

# Thursday Evening - English

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[ 0 : 00 ] To give a view to God's blessing, let us turn back to that portion of scripture which we read in the gospel according to Matthew and chapter 5. And we can take our text this evening from verse 3.

Matthew 5, verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Well, Jesus begins his famous Sermon on the Mount with eight beatitudes or blessings. And what Jesus is doing in these beatitudes is this.

He's giving us a description of the Christian. He's telling you tonight and me with you what the Christian is like. And so if you want to know what a Christian is, then this is a good place to start with Jesus' own description of the believer.

And he tells us eight things about him. The Christian is poor in spirit. The Christian mourns. The Christian is meek. He hungers and he thirsts after righteousness.

[ 1 : 04 ] He's merciful. He's pure in heart. He's a peacemaker. And he or she will be persecuted. And this person, despite all of these things, or indeed because of all these things, is a blessed man.

He is a happy person. If you were to describe the happy person in the world today, this is how you would do it. Because this is how you would describe the Christian.

Now, I just want us this evening to consider the first of these descriptions. Jesus says that if you're a Christian here tonight, then you will be poor in spirit.

And we'll come to see that what Jesus is talking about here is self-image. The way that you see yourself. Now, let me ask you tonight. How do you see yourself? You see, we all have an image of ourselves, don't we?

We perhaps don't talk about it. We maybe don't even think about that image often. But it's there. You have an idea of what kind of person you are. Of what you look like. Of what you're capable of.

[ 2 : 10 ] And this leads you to place a value upon yourself. It creates in you a sense of worth. And this image and this sense of worth, in turn, impacts your life.

It affects your thinking. It influences your behavior. Now, you hear a lot about self-image in your own day, don't you? It's a big thing. The old men read about it in their magazines.

You can read about it in the papers. You can go onto the internet and there are several blogs about self-image and how important it is. And it's closely related, of course, to self-esteem.

The way that you view yourself and the way that you feel about yourself or esteem yourself. And modern thought on the topic, it's actually not particularly modern, but it is still what people are saying.

What they say is that good self-image will lead to good self-esteem. So if you want to feel good, if you want to be happy, if you want people to be attracted to you, if you want to have better relationships in life, if you want to live better, then you've got to start here.

[ 3 : 16 ] You've got to think positively about yourself because people are attracted to that kind of thing. People are attracted to confidence. And you can only be confident in yourself, they say to you, if you have this positive self-image, if you see yourself well.

Now, how do you maintain a positive self-image in order to ensure this high self-esteem and this happiness? I read an article about this recently and it made a number of recommendations.

You want to feel good about yourself, it said. Well, you've got to do these things. Firstly, I'm just going to list off a few of the things that it said. Firstly, it said, make a list of the things that you like about yourself.

Your looks, maybe your personality, maybe your diligence, whatever it might be. Then it said, focus on the positive things about you and in your life. And then it said, try to forget about the negative things about you, just not to think about these negative things.

Then it said, if you've got a poor view of yourself, well, question whether that view of yourself is really accurate or not. And question why you see yourself the way that you do.

[ 4 : 30 ] It said, make helpful changes. But change the clothes that you wear, your appearance, your hairstyle, your behavior, maybe even your car. It said, take yourself less seriously and lighten up.

Then read inspiring books, books about self-esteem and so on. Remember compliments and note them down. Try self-hypnosis, get exercise. All of these things, the list goes on.

And it all seems very positive, doesn't it? It all seems very optimistic. In many ways, it all seems very easy. All you have to do is do certain things to adjust your own view of yourself.

But that's what you've got today. You've got what you've got to do. Do certain things to make you like yourself more. And then in turn, you'll be more confident and you'll feel better about yourself.

You'll be more happy. And the better that you feel about yourself, they say, the better people will feel about you. And the more confident that you are in yourself, the more people will be attracted to you because people are attracted to confidence.

[ 5 : 34 ] And so what do you do? Well, you build yourself up. You encourage yourself. You think more highly about yourself, about your looks, about your abilities, about your personality, about your intelligence, about your people skills, all of these things.

