

God's Kingdom Is for the Needy

by Zac Poonen

God's divine power has granted us everything necessary for life and godliness, and the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit and seek God.

Duration: 58:44

Scripture: Matthew 4:23, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 9:35, Matthew 24:14

Topics: "Kingdom Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being poor in spirit in order to experience the kingdom of heaven. He explains that being poor in spirit means recognizing our need for God and being humble before Him. The preacher also highlights the good news of the gospel, which is that we can become more and more like Jesus and overcome sin in our lives. He encourages believers to let God's word work in their own lives and to speak only what has been proven in their own experiences. The sermon references Romans 14:17 and Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 to support these teachings.

Transcript

I want to continue that study today and the next two sessions. In 2 Peter 1, we read these words in verse 3 and 4, that His divine power, that always refers to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, has granted us everything. It is a gift and it includes everything, not everything pertaining to life on this earth, but everything pertaining to spiritual life, eternal life and godliness.

There is absolutely no excuse now for anyone to say, I can't live a godly life. There were many excuses that people could make in the old covenant because they did not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. And if you don't have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you and you don't yield yourself completely to the Holy Spirit, then you've only got yourself to blame if you don't live a godly life.

But there's no excuse today. It's available. If people don't receive because of some reluctance to yield some area of their life, then they've only got themselves to blame.

But God has granted us everything. And everything means everything pertaining to living a godly life in a wicked, sinful earth. It doesn't matter how dark the surroundings are.

The life of Christ is more powerful than the darkness around. And do you know that every time you yield to the darkness in the world around you, you are testifying by your life, the life of Christ is not more powerful

than the darkness around me. I never want to give that testimony, not with my words and not with my life.

And every time I conquer the sin that surrounds me, it's a testimony by my life that the life of Christ is more powerful than all the power of Satan. I want to ask you, my dear brothers and sisters, what is your life testifying? What does your life testify in your home, in your office, when you travel on the roads and people are angry, man, there's a lot of road rage, what about you? That's darkness. Does the life of Christ in you overcome, or does the life of the devil overcome the darkness around? Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

That's not to be just a verse in the Bible. It's to be written in my life. The way I live, the way I relate to people who are evil, the way I behave to people who are angry, the way I relate to sexual temptation and to all the provocative, you know, billboards on the roads and the provocative scenes that I choose not to watch on television, et cetera.

My reaction to that is the life of Christ is more powerful than all of that darkness. I want to encourage all of you to be a living testimony to this ungodly generation that the life of Christ, the resurrection life of Christ that conquered death is greater than any darkness or sin or demonic power that the devil can hurl at us. So his divine power has granted us everything necessary, everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of him, and the very fact that the word true comes there proves that there's a lot of false knowledge of God, and the world is full of a false knowledge of God, even among Christians, even among many believers.

Believers who feel condemned, discouraged, have a false knowledge of God. Believers who do not know God as a loving, patient father have got a false knowledge of God. Believers who keep on condemning themselves for some sin they have confessed in their past life and don't believe that God has forgiven them have got a false knowledge of God.

So we enter into a godly life through the true knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and excellence, and for by these he has granted to us, verse 4, his precious and magnificent promises, and that's what we were thinking of, magnificent promises, the magnificent promises of God, and the purpose of all these promises, the greatest and best of God's promises, there are many promises, some relate to earthly things, and you've often heard me say that from Matthew chapter 5, you read there how the Lord says, love your enemies, verse 44, and so on, he says, and be like God your Father, who makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil, that means you're a good farmer, or an evil farmer, God will make the sun shine on your crops, and on your fields, and you know, all the plants need the sun, and God will make the sun shine on your fields, even if you're an evil farmer, because he's a good God. Your being evil makes no difference to his nature, and that's a wonderful, one of the wonderful things about the life of God when it comes into us, that somebody being evil to us can't change us. If somebody being evil to you can change you, then you need to know that, have the true knowledge of God, and receive the power, the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus said that he makes the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous. Now, we would think that God shouldn't let any rain fall on that atheistic farmer who doesn't believe in his existence, or some agent of Satan. God's a good God.

He sends the rain on that atheist farmer as well. Can you do that? That's what Jesus said, love your enemies, be like God your Father, be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect, that means don't let other people's words and behavior influence you. I mean, if he serves the devil, let him serve the devil.

Why should you go and serve the devil too in return? You serve God. When people hurled hate at Jesus on the cross, they served the devil, but he served his Father, and he said, Father, forgive them. He wouldn't serve the devil.

The world is full of people who, when somebody serves the devil, they say, you're going to serve the devil? Well, I'm going to serve the devil too, more than you. That's stupidity. And plenty of homes where husbands and wives serve the devil like that.

