way we begin to live differently. To have a different, changed life. Because, you know, I think deep down all of us want to see change. And that's why, obviously, New Year's resolutions are so huge.

In fact, you know, when we look at our own history as a people, we find that a lot of the cultural revolutions that have taken place, whether in our country here or around the world, have been based on the fact that we need to change. Things need to change, you know? In fact, it was that very cultural upheaval back in the 1960s that ended up giving birth to the movement that eventually brought Calvary Chapel to the forefront of kind of what was going on at that time in our country. And most of you know about the hippies who were hanging around in the 1960s and so forth. Some of them probably still exist, never got out of the 60s.

But what some of our younger members might not realize about the hippie movement of the 1960s is that it was sparked by a dissatisfaction with life. It wasn't just a bunch of kids sitting around thinking, gee, it'd be fun to take drugs all day and not have to do anything else. They were genuinely dissatisfied,

disenchanted with the world that they were living in. And so they began to seek change, you know? And boy, you know, if you were around in the 1960s and you watched the news, it was quite often laced with pictures of teenagers and kids in their 20s being carted off by the police because of some protest that was going on.

Many of those protests turned violent. It was a really tumultuous time. The evening news was literally filled with these images of these kids who were saying, enough already. We want change. And so we had pictures of kids burning their military draft cards, refusing to go to the war.

And the people were just very disillusioned with the way things were going and they believed that the honorable thing to do was to drop out rather than participate. And, of course, the music of that time reflected all of that sentiment. The Beatles alone, once they stopped singing about girls, their songs were essentially mostly all political in nature because they were reflecting the same attitude that was here in the United States. All you need is love, give peace a chance, power to the people, you know, stuff like that. And so as we look back on that time period today and we have the benefit of hindsight, we recognize, and I mean, some of those former hippies are probably even here, but we recognize that as much as these young people wanted to see change, they didn't have a clue how to get there.

I mean, some of them truly, honestly believed that the way to do it was through rock and roll and mind-altering drugs. I mean, that was truly what some people thought was the way to bring change. Of course, others sought religious experiences, Eastern mysticism, a bunch of other different things. But whatever they chose or whatever path they took, they were looking for something radically different than what society had to offer. And you guys know that the reason that Calvary Chapel exploded in growth back in those days is because some of those very same kids who were looking desperately for answers found what they were looking for in the teachings of God's Word.

The counter-revolution that they were looking for was ultimately found for them in the pages of Scripture. And this radical answer was found in the person of Jesus Christ because these young people came to understand that mind-altering drugs and rock music wasn't going to cut it. Political reform wasn't going to cut it. Social reform wasn't going to cut it. They began to understand that.

And they discovered that Jesus Christ offered the kind of change that they were looking for. And the reason I've given you this kind of fairly long intro to these couple few verses... Is because I want you to understand that personal change, transformation, begins right here. In the Word of God, what we've been looking at, in fact if there was ever a Christian manifesto that speaks about the transforming power of the Gospel and the work that God wants to do in our lives to change us, it is found here in the Sermon on the

Mount, specifically the Beatitudes, and it starts right here in this verse that we're looking at. I want you to look in your Bible with me once again to verse 3, and I want you to see this.

It says again, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And this first Beatitude establishes for us the form that Jesus uses throughout the rest of the Beatitudes. And again, it expresses this attitude or mindset, and then promises a blessed condition for those who conform to it. And Jesus begins here by pronouncing a blessed condition on those who are poor in spirit. So our first question is, what are the poor in spirit?

What does it mean? What does it mean to be poor in spirit? I mean, this is huge, if Jesus says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, it would probably be good for us to understand what this means, right? So I want you to understand here, when Jesus says, blessed are the poor, he's not talking about financial poverty. You'll notice the phrase there is poor in spirit.

And by the way, those are the two key words that we're looking at. The words are poor and spirit. Those are the things we have to understand to understand what Jesus is saying here. First, the word poor. Let me give you an explanation of that word from a quote that I found by William Barclay.