They go up in your estimation. You train yourself to do that. And then you make sure about this. You don't beat yourself up about anything. No. You don't dwell on the negatives, the things that are done perhaps as good.

What you do is this. You focus on the positive things. You make sure that you're always positive in your outlook when you look at yourself. Because having this positive view of yourself, they say, will lead to happiness, focusing on the negatives, thinking about sin, thinking about the things about yourself which aren't as good, your failings and your shortcomings.

Well, the world says these things will just make you unhappy. What do you think of that? The world's view of self-image is flawed, though, isn't it?

It's flawed. It doesn't actually stand up to scrutiny. On two points. Firstly, it is unrealistic. It's just not real. It's actually based on you not fully digesting the facts about yourself.

[ 6 : 55 ] It can only work if you don't face the whole truth. If you don't look at the problem areas. If you ignore the sin. If you blur the picture of it. If you obscure reality.

It'll work if you do that. Well, it probably actually won't. But in theory, it would if you do that. But what that leads to, you focusing on just half the truth or not even that, it leads to you, in many cases, creating an image of yourself which is a lie.

You're lying to yourself. You're lying to other people. And you're lying to God. It's not realistic. But neither is it what God sees. That's the other problem with the world's view of self-image, isn't it?

It ignores God. It's basically atheistic in its philosophy. God doesn't come into it. And as such, it's humanistic. In many ways, it's hedonistic as well.

It's self-image. It's based on your autonomous perception of who you are and what you are like. It's based on what you think.

[ 8 : 04 ] Yes, the world will teach you maybe how to think about yourself. But at the end of the day, you are the judge of you. That's what the world will teach you. They'll say, don't let anybody tell you anything about yourself.

You are the judge of you. You know best about yourself. And yet, there is a God, isn't there? There is a God. A God who made you.

And a God who knows what you really like. And he is a God who has an infinite knowledge of you. And as such, his perception of you is accurate.

So, in reality, what you're like and what I'm like, it's not actually what we tell ourselves that we're like. No. It's what God says that you're like.

It's what God says I'm like. You aren't the judge of you. God is the judge of you. So, what matters, actually, is the way that God sees you.

[ 9 : 04 ] That's actually what matters. That's the image that counts. We can tell ourselves a number of things. We can tell other people a number of things about ourselves. But what matters is what God actually sees.

Now, before we move on to that, it's worth mentioning that a flawed self-image is always going to lead to a flawed self-esteem. The basic humanistic premise is this.

If you see yourself positively, then you will feel positive. And the reason for this positive view of yourself, the fact that you do view yourself positively, it will lead other people to feel positively about you.

So, basically, self-esteem is high when you're valued at your work, when you're loved in the home, when you're respected in the community, when you're popular in school, whatever it might be. You feel good when these things are as you want them to be. But what about if you don't get that positive response? That's a thing, isn't it? Because then the whole thing falls to the ground, doesn't it?

[10:11] It crashes. You see, you can teach yourself just about anything. You can teach yourself that you're great. Yet other people might not see it like that.

They might not see you like that. So what happens? Well, you become maybe unsettled at your work. You become unhappy in the home. You become uneasy in your community. You maybe become reclusive in the school. And so what you have, really, is this cycle. If I feel good about myself, people should feel good about me.

But if actually people don't feel good about me, if they don't like me, if they don't support me, well, I actually don't feel good about myself. Despite all that I've done. Despite this picture of myself that I've created.

I feel bad about myself. So what you end up with is this flawed system. A philosophy that just doesn't work. And in reality, you work harder and harder at projecting this positive image of yourself.

[11:16] This is why society today is so fake. It's why it's so materialistic and so superficial. It's because it ignores reality in order to deceive itself and in turn to deceive other people.

Why? Well, so that you can feel good about yourself. Because you think that this is the way to do it. So that you can feel liked. So that you can feel loved. So that you can feel valued. And if you get this feeling that you're looking for.

This happiness that you are so diligently searching for. Then you'll believe that you will be indeed blessed. That you will be happy. It's purely humanistic, though, isn't it?

And so it tends to unadulterated selfishness. Because the key is to feel good about myself. Myself. That's key.