In a Christian home, truly Christian home, and there's a true knowledge of God, that does not happen. Even if everyone in your home serves the devil, you make sure that you're one who serves God. And so, what I was saying is that all these material blessings, like the sun rising and the rain falling, and every material blessing is given by God to those who are good and evil.

Do you qualify? Every material blessing is given by God to the righteous and the unrighteous. Do you qualify? That's why you find unrighteous people in the world becoming billionaires, with all their crookedness and cheating and everything else. And God blesses some of his children also with wealth.

But it's no indication that God is happy with the person. That's wrong. There are believers who are millionaires, and there are unbelievers who are billionaires.

What does it prove? It doesn't prove anything about their cap, it just proves God is a good God and gives material blessings to good and evil people. There are many believers who live very healthy lives without getting sick up to the age of 80, 90. There are unbelievers who live healthy, strong lives to the age of 100 and 130.

You see that if you look up the Guinness Book of Records. And non-Christians, atheists, live long lives. What does it prove? How do they live so healthy? Because God is a good God.

So health and wealth are God's blessings, no doubt. But they are given to the righteous and the unrighteous, to the good and to the evil. It's absolute stupidity for a Christian to think that God gives health and wealth only to his children.

Look around the world, open your eyes and see, and you'll see it's not true. But there's something else that God gives only to his children, his nature. That's what it says here, his magnificent promises.

Those promises are not related to health and wealth, that's given to everybody. But his magnificent promises, by which you become partakers of his nature, that's not given to the unrighteous. That's not given to evil people.

So if you want to know whether you are one among the good and the righteous, you can't find out by whether you've got health or wealth. But you can find out by whether you've got God's nature. You've got a nature that can love people who hate you.

By the way, you have a nature where you can bless those who curse you. And then when people speak evil about you, it doesn't even produce a flutter in your heart, because you can love them in return. And when people flatter you to the skies, that doesn't produce a flutter in your heart either, because you know they don't know the whole truth about you.

And that if they knew the whole truth about you, they wouldn't speak so well about you anymore. So you see, the praise and the criticism of men does not even produce a flutter in the heart of a man who's walking with God. But you know, you've got to long for that.

This is where the life of God overcomes the darkness of the world. Flattery is darkness, and the world is full of people who flatter. And if flattery excites you, I would say to you, Brother, be born again.

Let the life of God come in you, then flattery won't excite you. And if criticism disturbs you, I would say to you, be born again. Let the life of God grip your inner life.

Let divine nature take over. Then flattery and criticism will just be the same to you. The praise of men or the criticism of men will both be thrown into that garbage bin, because you live before God, who is the only one who knows you through and through, and His praise is worth getting.

So, God's magnificent promises relate to the divine nature. That's the thing we've been stressing, and I want you to remember that all your life, because there is another gospel being preached in the world today, which is a gospel that even the unrighteous can partake of without repenting of their sin. Health and wealth.

Multitudes of people get health and wealth in the world who are atheists, who have never given up their sinful life. I don't want that gospel. I want a gospel that makes me partake of divine nature.

And we looked at a promise last Wednesday in 1 Samuel 2.30, and I want you to turn to another promise today. That one was, them that honor me, I will honor. That's where we began.

I want you to turn to one of the most wonderful promises in the New Testament in Matthew 5.3. So, this is what we're going to look at today. Matthew 5.3. One of God's magnificent promises, which those who are seeking health and wealth are not interested in. So, I'll tell you this right at the outset.

If you're seeking health and wealth, you might as well switch off. You don't have to listen to me anymore. But if you're seeking God, you're seeking what Jesus came to give, then listen in.

Matthew 5.3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist came preaching, turn around fellas. He was telling Israel, you're looking in the wrong direction.

Till now it was okay. Earthly property in Canaan, and earthly giants killed, and earthly enemies to be destroyed, and earthly health, and earthly wealth, and all that. But he says, turn around.

Or in other words, repent. That's all it means. Turn around.

Because now you must face heaven. Another kingdom is coming. Someone is coming now in a few years, or in a few months, who will set up another kingdom.

And that's, I have come as a forerunner, John the Baptist said, to proclaim that kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is near. It hasn't yet come.

It's at hand. It's near. And they locked up John in prison.

The devil doesn't want that message to be proclaimed too much. He'd rather have people occupied with the kingdom of earth. Here's a guy who's preaching the kingdom of heaven, get him locked up.

So, they got him locked up, but it didn't make a difference. Because it says, as soon as Jesus heard that John the Baptist was locked up, Matthew chapter 4, he started preaching. Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

You know, you can't silence the voice of God. You can lock up one servant, God will raise up another. You can kill one servant, he'll raise up another.