Fascinating quote, I'll put this on the screen. He says, in the Greek language, there are two words for poor. There is a word that describes a man who has to work for his living. He's not rich, but he's not destitute either. We would just call him, we would say he's poor.

The other Greek word for poor describes absolute and abject poverty. It means to crouch or to cower, and describes the poverty which is beaten to its knees. In other words, we would probably use the word destitute to describe this level of poor. And that is the word that's being used here by Jesus when he says, blessed are the poor in spirit. He's saying destitute, all right?

So again, we're not talking about somebody who puts their hand in their pocket and brings it out and says, well, I only have a few coins. He's talking about somebody who doesn't have a few coins, who may not even have a pocket to put his hand into. We're talking about somebody who has nothing, okay? Absolutely nothing. And that again is the word that Jesus uses here.

The second important word is spirit. If you look there in your Bible again, and this is the Greek word panuma, and it simply means breath or wind or spirit. But in this context, the word is being used to describe in a broader sense, the life of someone. In other words, this is your life, all right? You know what we would say today?

We'd say self. That's our word today. We talk a lot about self. Is there still a magazine called Self? There used to be.

I used to see it on the stands. So it got so big that we even made a magazine with the title cover, Self. So when Jesus says, blessed are the poor in spirit, he's talking about that which is you. This is yourself, okay? So what is Jesus saying?

Blessed are those who are destitute of self, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who are destitute of self. All right, here's another quote that might help us kind of understand this a little bit better. John Stott says it this way. He says, to be poor in spirit is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, indeed, our spiritual bankruptcy before God.

For we are sinners under the holy wrath of God and deserving nothing but the judgment of God. We have nothing to offer, nothing to plead, nothing with which to buy the favor of heaven. Boy, that kind of sums it up, doesn't it? And yet, as desperate as that sounds, you have nothing. You have nothing.

You have nothing to give to God. You have nothing to offer for your lives. You have nothing with which you can ransom your life. Jesus says there's a blessed condition that is connected with the understanding of that situation. And I want to be quick to point out that poor in spirit does not mean the same thing as seeing yourself in a poor light or, like we would say today, having low self-esteem.

They're not the same thing at all. Recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy is simply recognizing our true condition before God. It's just who we are because, you see, our natural tendency is to see ourselves in a more inflated sort of self-important light. You guys remember the church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation? Jesus dictated a letter to that church through John, and he said something to them about how they saw themselves and how he saw them.

And I want to put this passage on the screen for you so you can see it here with me. It's in Revelation 3, beginning at verse 15, and Jesus said to them, I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I'm about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, I am rich.

Again, this is how they see themselves. I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But here's how Jesus sees them. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. What was Jesus telling this church?

He was telling them that their ability to see themselves was tainted, and they saw themselves as having a great deal, and he says, actually, you have nothing. You are destitute, and you just don't see it. And because of that, they were at risk of losing everything. So here's the important question that we need to ask ourselves here this evening. Why does Jesus declare a blessed condition upon those who simply recognize their spiritual poverty?

In other words, why is that so important, and why is it considered blessed by Christ? And here's the answer. When we recognize the emptiness and the bankruptcy of our lives, we're then in a place to really truly receive from God. Here's the interesting thing and important thing for us to remember. God can't put anything in your hands when they're full, okay?

He can't put anything in your hands when your hands are full. Because if they're full of something other than Him, then that is, if you will, another God. It's whatever you're satisfying yourself with, whether it's yourself or something or someone else. And one thing we know for sure is that our God says, you shall have no gods before me. And so, if there's something in our heart, if there's something in our lives that we're counting on, that we're relying on other than God, then He can't fill up that area of your life.

Because it's already filled, right? There's something else in your life that's filling it. And that's why Jesus says, blessed are those who are destitute of themselves, because there's nothing there. Jesus is free now to fill up their hearts, fill up their lives with His goodness, with His ability, with His power, and so forth and so on. And, you know, even when it comes to forgiveness, some people will come to God and speak words of asking, you know, for forgiveness, but there's still something in their hands.