This is my God, as it were. This is my idol. This is what I live for. This is what I serve. To feel good about myself is the be-all and the end-all. And I'll do anything to achieve it.

[12:18] Because this is man's chief end. In the eyes of the world. Now, if this involves lying. Lying to myself. Lying to other people. Then so be it. As long as I feel good at the end of it.

You see, the God of self-esteem, friends. It's the foundation of most of what we see in society today. It's the foundation of greed. Pride.

Of pride. Pride. Of people wanting to look the part. To impress other people. It's a reason for alcohol abuse. Drug abuse. And adultery. Because I must feel good about myself.

This is what's important. So if my marriage doesn't give me that, well, I get out of that marriage. Or if my work doesn't give me that. No matter how good my employer has been to me.

Well, I quit. Because it's about me. And all of this, friends. Do you know what it's based on? A false self-image. Thinking that we are better than we are.

[13:19] That's the basis of it. That I deserve better than this. That I am better than this. And don't think that this kind of attitude, or certainly a form of it, doesn't enter into the church as well.

Of course it does. We can't deny that there are people in the church whose self-image is flawed. They see themselves the way that they want to see themselves. Rather than the way that God sees them.

The way that they've taught themselves to see themselves. Rather than the way that God has taught them to see themselves. We perhaps all tend to it a bit, don't we? You believe in the Bible. You believe in God. You believe that there's a heaven and hell. But you're a pretty good person, are you not? You're not a bad person. People are generally pleased with you, surely. And so you think, well, I've done pretty well. My life has been okay. I've been a good friend to people. A good parent. I've been regular in church.

[14:18] I've read my Bible. I've prayed. I've done it every morning. And I've done it every evening. I've upheld thus far a biblical morality. You know what? I even go to the Lord's table. I professed my faith.

I stood or I sat in front of all of these elders. And I told them that I was Christian. And I went to the Lord's table. Now, I'm not calling myself perfect. But my positives probably outweigh my negatives. And so I expect that when I die, well, God will be relatively pleased with me. And I'll go to heaven. And I see myself as pretty good. And I'm sure that God's view of me will match that.

But again, what we have to ask ourselves is this. Is our view of ourselves, is it true to reality? Is it true to the Bible? Is it true to God?

Is it? Is the way that you see yourself tonight the way that God sees you? Because if it isn't, you've got a problem, don't you?

[15:20] You've got a problem because you've been building on a false foundation. Well, we've seen what the world says about self-image. I want us now to see what the Bible says about self-image.

And always remember this, friends. The Bible addresses all of these current issues. It addresses them in one form or another. What you read about in the paper, what you read perhaps in magazines, the Bible's got something to say about it all.

Jesus was perfectly accustomed to this world's view of self-image, of self-promotion, of self-gratification, all of these things. There's nothing new under the sun. But what Jesus does in his very first beatitude is this.

He overturns that whole position, doesn't he? He challenges this notion that through happiness in this world is going to have to depend on a false view of yourself. That's what he does.

The notion that if you want to be happy, then you need to always see yourself positively. You need to have this positive outlook. He challenges it. And you know what Jesus says?

[16:23] It goes against the grain, doesn't it? Blessed are the poor in spirit. The key to blessedness, according to Jesus, is poverty. Poverty.

This, friends, is where the gospel begins. This is where true spiritual experience begins. With poverty. You see, this is one of the many paradoxes, or apparent paradoxes of Christianity. That the world just can't understand. That the world just can't get its head around. We read elsewhere that we must become fools in our own eyes. That we might become wise before God. That we must lose our lives in order to save them. And now here we read that we must become poor. In order that we might be made rich. But what is this poverty?

Well, firstly, to be poor in spirit is to evaluate yourself. Need to understand yourself as you are before a holy God. There are two main words used for poor.

[17:32] We translate poor in our New Testaments. And one of them speaks about having nothing to spare. Just enough to get by. Just managing to pay the bills, put food on the table. You might feel like that yourself sometimes.

But you know the word here is different. It's the other word. It's a word that's used for those who have basically nothing. They're so poor that they've got nothing to live on.

And so they need to beg. Blessed are these poor. That's what Jesus is saying. Now, he's not talking about the financially poor.

