

Blessed are the Poor, Part 2

Luke 6:20

Matthew 15. Remember the Syrophenician woman? She had a demon possessed daughter. She came to Jesus in exactly this kind of *ptochos* attitude, this *ptochos*-like beggar. Keep in mind, as you are turning to Matthew 15 to look at this dear woman, according to Luke 6:17, it was some of her people. Gentiles from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon who came to hear Jesus preach on the occasion of the Sermon on the Mount. She may even have been one of them, or at least heard the report from her countrymen.

Take a look at Matthew 15:21 and notice her sense of spiritual privilege as a Gentile talking with Jesus. That is to say, she had none. Look at Matthew 15:21 "Jesus went away from there and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. Behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying." The verb tense there indicates she was crying out repeatedly, following Jesus just crying out, crying out, 'Have mercy on me,

O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.'

"But he did not answer her a word. His disciples came and begged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him saying, 'Lord, help me!' And he answered, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.'"

That's a reference; children's bread, is a reference to the people of Israel. He was sent to feed them; he was sent to feed the children of Israel. And the dog is a reference to the Gentiles. It sounds really cruel, doesn't it to say that about her. Here's this dear woman with a demon possessed daughter. She's begging, she's crying out, she's got the right identification. "Have mercy on me, you Son of David." The word for, dogs, there is not like a mangey scavenger dog that roams the streets and you want to throw rocks at it.

I don't know if you feel that way. Sometimes boys feel that way, but this is a, this is like a little lap dog. We've got a little lap dog in our house. They're very cute and fluffy and you want to pet them and cuddle them and stuff like that. That's the word he uses there so he's not being insulting. He's just talking about the vast difference between the children of Israel who sit at the table and all the Gentiles who are like those little lap dogs. She wasn't even offended.

Notice what she says, verse 27, "Yes, Lord, yet even the" little, "dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Incredible response, isn't it? She didn't walk away in a huff and say, Call me a dog, I'll show you, you stupid Israelite. I'm gone. She didn't say that at all. You know, humility, a heart of faith makes very thick skin not easily offended.

Verse 28, "Jesus answered her, 'O Woman'" This is what he was getting to the whole time. He was going to draw this out and teach his disciples. "'O Woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.'" And her daughter was healed instantly." She's not like the Jews coming to Jesus expressing and assuming

he's going to see their spiritual riches. She's not like them expressing spiritual self-reliance.

She's not trying to purchase favor with Christ, manifesting any material self-reliance. Hey Jesus, heal my daughter and I'll give you a lot of money. I know some people and we'll make sure you get some cedars of Lebanon your way and some purple garments and stuff. We'll hook you up. Just heal my daughter. She's not doing any of that. She comes there begging with her hand out, reaching out for grace. What does Jesus say? What is his testimony of her? "O woman, great is your faith." She trusted him whom she had identified as Lord, Son of David. She believes here in Israel's Messiah, putting all her faith in the King of the kingdom of God.

And as we see from Luke 6:20, you can turn back there now, by the way, as we can see from Luke 6:20, Jesus' first beatitude, his opening line in the Sermon on the Mount, that daughter of Tyre and Sidon, she was no longer defined as being a daughter of Tyre and Sidon, because She had become a daughter of the kingdom of God, because Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are

poor for yours is," that is present tense, current condition, continuing reality, "yours is the kingdom of God."

So the poor, the *ptochos*, Jesus identifies here, they are those for whom God is their all. They are those for whom God is their only. They're best symbolized by pointing to the mendicants, the beggars among them. The beggars that don't have a penny to their name. And when that's your condition, or when that is your attitude toward this world and its wealth, then God truly is your only source of reliance. He's your only hope of provision. He's your only hope of advantage, of joy, of privilege, of prosperity. When God is your all, what else do you need?

With that in mind, let's answer a second question. Why are the poor blessed? Why are they blessed? In word, we just said it, because God is. And because he is their only hope. Because God is, we can take his Word as promises. His Word's unshakeable. We can trust him because he is. And if he is, his promises are true and we believe them, abandoning all in this world to believe and embrace them, you know what? He's our only

hope. The poor are blessed because God is, and he is their only hope.

The poor have had all their earthly hopes, all their ambitions, all their aspirations, all their dreams stripped away completely, and all that's left for them is their Creator shining in glory before them. And once they see him, they realize, he's all I needed anyway.

Listen to David, Psalm 34. "I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast," not in being the king of Israel. "My soul makes its boast the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, let us exalt his name together! I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him saved him out of all his troubles."

Think about that. David was one of the wealthiest and most powerful of all the ancient kings, and yet, look at how David

described himself: "This poor man." Really, poor? Let's compare bank accounts with David. Yeah, according to Jesus' meaning, David was numbered among the poor. That is why he says, "Let the humble hear what I'm saying and be glad," and "Come join with me" and "Let us exalt his name together." Me and you, all of us who are *ptochos*. All of us who are blessed by God.