In other words, you know, they might come to the place of saying, God, I ask you to forgive me, you know, but in their heart, they're thinking, you know, compared to that other person, I'm really not that bad, you know. But I'm going to say, you know, forgive me because, you know, He taught us to say in the Lord's Prayer, you know, forgive us our debts as we forgive. debtors so you know i'm gonna i'm gonna do that you know i'm a good christian i'm gonna go ahead and say what needs to be said here but going on inside the heart there there's not a true attitude of poor in spirit there's not an attitude of of of utter poverty before god that that person still thinks they have something to offer god you know that is of value you and believe me when i say coming to the revelation of one's poverty before god can be a painful a painful sort of a thing and i can tell you right now there's not one person in this room who wants to do it there's nothing fun about coming to the realization that i have nothing to offer god there's nothing fun about it there's nothing fun about coming to the realization that i am so easily satisfied with self i'm so easily i so

easily rely upon self particularly in times of difficulty and so forth um but it is absolutely necessary that we come to christ in that way and only then can we move up the stairs that are the beatitudes and as you go through and read through the rest of the beatitudes which i encourage you to do you need to see these things as progressive stair steps but again um the right frame of mind for even getting onto the stairway is understanding how i see myself before god and and and it has to start there right here at this beatitude you know king david understood this how how would you like to have been king david yeah he was a man who was wonderfully blessed he was a man who heard incredibly promises from god wonderful promises i mean the messiah is going to come from your family line wonderful things but he's also a man who sinned for all to see and we're still talking about his sins today we we even have his prayers of repentance and i have to tell you that when i read through david's prayer of repentance in psalm 51 i see that he understood what we're talking about here when jesus says blessed are the poor in spirit and i want to show you this from psalm 51 on the screen it goes like this he says oh lord open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise not my own for you will not delight in sacrifice or i would give it you will not be pleased with a burnt offering the sacrifices of god are a broken spirit a broken and contrite heart oh god you will not despise you know what's interesting about this that david was living during the days of the old covenant when sacrifices and offerings were demanded of people but he comes to god and says i know that's not what is going to please you in this situation what you want is the brokenness of my heart you want to see a broken and contrite spirit and you know this was something that god had to encourage the people to do and not show some outward form let me show you a passage from joel also very interesting passage here yet even now declares the lord it says in joel chapter 2 beginning of verse 12 return to me with all your heart he says with fasting with weeping and with mourning and then he goes on to say this and rend your heart and not your garments and then joel adds in return to the lord your god for he is gracious and merciful slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and he relents over disaster but what is god saying through joel i don't want to just see that outward sign you know like i'm sorry he wants he wants in our lives and what is necessary in our lives for us to move on with god is to understand our true spiritual condition blessed are the destitute of self for theirs is the kingdom of heaven and it starts with that understanding that mourning mourning over my sinful condition we're so easy at covering it up we're so and and the enemy comes along to whisper and say it's really not that bad you know the reason that god wants us to see a true picture of our spiritual brokenness is because then he knows that we begin to place ourselves in a position for real blessing from god we get it so backwards i saw a gal online recently who was talking about how she wanted her marriage to be blessed and so she was like so my boyfriend and i want to get married friend and i want to get married in a church because we really want our marriage to be blessed by god and i probably shouldn't but i went ahead and respond i didn't even know the gal and i