Of course he isn't. The Bible never exalts financial poverty. You know, there's nothing blessed about not being able to look after yourself. There's nothing blessed about not being able to look after your family.

Some people have found themselves in that situation. But there was nothing happy about it for them. And they might have been made happy by God in it. But there was nothing happy about the situation.

[18:29] There's nothing blessed about having to beg. And yet Jesus says, well, what he does say is, Blessed are the poor in spirit. In spirit.

What he's speaking about is what we've been speaking about. Self-image. He's talking about the way that we see ourselves. The way that we feel about ourselves in our spirit, in our heart, in our very being, in our passion.

And he says that the poor in spirit are humble because they know that they've got nothing to give God. They know that they've got nothing to attract God to them.

They're before this God. And they see themselves as sinners before him. And so they're made to beg. They're made to beg. We'll come back to that. Now, let me put this into context.

For many of us, how we see ourselves and feel about ourselves, it's relative, isn't it? Relative to our surroundings. So, if you're top of your class in school, you feel pretty smart.

[ 19 : 29 ] That is until you go maybe off to university and there's many people there who are smarter than you. And you don't feel so smart anymore. Or maybe, when you were younger, your mother taught you that you were good at singing.

You're better than all your brothers and your sisters. And you thought that you were pretty good until you went to the mod. And you weren't placed. You see, we tend to evaluate ourselves relatively.

We compare ourselves constantly to the people around us. But the man who is poor in spirit, and notice, he realizes that what he is in the presence of God is what he is.

What he is in the presence of God is what he is. So, what he's been taught to think about himself, or what others think about him, well, these things don't really matter.

I'm not saying it doesn't matter what people think about you. Of course it does. But relatively, and comparatively, no. What matters is how he is before God. What matters is what God thinks.

[ 20 : 37 ] What does God think? Well, what is God like? What does the Bible tell us he's like? Well, it tells us that he's holy, doesn't it? And that God is pure. And that God is perfect.

And as such, that God demands holiness. And God demands purity. And God demands perfection. And he demands it of me. And he demands it of you. And you know, friends, the poor in spirit, they see themselves in light of this reality.

In light of the reality of who God is. They see themselves before such a God. And you know, when you see yourself like this, when you see yourself realistically, well, you can't but say with the apostle in another place, for I know that in me dwells no good thing.

I don't match up to this, to this holiness, to this purity, to this perfection. You look inward. You look into your soul. And what do you see? Well, you see sin, don't you?

If you've ever seen yourself. You see ungodliness. You see imperfection. You see backsliding. You see unrighteousness. You see rebellion. You see that actually, despite what the world may tell you, you're not intrinsically good.

[ 21 : 48 ] not before God's perfect standard. You come to that realization that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, that there is none righteous, no, not one, that you, by nature, are a sinner, deserving the wrath and curse of God.

Your works won't save you, but your personality won't save you. No, but these things will condemn you. You know, if you're poor in spirit tonight, you realize that, left to yourself, and we'll come to that, but you realize that, left to yourself, that you are going to hell and that you deserve to go there unless God intervenes.

How different from the world? How different from their approach, Jesus' approach? How different from a world which tells you to focus on the positives in your life, to forget these things that aren't so good?

And yet, you know, to you who are actually poor in spirit, well, it's folly, isn't it? It's fake. It's not real. Because you can't fool God, can you?

Can you hide from God as Adam tried to hide from him in the midst of the trees of the garden? You know that God sees you and that he knows you, and as such that he knows your sin, the darkness of your heart, the corruption of your mind.

[ 23 : 11 ] And so this knowledge, indeed this feeling, it infiltrates you, and it cannot but change your whole self-image. And so now when you look at yourself, what do you see?

Well, you're overwhelmed, are you not, with this sense, not of pride, but of powerlessness and helplessness, of moral uncleanness and spiritual bankruptcy.

That's what you see in yourself. Do you see that? Do you feel that tonight, on this Thursday of communion, as you look ahead to the Lord's table on his day, on what used to be called the day of fasting and humiliation?