It's been true throughout 2,000 years, ever since the kingdom of heaven was first proclaimed by John the Baptist. He was the first one, by the way. No Old Testament person could proclaim that, because it was not offered.

And even John the Baptist could only say, it's coming. And Jesus said, it's coming. And finally, he said, one of these days, you'll see it actually here.

And that happened on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to earth and filled people's hearts, and the kingdom of heaven had come. It's really true, that song we sing, heaven came down, glory filled my soul, my heart. That only can happen when the Holy Spirit fills a person.

So, Jesus proclaimed that, and then Jesus was crucified by evil men, and the apostles picked up that message, and they proclaimed the kingdom. Peter proclaimed it, and Paul proclaimed it. You know, that's if you read in the Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 28, you read the last verse of Acts 28, says, Paul's two full years in his own rented quarters.

He would never be obligated to anyone. He was a mighty apostle. He would pay rent and stay in his own house.

And he was welcoming all who came to him. And what did he preach? The kingdom of God. That's what he preached, the kingdom of God.

But somehow, through the years, that message disappeared in the darkness that enveloped Christianity for many centuries. But here and there, people preached the kingdom of God, and they were persecuted by the big, huge, dead church that didn't want that message preached. But I'll tell you this, God has never left himself without a witness in any generation.

In every generation, we'll discover that in eternity, from the time that the Holy Spirit came, in every single year in these nearly 2,000 years, God has always had somebody preaching the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, while multitudes preach the kingdom of earth. I mean, look at the priests and pastors and bishops and popes nowadays. You can see that it's earth.

It's wealth and pomp and show and magnificent cathedrals. And the whole thing is of earth. And you can see how Christendom has drifted.

They don't have the power that the apostles had in those early days when they met in caves and little houses, the power of the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of heaven, sort of gradually, the devil succeeded in removing that message from Christendom. But everywhere, but in some place on the face of the earth, God would have a witness.

There would be at least one light shining, and I believe that with all my heart, in all these 2,000 years, without a break, that baton of the message, the gospel of the kingdom, has been passed on from the Baptist to Jesus to the apostles. And every year, it's gone onto somebody's hand, and it's come down to

our generation. And I pray that in the next generation, I believe that, in the next generation too, if the Lord carries, there will be somebody preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

If you don't do it, you young people, I'll tell you, somebody else will do it. God will not be left without a witness just because you fail him. You've heard the message.

Maybe you're not willing to pay the price. Maybe you're still occupied with the things of earth. God will just pass you by and find somebody else.

I've often thought about that. When God went to Urur of the Chaldees, and he called Abraham, said, I want to make a great nation of you, but you've got to forsake everything. Give up your family, give up your retired comfort and your house and everything.

Come to a land. I won't even tell you where I'm taking you. Supposing Abraham said, Lord, can't you do it here? I mean, I've settled down for so many years.

I'm 75 years old. God said, Abraham, I won't disturb you. Live here.

And he'd have found somebody else, and you'd never have heard of Abraham again. And I believe we'll discover when we stand before the Lord in the middle day, that he called certain people and they wouldn't respond. I believe Judas Iscariot wouldn't have been the bad name it is today.

He was a wholehearted disciple when Jesus called him. But somewhere along the way, he got taken up with the gospel of the earth and didn't want the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. He wanted a gospel which would make him rich on earth, famous on earth.

And he thought he could use Jesus to become famous and rich. Like many preachers today are using Jesus to become famous, using Jesus to line their pockets. India is full of them.

People who, if they were in a secular job, they wouldn't be getting 10% of what they are earned today in Christian work. What's that? They have used Jesus to make money 10 times more than what they would have got if they were in a secular job. Profitable business, Babylon.

Well, I think you'll discover in the final day there were people whom God called. I want you to be my witness to the kingdom of God. And they started off okay, but along the way, they looked at other preachers and said, why should I miss out on what that fellow is getting and what that fellow is getting? Why can't I also get a little fame and honor and money? They gave up that bait and got fooled by the devil who said, bow down to me and I'll give you whatever you want.

They bowed down. They got what they wanted. But God just took that bait and then gave it to somebody else who wouldn't be fooled by the devil.

Are you going to miss out on something, you young people? God wants a witness in every generation. To say what? That the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit. It's a promise.

Blessed, fortunate. In the Amplified Bible it says, someone to be envied. Do you want to envy somebody? Don't envy somebody who is rich.

Don't envy somebody who is a mighty muscle man or Miss Universe. Don't envy these foolish people. Envy someone who is poor in spirit.