piped up and i said it has nothing to do with where you get married there are so many other elements that are involved related to walking in and experiencing the blessings of god let me tell you something getting married in a church is not one of them that that is not important because the church is a bunch of people it's not a building and there's nothing special about any church building other than the fact that we meet in it but it's just a building and yet we we want to do all these external things you know so that we can walk in the blessing of god and and jesus pronounces a blessing a blessed a blessed condition and he starts it right here and it begins with brokenness you want your marriage blessed be a broken person from the standpoint of understand your your bankruptcy before god understand how destitute you are you want your marriage to be blessed that's wonderful then begin to admit to god that you don't have what it takes to be a husband or a wife get what's in your hands out of your hands so that god can begin to fill your hands with him right we we come into marriage and i'm just using one example here we come into marriage with our hands full in fact our arms are full even though we may not realize it we've learned what we've learned from our parents we've learned what we've learned from society we've learned what we've learned from reading self-help books and all this stuff and look at the condition we're in related to marriage in our country you know we're we're marriage has been devastated as an institution you know um get rid of it get rid of all that stuff come before god in utter brokenness lord i need you i need you to show me what being a spouse is all about uh i need you to show me what being a parent is you know get it get what you've got in your hands get it out come before god with empty hands and recognize your spiritual bankruptcy and say god i need you to fill me with you see that's very difficult for us to do because we're very prideful people and we don't like to admit that we don't have things kind of all put together and if and as long as we maintain that attitude god is always going to be at arm's length from us and we're going to struggle all right now let's look at the promise here that is at the end of verse three in your bible again he says blessed are the poor in spirit and then here it is for theirs is the kingdom of heaven wow what he's saying is to those again who are destitute of self god promises all the richings and riches and all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven and i think that's just wild because essentially what jesus is saying here is that for those who recognize they have nothing they actually have everything that's what he's saying when you recognize that you have nothing rejoice because you now have everything and that is the the the key to what he's saying here he's saying that you now possess everything he literally gives us the kingdom and this is something we don't think about very often in our life because i guess we don't see ourselves as possessing the kingdom you know it's like what do i have in my life that is that is the kingdom well we it regardless of whether you see it or not you have it Let me show you a passage from Luke chapter 12. This is an interesting verse. Jesus speaking here, he says, "'Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's "'good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'" Isn't that an interesting passage?

You don't often hear people talking about that, though, a lot. Fear not. Don't be afraid. Actually, the context of this passage is Jesus telling them not to worry about what they eat, or what they're gonna eat, what they're gonna wear. You know, worrying about the issues of life.

Worrying about, you know, getting on in life. See, don't worry. Don't worry about these things. "'Fear not, for it is your father's good pleasure "'to give you the kingdom.'" Well, when do we begin to receive the blessing of the kingdom? When our hands are empty.

When we recognize, you know, what we don't have, but it's so easy to lose sight of what we've been given. We become so small in our vision and in our attitudes, and you might remember the people in Corinth. In Paul's first letter, he was challenging them about the fact that they were getting so petty that they were arguing over which apostle was the best and which one they followed. And some people were saying, well, I follow Apollos, because he's kind of, you know, a brainiac. And some people said, well, I follow Paul.

And some people said, well, I follow Peter. And then the real super spiritual people said, we follow Jesus. And he's like, ah, you guys. Do you understand, can you guess what Paul is going to essentially say to them here? Let me put this up from 1 Corinthians 3, verse 21.

He says, you know, you guys, let nobody boast in men. Look at this, for all things are yours. And that includes whether we're talking about apostles like Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death. Have you ever thought about the fact that death is yours? Or the present or the future?

And look what he says, all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's. Wow, I wonder what would happen if we started to just meditate on some of these truths about the fact that God has given us the kingdom. He's given us the kingdom. Fear not, little flock, it's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Paul says, all these things are yours.

Why are you bickering? Jesus says to the people that he's listening to, why are you worrying? Why are you stressing? All these things are yours. I've given you the kingdom.

Why are you worried about these things and so forth? But what is the first step to possessing the kingdom? It's not possessing anything of self that might get in the way. Blessed are the destitute of self for theirs is the kingdom for to them belongs the kingdom. This isn't one of those truths that you can just hear a passing message about and kind of walk away going, hey, I got the kingdom.

This is one of those things that takes some real thought and even some prayer. Lord, am I living my life as if you've given me the kingdom? First of all, is there anything in my life that is standing in the way of me receiving? Because I don't want anything in my hands. You know, when I am found in Christ, I want to be found just with Him, you know?

We're gonna get to a wonderful passage here in God's word. We're gonna get to a passage here in Galatians at the end of chapter two, and I didn't cover it this last week on purpose, but we're gonna get to this wonderful passage where Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ now lives in me. And the life I now live, and what that means is I don't possess anything because the old man isn't alive anymore. So all the possessions, all the things that were of me, all the things that I used to put my hope in and put my energy into and I was so proud about, I've died to all those things. I have become bankrupt of self and all the things that the world points to and says, these are important, you know?