Do you see yourself like that? Are you poor in spirit? Do you see poverty within? You know, if you want to know if you're really a Christian, that's a question that we must always ask. That we must always be examining ourselves.

Not only at communion time, but in many ways, all the time. If you want to know if you're really a Christian, how do you answer this question? Because you may be glorified in the eyes of men.

[ 24 : 17 ] You may be exalted in the community. You may be praised in the family. You may even be lauded in this church. But how do you fear before the God who has searched you and who knows the secrets of your heart?

How do you fear before him? Do you think that at the end of the day, well, you're really okay? You're really not that bad? Or do you say with Jacob, Lord, in light of all this, I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies.

Do you say with Peter, do you fall on your knees and say, depart from me? For I am a sinful man, O Lord. Do you? Do you see yourself like that?

You know, when Jesus was born, a man called Simeon held him in his arms. Do you remember what he said? He said, this child is set for the fall and for the rising again of many in Israel.

And you know, friends, you must fall. Fall from a high estimation of yourself before you rise again.

There must be conviction before there is conversion, certainly in most cases.

[ 25 : 25 ] There must be poverty before there is riches. Jesus. And you know, the blessed man, the happy man, he's the one who is poor in spirit. He's the one who has this realistic self-image.

It's not that he sees himself as worse than he actually is. Not at all. It's not to be overly pessimistic.

That's not poverty of spirit. That's not humility. It's to see yourself realistically.

It's to see yourself as you are. Blessed are the poor in spirit. To the world, this beatitude is a paradox. And yet, to the Christian, it's an inescapable and indeed a gloriously liberating biblical truth that we are not good enough.

But you know, being poor in spirit is more than just understanding yourself before a holy God. to be poor in spirit is to understand yourself before a God who is both holy and merciful.

You see, it's those who see no hope in themselves who will go outside of themselves for hope. It's those who know themselves to be sick who go to a doctor.

[ 26 : 44 ] And as such, it's the poor in spirit who see their sin and who confess their sin. It's these people who will go to a God who promises to be merciful to them if they but come.

The poor in spirit, as we mentioned briefly, they're beggars before God. Beggars. And what does a beggar do? Well, a beggar begs, doesn't he? And a spiritual beggar, knowing that he is poor in spirit before God.

Well, he'll beg to nobody else but to the God before whom he is poor. To the God who he has come to know as rich, he'll go to nobody else.

Do you know why? Because he's realized that only God himself can alleviate the spiritual poverty. Only God himself can make him rich. We read a lot about the poor in the Old Testament.

They're generally an oppressed people, aren't they? They've got very little going for them. They've got no resources to defend themselves, to save themselves. But what do they do so often in the Old Testament, the poor?

[ 27 : 51 ] Well, they pray to God. They trust in God. They are blessed not because they are poor but because of what they do in their poverty.

They go to God. We read that God thinks upon them and God helps them and God delivers them. And you know, friends, that's a picture that we have here. The man who is poor in spirit isn't a man who spends all day and all week wallowing in self-pity.

Not at all. He doesn't just sit at home in his chair in his living room condemning himself and reeling in his own hopelessness. No. What does he do? He looks for help. He looks for forgiveness.

He looks for life. He becomes a desperate man. He maybe thought that he was rich, that he was okay, but he realizes now that he's anything but. And so what does he do? Well, he searches.

He searches until he finds. He pleads with God until he gets an answer. He will not let him go except he receive the blessing. This kind of man can't sit still because you know this in just about every area.

[ 28 : 53 ] Bankruptcy isn't a comfortable situation to be in. The bankrupt man will do anything to get out of his debt. Just like the guilty man is not a happy man. He'll do just about anything to secure a favorable verdict, to get a pardon.

So it is with this man who is poor in spirit. He'll confess his sin and he'll beg for forgiveness. He'll admit his own inability and his powerlessness and he'll pray for God's spirit to quicken him, to make him alive.

He'll declare his moral depravity and pray to God to teach him to repent from his sin and to turn from it. He'll flee to Jesus. That's what the man who is poor in spirit will do.

He'll flee to Jesus that he might hide himself in his wounds and bathe himself in his blood and wrap himself in his robe of righteousness because he has no hope in himself.