That's what Jesus said. Blessed to be envied is the one who is poor in spirit because the kingdom of heaven belongs to him. And if you see that the kingdom of heaven is the greatest thing we can have on this earth, you'd really envy the man who is poor in spirit because he's going to get the whole lot.

If you look at the kingdom of heaven like a big mansion with a thousand rooms in it, poor in spirit is the master key that opens every room and every treasure is yours. So we need to understand what it means. How can this promise be mine, this magnificent promise? I really believe it is.

To me, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is the New Covenant equivalent Ten Commandments in the Old Testament. Under the Old Covenant, the great thing was the Ten Commandments, the two tablets of stone. That's what the Israelites gloried in.

That's all they had. It was a great glory because God himself wrote it with his own finger. Now in the New Covenant, that has been replaced with Matthew 5, 6, and 7, written by Jesus himself.

He said, There you read, you shall not commit murder. I say to you, don't be angry. There it was written, don't commit adultery.

I say to you, don't even lust in your mind after a woman. See, it's all replaced by something higher. Why? Because that was an earthly kingdom.

This is a heavenly kingdom and heaven is higher than the earth. So if the earthly kingdom required that you don't commit murder, in the heavenly kingdom it requires that you don't even get angry. If the earthly kingdom required that you don't commit adultery, the heavenly kingdom required that you don't even lust after a woman in your heart.

And if the earthly kingdom required that you swear, you tell the truth when you swear, the heavenly kingdom says you must speak the truth all the time. Your yes must be yes, your no must be no. Anything worse than that is evil.

It's pretty high standard. It's impossible to live it unless the Holy Spirit fills your heart. And every time you don't live it, you're testifying publicly, the Holy Spirit has not filled me.

Every time you get angry, you're publicly saying, the Holy Spirit has not filled me. Every time you tell a lie, you're publicly shouting, the Holy Spirit has not filled me. I speak in tongues, but the Holy Spirit has not filled me.

Every time you lust after a woman, you're saying, the Holy Spirit has not filled me, brother. Do you know that your life is shouting day and night, the Holy Spirit has not filled me, the Holy Spirit has not filled me, the Holy Spirit has not filled me. Oh, why don't you seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It's a wonderful promise.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You know, when Jesus preached, it says in the previous chapter, Matthew chapter 4, the first time the word gospel is preached. You know, I wish people would think, study the scriptures a little more.

My big grouse against Christian preachers worldwide is they don't study the scriptures. They read Christian books. Their theology comes from Christian books.

They say it's easier to read. But you care more for the words of men, more than the words of God. That's how you go astray.

One of the things I decided, I was born into a church which had so many things against God's word. When I started studying scriptures, I found so many things in it which are contrary to the teachings of the church I grew up in. And I said, Lord, I make one decision before you.

This was years ago, nearly 40 years ago. I said, 47, 48 years ago. I said, Lord, if I find anything in the word, I believe the Bible is the word of God.

If I find anything in this book which is contrary to what I've believed all my life, I'll throw it away. I'll believe you. And I'll tell you, it's gone well with me.

50 years nearly. Because I made that simple decision. I would recommend it to you.

Take everything in the word seriously. Don't judge others. Don't ever judge other people.

You are not the judge. The Bible says there's only one judge. One lawgiver.

Don't give laws to other people. James 4 is very clear. Read the Bible not to judge other people.

Not even to preach. Read the Bible to set your own life right. That's part of what it means to be poor in spirit.

A poor in spirit is a person who has a sense of his own need. A person who's trying to preach to other people, he's not poor in spirit. A person who's preaching to other people what God has already preached to him and what he's set right in his own life, he's poor in spirit.

But a person who's preaching to others just to set that fellow right and the other fellow right, or taking some verse to hit somebody on the head with like a hammer, he's not poor in spirit. And there are plenty of preachers around like that. I myself was like that in the early days till God opened my blind eyes to show me that that's not the way to preach my word.

Live it first. Let it work in your own life. And speak only what has worked in your own life and don't ever speak about something that's not worked in your own life.

I decided that 32 years ago when I kept my word to God. I would encourage you, let God's word work in your own life. But I took it seriously.

Everything seriously. The little things, the big things. So what do I want to stress here? The first three times the word gospel, which every Christian talks about gospel, gospel, gospel, gospel.

The first three times the word gospel comes in the New Testament. You know where it is? Let me show it to you. Matthew chapter four and verse 23.

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming which gospel? The gospel of the kingdom. Second instance, verse 35 of chapter 9. 9, Matthew 9, 35. Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

He did his job and he went up to heaven. But before he went up to heaven, he said in Matthew 24, he's talking about the last days. The disciples asked him, Lord, when are these things going to happen? Verse

3, tell us what is the sign of your coming and the end of the age? They're talking now about 2,000 years later.