I'm divested from all of those things through my death in Christ, and now I live in Him. Well, do you know what that means? That means that whatever belongs to Christ is mine. Right? Because He's given me the kingdom.

He's literally blessed me with the kingdom. It is His good pleasure to give you the kingdom. In other words, you don't have to prevail upon Him. You don't have to beg. You don't have to plead.

It's His good pleasure to give you the kingdom. What is important for you to understand is what that means in your life and how to go forward with that. I truly believe that one of Satan's most effective tools in our lives is to convince us that we are paupers, even in Christ, and to limit us in our understanding of what he has done and given to us by virtue of our faith in him and our adoption as sons and daughters. And because of that, we go through this life doing all the things we shouldn't do, like worrying, like getting very small and bickering about who's the best apostle or whatever. And we need to be drawn up and drawn out of that with the understanding of who we are in Jesus and what we've been given in Him.

What we've looked at here tonight in Matthew 5 is the step to receiving the kingdom. Because it'd be ridiculous for us to talk about all the things that he's given to us, right? Without talking about how we obtain it. Even, you know, our very salvation is predicated upon understanding that I have nothing to offer God in exchange for my life. I have nothing.

I am destitute of self, even as it relates to my eternal salvation, and I have to come to him on bended knee and say, I have nothing. I have nothing to offer. I have nothing to give you to somehow earn what

you, you know, might otherwise give me. And that, as you know, is where salvation begins, right? As long as somebody thinks they have something to offer, they're not gonna need Jesus.

So this is the first step to knowing Christ. It's the first step to walking onward in Christ, and it is the first step to possessing the kingdom. And when we begin to understand the depth of what it means that we've been given the kingdom, it changes our perspective. It changes our perspective. It changes the way we pray.

And I'm not suggesting to you that because God has given you the kingdom, you're never going to struggle, or you're never going to go through a period of leanness in any way. I'm not suggesting that. I'm saying it changes your attitude about those things. You're no longer gonna go through things like that merely because, like the enemy would like you to believe, God doesn't love you, or you don't have rights, or access to that stuff. You're going to realize that if you are going through a time of difficulty, or a time of trial, or challenge, you're going to know and understand that this is within the context of the rulership of the kingdom of God, because the kingdom has been given to you.

You are in the kingdom. He rules over that kingdom, and you can say, like Jesus said to Pilate, when Pilate tried to intimidate him by saying, don't you realize I have the power to set you free, or to crucify you? Remember what Jesus said? He said, you would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above. Where does that statement come from?

It comes from the understanding of the kingdom of God that surrounds and envelops, and holds us in. And we're no longer having this attitude of panic, right? When we're faced with something, because we are beginning to understand the kingdom of God. Wait a minute. I'm in the kingdom of God, and if there's a kingdom, there must be a king.

And if there is a king, that means he rules. And if he rules, that means he's my ruler. And if he's my ruler, I can rest in that rule. So many times, you know, we read some of the Psalms like, where David said things like, he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

And we look at that and we're kind of like, well, lucky him. Guess he knew something that I didn't. Yeah, actually, that's true, he did. He understood the kingdom. He understood.

That he was in the kingdom of God. And he can rest in the king. And his ability to providentially, supernaturally, guide and direct our lives. Doesn't mean we don't have to, from time to time, do some spiritual warfare. Doesn't mean we don't have to get up and pray and pray with faith.

Doesn't mean we're not gonna have to anoint the sick with oil and pray the prayer of faith. Doesn't mean that we're not gonna have to be alert and self-controlled. Doesn't mean that we can sit back on our laurels and do nothing. It just means we walk into it with a completely different understanding. He is my king.

He is on the throne. I am in the kingdom. He has given me the kingdom. The kingdom is mine. He is mine.

I am his, right? And it truly changes our entire perspective. And it begins by divesting ourselves of self. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.