The world hopes in itself. It hopes in other people. But the believer hopes in nobody but God. And in God he sees this glorious provision, this glorious help, this glorious forgiveness, this glorious gospel, gospel.

[ 30 : 07 ] Now let me ask you, do you find yourself tonight looking for such and one? One who will pay your debts and who will rid you of this bankruptcy of yours?

Do you find yourself searching for an advocate with the Father? One who will stand in the court of God's justice and who will plead for you on his own merits?

Well, it's to Christ, friend, that you must look. It's on him that you must depend for this mercy. That's what the poor in spirit do.

That's what you must do. They've got no hope in anyone else and neither do you. They say and you must say nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling.

Naked come to thee for dress. Helpless look to thee for grace. Foul I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

[ 31 : 09 ] Can you say that? Friends, some people say that Christianity is just a crutch. And you know, it is that.

Indeed, it's more than that, isn't it? You could use another metaphor. You could say that Christianity is a stretcher because as a Christian you confess that you can do nothing of yourself.

You're poor. You're weak. You're helpless. You can't convert yourself. You can't sustain yourself in the Christian life. You confess that it's all of God. That he needs to save you.

He needs to sustain you. You can't save yourself. You can't walk your own way to heaven. You're not self-sufficient. No, without God's intervention in your sinful life you're completely hopeless.

Without his mercy and his great love towards undeserving sinners you will go straight to hell. You realize that. And so you cast yourself upon this God. And so is Christianity a crutch?

[ 32 : 07 ] Well it is. It's a crutch or a stretcher or whatever other kind of metaphor you want to use. The poor in spirit they realize that. They do. But how are they blessed?

Quickly. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They're blessed in that they are now through their poverty possessors of a kingdom rich in the eyes of God though poor in the eyes of men.

Now what is the kingdom of heaven? Well simply it is the sovereign reign of King Jesus over his people. That's what it is. And we enter into this kingdom as I hope that you have through faith in the king.

This is God's gift to the poor in spirit. Entry into this kingdom. Now the kingdom of heaven isn't a reward as such. It's not gained by merit but it's a consequence of your poverty.

It's given to you because you're poor and because you couldn't gain entry into it in and of yourself.

There's an old story about a doctor in a Scottish town long before the days of the NHS when doctors used to charge and he died suddenly.

[ 33 : 25 ] He was a good man, a Christian man, a kind man. But he died suddenly and his wife wasn't as good a woman as he. He was a man and she wasn't a Christian.

When he died she thought to herself well he died suddenly I'm sure that a lot of people still owe him a lot of money. and she went to his book to his ledger where he kept all of the details and she found that yes there were people who still owed him money and then she noticed when she went through some of the others some of them had paid yes but in the column for some of them where he was to take off where they had paid he had written this forgiven too poor to pay forgiven too poor to pay and the woman to say the least was not happy.

In fact she was so unhappy with the thing that she went to these people and demanded the money. They were too paid. They were literally too poor to pay and then when she didn't get what she wanted there she went to the court and she demanded that she took them to court and demanded that she be paid this money.

And anyway the evidence as it were the ledger was handed to the judge and the judge looked at it and he read it and he asked the woman this question he said to her is this your husband's handwriting?

And she said well yes it is. And he said well if that's your husband's handwriting then there's not a court in the land that will overturn it. And so the people too poor to pay as they were they were led off the hook.

[ 35 : 03 ] And so it is with us friends we are too poor to pay the Lord too poor to gain entry into this kingdom and yet he has forgiven us if we are in Christ because we are too poor to pay.

We've come to understand that. We've come to beg. Marshy beg help beg entry into this kingdom. There is just the kingdom of heaven.

Notice that what we have here is the present tense. The Christian you tonight in Christ you are in current possession of this kingdom. If you are poor in spirit if you think little of yourself and if you think much of God then the kingdom of heaven is yours and it's yours now.

You are a part of it. What a position you have in it. What a position you have in it. You are no longer just a subject you are no longer or you are not just a servant you are a friend a friend of the king and no wonder the kingdom of heaven can be said to be yours.