Lord, what's going to happen? And the Lord said in 2,000 years, a lot of things are going to happen. But one thing that is going to happen is this. Matthew 24, 14.

The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world to all the nations in the next 2,000 years. Only then the end will come. Just by the way, those are the first three references to the word gospel in the New Testament.

And isn't it interesting that every single time Jesus called it the gospel of the kingdom. That's what he came to bring. Have you experienced the gospel of the kingdom? That's why this wonderful promise is a magnificent promise, because not everybody can have it.

It's wonderful good news. It's the best news the world can ever hear. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

But it's not for everybody. It's for the poor in spirit. It doesn't matter who you are, my brother, sister.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Heaven comes down into their life. And I believe this.

That the Holy Spirit has come to give me in my life a foretaste of heaven above. Of the peace and the joy and the victory and the purity and the holiness and the love and the goodness there is in heaven. And it's going to be mine, not in its fullness, but a little taste that makes me long for the full reality of it.

It's like some company that's produced some new type of chocolate or something, sends you a small little bit of it, saying if you want more of it, buy the whole slab. And if that's the best chocolate you've ever tasted in the world, boy, they've really got you. And that's what my life is supposed to be.

The Holy Spirit comes and gives me a foretaste of heaven and says, do you want more of this? I say, yes, Lord. Then live for this. And that's what other people around me should see.

That's what other people around you should see. And it is for those who are poor in spirit. If you do not have more of the kingdom of heaven in your life, it's because you're not poor in spirit, my brother, sister.

But you can be. The wonderful news, the good news, gospel means good news, the good news of the kingdom. I can be poor in my spirit.

Let me show you a verse in Romans 14, which describes the kingdom of heaven like this. Romans 14 and verse 17, it says, you know, Paul is talking to people who are arguing about eating and drinking the whole chapter. He says, some people are arguing about, shall we celebrate this day or that day? Some people are arguing about, shall we eat mock meat offered to idols or not offered to idols? And a whole lot of arguments about silly earthly things.

What do most husbands and wives fight over? Tell me. Earthly things. Right? It's true.

What do a lot of Christians fight over? Some petty little earthly thing. Paul says, keep your conviction, brother. Why do you want to force your conviction on somebody else on these peripheral, unnecessary things? These are not, you're not going to be a better person if you eat meat or don't eat meat.

You're not going to be a better person if you keep the Sabbath or don't keep the Sabbath. You're not going to be a better person if you get circumcised or not get circumcised. Brother, the kingdom of heaven is the most important thing, not meat and drink.

And in that context, he says in Romans 14 and verse 17, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And anyone who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God. You want to be acceptable to God? I want to.

I want to serve Christ not with eating and drinking, not with arguing with people and Christians about peripheral, silly things, which I see you hold whatever conviction you like. People argue about wearing jewelry. I have a conviction on it.

From Scripture, 1 Peter 3 and 1 Timothy 2, that I should not wear gold and I don't even have a wedding ring. But I don't impose that on other people. I see you go by your conviction.

The main thing is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Concentrate on that. That's the center.

The other peripheral things, we are allowed to have differences of opinion. You can't get me to change my conviction and I'm not trying to change yours. You do whatever you feel.

Ultimately, you answer to God whether you obey Scripture or not. And I'm going to answer to God whether I obey Scripture or not. I have a certain conviction of Scripture in many things.

And that's why I preach as I do. Freedom to others, but with a firm conviction. So here in Romans 14, 17 it says, the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

That means that I can have this divine righteousness, the righteousness of Christ himself. There's nothing greater than that in the whole world. The world has never seen anyone as righteous as Jesus.

He was so perfect. And the wonderful message of the gospel of the kingdom is that I can be progressively more and more as holy as Jesus was. It's not overnight.

It's like climbing a mountain, like you climb Mount Everest. But the message of the good news of the gospel of the kingdom is that I don't have to live in the lower realms. The low levels of sin that the Adamic race is living in.

I can press on to perfection and become more and more like him. I can overcome. It's like a little child who did not know how to add.

He goes to the next class in school and he learns how to add. But he still doesn't know how to subtract. And he goes to the next class and he learns how to subtract.

And then he keeps going higher and he learns how to multiply. And he learns how to divide. And he learns how to find a square root, which he didn't even know three, four years ago.

Boy, isn't that exciting? Aren't you excited when your little child can find the square root of some number, which you yourself probably don't know how to find? Isn't that good? That's the type of thing in Christian life that's exciting. That areas in my life that I couldn't conquer for so many years, sins that ruled me, I'm getting free from them. Like the ignorance that rules a little baby disappears more and more and more as he goes higher and higher in the class.