The riches of the Davidic kingdom, even the riches of the Solomonic kingdom that followed David, those golden years of Israel, they were nothing to be compared and less than nothing to the kingdom of God. I believe it's Isaiah who said take all the kingdoms of earth and put them in a scale and a balance and weigh them next to just one word of God. They are wanting, and more than wanting. They are lighter than air. That kingdom is the present possession of everyone who trusts in God, of all the poor, no matter what their current financial condition, all of them. They trust in him and him alone. If he's their hope and he is their joy and he is their reward, theirs is the kingdom of God.

That's why the poor are blessed. Because they look to God. Their faces are radiant. Radiant with what? With joy and

contentment. They will never be ashamed. The rich, that's a different story. They better enjoy it now because it's in this life only that their riches will provide some level of superficial comfort. Woe to them. They have received their consolation. But the poor, for them? The consolation of the poor is still yet to come.

Look at that word, blessed. Let's talk about that for a few minutes. Many have translated the word, blessed, which is the word, *Makarios*, in the Greek. They translated it as, happy. Happy, it's not entirely wrong, if translated as happy, as long as we understand biblically what happy means. It's just, happy, as a translation to say, Blessed are the happy, is kind of misleading today, especially in our country that has declared itself to be devoted to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Right?

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It's kind of a definitional statement about us, isn't it? The Declaration of Independence.



And I appreciate that statement, as far as it goes. I appreciate the fact that all those rights are understood to be endowed on humanity by creator God, not by human governments, by creator God and governments are in place to be able to protect those rights for citizens. That's the job of government.

But today, we have become unmoored from a biblical framework. And our independent minded fellow citizens, fellow Americans, have decided to abandon biblical definitions of words like life, and liberty, and happiness, and they've decided instead to define them according to personal self-interest, which are sinful interests, especially the term, happiness. Happiness seems to refer to good feelings, pleasant thoughts, positive emotions. Our country is a very sensual people, isn't it? Very feelings oriented.

Biblical happiness, biblical blessedness designed and given by God, has very little to do with feelings; everything to do with an advantage in God. And it's an advantage and a prosperity that we don't fully realize here and now. It's delayed gratification. It's wait until the Son of Man comes. Now to the degree that our thoughts are God-centered and are meditative and

reflective on the privileged place we have with God, certainly good feelings, positive emotions are going to follow from that.

We're not trying to deny the existence and importance of our feelings. But if you consider the one who had to be counted the most blessed man who ever lived, it would be Jesus Christ, right? Without a doubt. Many times his soul was in absolute agony. He cried out on the cross when the flesh had been torn from his back, when his brow was pierced with long, sharp thorns.

His hands and feet pierced with iron nails. The bitterest part of all of that was not the pain in his flesh. It was the pain in his heart. His heart was broken by the abandonment of his God to the hands of injustice, and he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Did Jesus at that moment cease to be the blessed? Never, never. Why not? Even as he died for a curse for all humanity, he was still the blessed of God. Why? Because of all people on the earth, his was the kingdom of God, present possession, as well.

Of all people, surely, he will be filled and satisfied, as Isaiah says, Isaiah 53:11, "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied." Jesus' sorrow, it has turned to laughing, rejoicing, overwhelming exaltation. He's going to return one day to bring us to himself.

Jesus never ceased to be the most blessed of all because at no time did God cease to be his one and only hope. With God as his hope, everything else is fine. When God is your hope, nothing else can shake you, nothing else can rattle you, nothing else can cause you to fall. You stand firm, fixed upon God and his promises. You walk in obedience to his revealed will because you love him. It's how the poor are blessed.

A couple of terms to give you here, two from the Old Testament, two from the New Testament. All of them translated as *ble*ss, or *ble*ssed, but there are two basic meanings I want to pull out here. In the Old Testament, I'm being very simplistic here, so forgive that, if you know Hebrew or Greek or anything. But in the Old Testament Hebrew you have the words, *barak*, which means, to *ble*ss or to confer a *ble*ssing; or even to, if it's directed toward God, man toward God, *barak*, means, to *pr*aise.

When we say, Blessed be God, we're not saying, I'm going to confer on God a blessing he doesn't already have. No, I'm just going to recognize all the goodness he is a he's given and praise him for it. That's what, *barak*, means when I'm conferring it to God. But God is usually the subject of the verb, *barak*, and we are the objects. He blesses, he confers a blessing. The other Old Testament word is the word, *ashar*, *ashar*, or we might transliterate it into English as, *asher*. It means, to be blessed, to be happy. It means, to be considered blessed or fortunate or happy or prosperous or well-situated.

There are two New Testament Greek words: *eulogia* and *Makarios*, and they roughly correspond to, *barak*, and, *ashar*, to those Old Testament words. The word, *eulogia*, comes from the word, *eulogeo*, *logos*, or *logeio*, meaning, to speak or to say. *Eu*, meaning to speak well of, that corresponds to the Old Testament verb, *barak*, to praise, to bless. The word, *Makarios*, means to, to be blessed, to be happy, to be well-situated or to be counted so by others, and that can, corresponds to the Old Testament word, *ashar*.