You are a friend of the king himself. No wonder you can have such a part in God's kingdom on earth if you are an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.

[ 36 : 16 ] This kingdom you are part of it you are a member of it. The Lord has as it were signed you into the deed but it also looks forward doesn't it?

The kingdom of heaven it is the already and the not yet. We are part of it and yet it is still to come in all of its fullness in its consummation. And you know friends when that day comes you who are truly as Jesus says here poor in spirit you who see yourselves realistically well the day is coming when Jesus Christ shall make up all of his jewels all of his jewels you don't see yourself as a jewel but in the Lord's eyes and after the Lord's work that's exactly what you are and he will gather you into his eternal kingdom the day is coming when his enemies shall be made his footstool when those who were too proud those who thought themselves rich and indeed all of the world will bow the knee and confess with the tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father the day is coming when you who are poor in spirit you who are a sinner shall be brought with gladness great and mirth on every side into the palace of the king and there you shall abide you shall be made to sit unworthy as you are at the marriage supper of the Lamb and you who knew such corruption in yourself will shine like a star in glory that's the teaching of Jesus that's the teaching of scripture that's the blessed reality that is yours today and that awaits you on that day when your soul shall be made perfect in holiness let me conclude with this this is a first beatitude and it's a first beatitude for a reason you see

Jesus didn't haphazardly preach sermons Jesus didn't haphazardly do anything and this is at the head of the list because it's important because it's fundamental indeed because it's foundational because Jesus knows that without a biblical self image you cannot be a biblical Christian that's what he's saying some of you have heard of William Carey he was a missionary to India and he was one of the first who had real success in that place and who translated the Bible into the Indian language and he was a great man a worthy man a godly man a good man and people thought so in his own day and I'm sure they told him but you know before he died this great Christian he requested that the following simple verse be written on his tombstone a wretched poor and helpless worm on thy kind arms

I fall that was his hope that was his view of himself now how do you see yourself tonight how do you see yourself do you see yourself as God sees you when you look inward do you see poverty or do you see riches when you look at yourself does it produce humility or does it produce pride does it produce lowliness or does it produce self-confidence because you know this friends there's nothing sure it's those who see themselves as wretched poor and helpless worms those who see themselves as poor in spirit it's those who are rich with God because they fall on the kind arms of the savior it is the poor in spirit who are blessed it is the poor in spirit who will inherit the kingdom of heaven is that you is that a description of you is it a description of me the

Christian the blessed man the happy man is poor in spirit as you look forward to the lord's table on the sabbath day I'm sure there's many things about yourself that you wish were different I'm sure that you wish that you were better than you were holier than you were more religious than you've been over these last perhaps six months or so since the last time many things that you're not but can you say that whatever you're not you are poor in spirit because if you can then you are blessed indeed and you are a Christian indeed amen let us pray gracious and ever blessed God we confess our own poverty before thee at this time that we are sinners wretches before a holy God and yet we thank thee for the hope that is ours in the gospel that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost and that he came into this world to save sinners that he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance and that is one of the many promises that we cling to this evening all be

gracious to us then build us up in our most holy faith keep us in the way leave us not to ourselves do not forsake us but continue with us and forgive for sin for Christ's sake amen well let us bring our worship to a conclusion by singing to

[ 41 : 50 ] God's praise in psalm 51 on page 282 psalm 51 and reading together from verse 17 a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice a broken and a contrite heart Lord thou wilt not despise these are words of a man who is poor in spirit show kindness and do good O Lord to sigh on thine own hill the walls of thy Jerusalem build up of thy good will then righteous offerings shall thee please and offerings burnt which they with whole burnt offerings and with calves shall on thine altar lay and that verse of course finding its fulfillment in the life and in deed especially the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ verses 17 to 19 then to God's praise a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice a broken and a contrite heart Lord So good and a contrite heart, Lord, thou wilt not despise.

Show kindness and do good, O Lord, to sigh on thine own hill.

The walls of thy Jerusalem, built up of thy goodwill.

Then righteous offerings shall be pleased, and offerings burned with safe.

[ 44 : 32 ] With all burned offerings and with calves shall on thine altar lay.