Ignorance disappears. Knowledge comes in. That's how it is.

Light comes in. Righteousness. Is that good news? Why are so many Christians afraid of the word holiness? I have been more criticized by other Christians for preaching holiness than for almost anything else.

They say, hey, you're preaching sinless perfection, you're preaching holiness, etc., etc., etc. When they say that to me, it's obvious they haven't heard my tapes or read books. But why are people afraid of holiness? Why do people prefer a preacher who gets up and says, yeah, we'll, of course, we'll always sin till the day we die.

Why do they like a woman preacher who gets up and preaches, I got angry with my husband the other day, I told him I couldn't stand that anymore. But, yeah, we're human. You like to listen to such people, right? Why? Because you find a comfort in your sin.

When you yell at your husband, you say, ah, that great preacher also does it, so I suppose it's okay. You don't care for what the Bible says. We are looking, I'll tell you, the Christians are looking for comfort in their sin.

They watch television programs to find some comfort, ah, that fellow fell into adultery, suppose. It's human. That preacher confessed that he was into internet pornography once in a while as a preacher.

He's struggling with it. Oh, I suppose it's okay. You go to listen to God's word to find comfort in your sin? Why are people afraid of holiness? Why do people prefer to listen to someone who says, we're only human, we'll keep getting defeated, even though the word of God says sin will not rule over you because you're under grace now, not under law.

You don't like such words. You don't like the words of Jesus where he said, Matthew 5, 48, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. Or like he said in Luke 6, be merciful as your heavenly father is merciful.

Strong words. We want this cheap type of message and that's why we are so weak and sickly as Christians. I thank God I don't listen to them.

I listen to God's word. I read the Bible. That gives me much more than what all these preachers can say.

Why are people afraid of holiness? I'll tell you why. Because the devil has fooled them that holiness is something terrible. Supposing I were to say to you, I want you to have perfect health.

Perfect health? Oh no. You mean I don't want any sickness? Are you scared of that? Look at the amount of money people spend for perfect health. Hundreds of thousands of rupees, surgery and treatment and even beauty treatment.

Supposing I say, I can make you perfectly beautiful. No, no, no. A little bit of ugliness is necessary.

Why are we afraid of holiness? Holiness is like beauty. The Bible speaks about the beauty of holiness. You heard that expression? The beauty of holiness? You haven't seen it.

The devil has fooled you and said it's the ugliness of holiness. What a work the devil has done. The beauty of internet pornography.

The beauty of letting somebody having a piece of your mind in anger. The beauty of that. The relief you get when you finally told your wife or husband what you thought about him or her.

Is that beauty? It's ugly. It's like a girl who's so crazy she wants to be ugly. I've never met such a girl who wants to be ugly.

The world is full of people who are striving to be beautiful. Why aren't they striving to be holy? They spend so much money on beautifying face, on improving their health, that when somebody gives them the gospel free that you can be holy, they're not so keen on listening to that. I say the devil is really smart.

What a work he's done. I'm not talking about people who haven't read the Bible. I'm talking about people who claim to be born again.

People who claim to be filled with the spirit. And they haven't seen the beauty of the kingdom of heaven, which is righteousness. I want to say to you, my brother, sister, you'll never have anything in the scriptures if you don't believe it.

That's a law of God. You can't alter it. It's like the law of gravity.

You can't change the law of gravity no matter how much you try. On this earth, the law of gravity operates everywhere. And like the law of gravity is the law of faith.

According to your faith, it will be unto you. If you don't believe that you can have the righteousness of God's kingdom, according to your faith, be it unto you. It will not be true in your life.

But that is the gospel of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is righteousness and peace. That's another thing I believe in.

I believe with all my heart that the peace of God can rule my heart and mind as it says in Philippians 4, 6. This wonderful promise about the kingdom of God there in Philippians 4, 6. It's not that God's people don't have trials or God's people don't have any temptations. It's not that. God's people have as many temptations and trials as anybody else in the rest of the world.

But they do this. Philippians 4, verse 6. When they have trials and problems, instead of getting anxious, they commit everything. Everything means everything.

That small little thing like I can't find my keys to the more serious thing like the doctor says I've got cancer. Okay? From the small little thing like I can't find my keys to the big thing like the doctor says the report is cancer. Everything.

By prayer and supplication. Supplication means specific request. Once when blind people came to Jesus and said have mercy on us.

Jesus said don't just say have mercy on us. What do you want? We want our eyes to be opened. So don't go to God and say oh God bless me.

God, Jesus said what do you want? Tell me. Be specific. That's supplication.

And when you do that, Lord, I've lost my keys. I want to find them. Lord, the doctor says I've got cancer.

I don't believe cancer is a gift of God. No. God's a good God.