So, *barak* and *eulogia* means, to confer blessing upon, as in God blessed us or we bless or praise God. *Ashar* and *makarios* means, to be blessed, to be considered or counted as favored, or even, to be envied, because people recognize us for being so well favored, so well-positioned, so well situated. That's what it means, that sense of satisfaction knowing we're blessed, knowing a blessing has been conferred upon us, but also knowing we're in that position of blessedness and that others will also recognize that as well. That's what it is to be blessed, *makarios*.

Now let me illustrate what it is to be not *makarios* and then we'll contrast that to what it means to be *makarios*. You're in Luke 6, turn ahead a couple pages to Luke 12, Luke 12, and let's look at Luke 12 and verse 13. Luke 12:13. We're going to consider, contrast two parables, or two stories Jesus told, and this is the first one, Luke 12:13. "Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'" Where is his heart? It's in the wrong place, isn't it? So "he said to him, 'Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to him, 'Take care, and be on your guard

against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'

"He told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, "What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?" And he said, "I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods." He's a hoarder, isn't he? "And I'll say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him," you, "'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.'"

That's a clear case, right there, of being not *makarios*, not blessed, not well-situated. When God calls him to account one day, as we all will be called to account, this man was clearly in an unenviable position. Again, that's in spite of how apparently prosperous the man looked on the outside. There he is tearing down barns, building bigger barns. He's getting loans and if he even needs loans. He's just building, building,

building, all the while unbeknownst to him, his life is ebbing away. Time's ticking.

He's engaged in entirely the wrong work. He's giving his life, his energy, his focus to the entirely wrong enterprise. He's got entirely the wrong concern. All his material prosperity, all his treasure would not profit him one iota when standing before Almighty God. That's why Jesus followed up that story, verse 22 all the way to verse 31, exhorting the people not to be anxious about material provision, but to trust God.

Jesus' point here, though, is that those who are truly blessed, they leave off all worrying about physical provision in this life, what we eat, what we wear, where we live, what we drive. Why? Because God is the one who takes care of all of that and we can entrust our souls to his care. Our sole focus must be, look at verse 31, Luke 12:31. Our sole focus must be "to seek his kingdom, and all these things will be added to you," as well. So invest in eternity, lay-up treasure in heaven.

That's why he ended this section here in Luke 12:32 and following, look at it there. He ended this section with this: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you," not just all these little things, what you shall eat, what you shall wear, where you shall live, what you shall drive, what job you have, all the rest. It's your father's good pleasure to give you, "the kingdom. So, sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old," provide yourselves, "with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

No fear for the little flock, the *ptochos* believers. No fear for those whose concern is about the things of the kingdom of God, which is their only inheritance, the greatest treasure they possess. And there at the center of it all is God and God alone.

Turn over to one more story to illustrate this in Luke 16. Luke 16. Take a look at Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus. And in this story, we see contrasting stations of



poverty and wealth in a very extreme way. Familiar story, starting in Luke 16:19. "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man." Notice the guy couldn't even get there, he was laid there. He was *ptochos*. He's crippled.

"At his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'"

Why does he say, send Lazarus, but not, Abraham come yourself? Because even in torment, the rich man misjudges this *ptochos* believer. Lazarus has been raised to the same level as Abraham; the rich man still can't recognize that. But he's envying him. He counts him now as blessed. And "Abraham said,"

verse 25, “‘Child, remember that in you in your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.’”

It’s a harrowing story, isn’t it? Who is the blessed one? Not the rich man, not the one who spent his life enjoying all his consolation and comforts that money could buy on earth. The blessed one was Lazarus, the beggar, the *ptochos*. He’s the blessed one. It’s Lazarus whose, whose every comfort in this lifetime had been stripped away. His only hope was in God and in God alone to save him. Lazarus, not the rich man, was the blessed one. Lazarus, along with, along with father Abraham, right, whose materially prosperous in his lifetime.

It’s not an issue of finances. Lazarus, along with Abraham, along with all of those who put no trust in riches, but put trust in God and in God alone, that is all the *ptochos*. They and they alone who are going to enjoy the presence of God, who is their only treasure and they’re going to enjoy him forever. No end. That’s what makes heaven heavenly, right? It’s not the sense of ease or peace, even though that’s there. It’s not the

cessation of struggle that we all go through every single day. It's not the pearly gates or the golden streets.

It's not even the sense of escape from sin, which we struggle with and hate. It's not even the sense of escape from the wrath of God, as good as that is. What makes heaven heavenly is the presence of the living God, the one whom we love, the one in whom is all our joy and satisfaction because God and God alone is our treasure and our reward. The heart of all those who are *ptochos*. It's the heart of the sons of Korah.

Psalm 84: "How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trust in you!"