No father gives cancer to his children. God's a loving father. It's from the devil.

I believe that. The good God. I mean a lot of things happen to us because we live in a world which is under the curse but I'll never say it's from God.

Thorns. That's not God's perfect will for me. I may get poked by it but I won't say God poked me.

He certainly didn't. Thorns came because of man's sin. We need to recognize everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Lord, thank you. You've heard me. And then what will happen? The peace of God, verse 7, which is beyond all understanding will guard and I believe the word there in the original is will be like a military garrison around your heart.

You know the angels of God encamping around my heart and mind and my mind. I believe with all my heart this is the will of God for me. And I want to tell you believe that for yourself first of all and tell the devil to his face that the peace of God is my inheritance in Christ.

And don't let the devil disturb your heart or mind and it says even in relation to other people as far as possible live at peace with all men. I mean if other people want to fight with you let them fight but from your side be at peace. I've decided that years ago.

I refuse to fight with people. I refuse to quarrel with people. I say you can disagree with me.

It doesn't matter. I still love you. And I'm not going to get into a fight concerning anything.

I'm not going to get into a fight with a porter in the railway station for that extra five rupees he asked for or with an auto rickshaw driver for that little extra money he asked for or somebody else. No. Money is not my God.

I don't have to have much of it. But I don't. God always takes care of all that I need and I'm not going to fight with people over that.

Because I'm determined. Peace is part of God's kingdom. I'm going to have peace in my heart.

I'm going to have peace in my mind. I have peace with God because every sin is confessed. And as far as possible I shall live at peace with all men.

It's part of God's kingdom. Righteousness, peace. And the third thing is joy in the Holy Spirit.

Joy. Another thing. I believe with all my heart that my life is to be one of perpetual joy.

Now you've heard me say this before. Joy is not smiling. Jesus didn't go around smiling all the time because he wasn't an idiot.

Only idiots go around smiling all the time. And when emcees stand up in full place and say smile, I say well I want to rejoice not smile. Have you seen these stickers at the back of cars? Smile.

God loves you. I like to put repent. God loves you.

I'd like to have a sticker like that on my car. I mean you can smile as much as you like man and go to hell. I don't want you to smile and smile and go to hell.

I want you to repent and be saved for you man. That's what I want to tell people. It's a false message.

Smile. God loves you. Keep smiling and go to hell.

I'm not interested in that. I'm talking about joy. Joy that is there all the time.

Even in sorrow. What does Paul say? Even if a loved one dies. Of course we sorrow because we are human.

Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. I'm not greater than him. We weep when a loved one dies.

But Paul says we don't sorrow like other people. In the midst of that sorrow there's a joy. My loved one just left for another country.

A better country. It's like these folks in India who wait for 10 years to get a visa to go to America. Stand in the queue outside the American Embassy at 3 o'clock in the morning.

After many many years of struggling finally they get their visa. What a day it is. But when you see the old parents at the airport they are crying.

I mean they were waiting for 10 years for their son to get this visa but they are still crying. That's the type of sorrow I have. Loved one goes yeah he's gone but he's gone to a better country.

America is not a better country by the way. I'm talking about heaven. So even in sorrow there's a joy all the time.

There's nothing can take that away because the Bible says we rejoice in the Lord and he never changes. I don't rejoice in my circumstances because they change all the time. And I'll tell you this.

A true disciple of Jesus is freed from being disturbed by circumstances. He lives above the circumstances. You know it's like if you ever travel in a plane.

You go way up to 30,000 feet and all 10,000 meters. There's hardly any disturbance over there. But when they're coming down a little bit then all the turbulence you've got to put your seat belts and all that.

But you go above all those clouds and disturbances which are close to earth and you just it's smooth sailing. You hardly even know that you're in a plane flying at 800 kilometers an hour. No.

It's like that. You know if you say Lord not going to be in the turbulence of circumstances where I keep my seat belt fastened and wonder what's going to happen all the time. No.

I'm going to live above all that because above all that is you. And I'm your son. I'm your daughter.

You've got to say that. You care for me. You love me as you love Jesus.

I rejoice in you all the time. And I'm going to tell the devil to his face. God loves me.

I'm a child of God. I'm a privileged person. I'm not like all the other people on earth Satan.

I belong to God. You know I want to encourage all of you just like you've spoken many times to God in prayer. Speak to the devil.

He can hear you. Tell him you don't belong to him. Tell him he can't touch you.

Tell him he can't bring all his disturbance in your heart because you live before God. He loves you. So we come back to Matthew 5 in verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

And in these closing moments I want to explain to you what it means to be poor in spirit because all that you heard from me just now can be yours if you're poor in spirit. If you're not poor in spirit, brother, you've missed the bus. To be poor in spirit means to have a sense of my own need.

Like the man who is poor financially. The poorest person financially in Bangalore is the tramp, the beggar. He doesn't have a home to live.

He doesn't have even money for daily food. And he comes to your gate and asks you, please give me. You say, where's the money I gave you yesterday? Oh, that's finished.

He doesn't have even what you gave him yesterday. It's gone. And he comes again.

And you can be sure he'll be there tomorrow morning. I've seen beggars for 10-15 years, still coming. Same person.

And I've learned something from them. I've learned what it is to go to the gate of God and to knock unashamedly. That beggar is not at all ashamed.

He's been coming for 20 years to your gate. He's not ashamed to come again. He's not ashamed to acknowledge.

I don't have enough money for today. That's what it means to be poor in spirit. To go to God and say, God, I don't have what it takes to live this life on earth.

This world is a cruel, wicked world. I need you. I need you.

I find myself losing my temper, Lord. I find myself lusting. I find myself doing a whole lot of things that displease you.

I don't have what it takes. And it's not enough that I came yesterday, because yesterday's power was good enough for yesterday. Sufficient unto one day is the evil thereof, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6 verse 34.

One day has got a certain quota of evil. To handle that, I need the power of the spirit for that day. And tomorrow, another quota of evil is allotted.

The world is full of evil. I face it too. I need the power of the Holy Spirit.

I need to be poor in spirit and come to God every day. Lord, I need you. And the devil said, what about that guy? Can't you see his need? Yeah, he's got need.

It's not my business right now. My business is my own need. And when God meets my need, I'll be able to meet that person's need without a condemnatory, critical, judgmental attitude.

I'll be able to meet his need in a loving, kind way like God has met my need. There's a lovely verse in James 1 which says, God doesn't scold anybody. I like that.

Sometimes parents say, how many times have I told you not to do that? Scolding. Bosses say that in the office. But never.

I like that. When I go to him, he never says, how many times have I told you not to do that? Never. He knows.

I love that verse in Psalm 103, which says, he knows that we are dust. He remembers our frame like a father pities his children. So the Lord pities those who fear him.

Those who say, Lord, I'm sorry I slipped up. I fell again into lust or pornography or anger or something that displeased you, Lord. I acted selfishly there.

He knows your frame. He remembers that you are dust. And if you fear him and you come to him and say, Lord, I grieved you.

I see my own need. I would say this word again. Don't be occupied with the need you see in other people.

Don't be so critical and judgmental. A man poor in spirit is not critical of others because he's so conscious of his own need. And when that beggar comes to the gate, is he criticizing all the other poor fellows in the world? No, he has no time.

He's so conscious of his own need. He's not criticizing other beggars who are not dressed properly. Have you ever met a beggar like that saying, that fellow is not dressed properly, this fellow is not dressed properly? He has no time for that.

And when you're critical of others, that is the clearest proof that you're not poor in spirit at all and you will never get the kingdom of heaven. You'll get a lot of things on earth, perhaps, but never kingdom of heaven because you're so occupied with the needs of other people. Poor in spirit.

Lord, I see my need. I see my need of greater purity. I see my need of greater compassion and love and goodness and mercy towards others.

Lord, I see my need and I know you will meet my need because you said the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit. I'm one of those fortunate blessed ones. In the Message Bible, it's translated like this.

Poor in spirit. When there's less of you, there's more of God in your life. When there's less of you and your high thoughts and your judgmental attitudes and your criticisms of others, when there's less and less of that, God will have more space to fill up your life.

When there's less of your preoccupation with yourself, I've got this, I've got this, I've got this, there'll be more of God. I want to encourage you, my brother, sister, be less occupied with other people. See your own need and come to God and there'll be more of God in your life as you decrease and He increases.

Let's pray. Magnificent promises. You see that as a magnificent promise? Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the whole kingdom of heaven is theirs.

I see it as one of the most wonderful promises in the Testament. And I want it. At any cost, I want to know what it is to be poor in spirit.

Determine that you will proceed this way. I know the devil will try to turn you away from it by tomorrow. But determine you're not going to let the devil win now anymore.

He's fooled you enough. No more. Heavenly Father, how easy you have made it for us.

You haven't told us to conquer some mountain or go to the stars. You've just asked us to be aware of our own need and acknowledge it. That's the easiest thing in the world for us to do because we are so needy.

Lord, how the devil has fooled so many. Help us not to be fooled by this deceiver of the world anymore. We want to live before your face.

Fill us with the spirit and lift us to those heights that human eye has not seen and ear has not heard, not entered into the heart of man. The wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love Him and wait for Him. We want it all, Lord.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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