

**4<sup>th</sup> Sun... A**  
**Poor In Spirit**

**Introduction:**

Today's Gospel known as The Beatitudes gives us an insight into how Jesus viewed God's dream for humanity, the human family.

And it probably would bring peace and happiness to peoples if followed. It certainly describes the way Jesus lived. Let's take a brief look at just one of these Beatitudes, and try to make sense of it since it are not self-explanatory and is quite counter-cultural.

**I Blessed Are the Poor of Spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs...**

At first glance this looks strange.

We live in a culture that would say:

Blessed are the rich, for they shall be fulfilled.

*Please say it after me... Blessed are the poor in spirit.*

*Try it again... Blessed are the poor in spirit.*

*One more time...Blessed are the poor in spirit.*

Let it sink into your soul...Blessed are the poor in spirit.

What mite it mean?

We know that poverty is something bad... dire poverty anyway.

We see pictures of the poor and shudder.

Dire poverty is evil and causes much suffering.

So Jesus couldn't be asking us to do that, could he?

Let me briefly describe how I think this Beatitude might impact our life today in our American society.

## **II The Kingdom of Stuff**

Our consumer culture tells us that more is better.

We need to buy the latest, the best, the new and improved...

more and more stuff will help to make us fulfilled and happy.

We are told that we will love that new car, a new home, a new piece of jewelry... and isn't love important?

We were made to love God and to love others.

Therein lies the road to happiness.

We live in a Kingdom of Stuff.

And I guess that more Stuff is supposed to make us happy, fulfill us, help us feel important and 'up to date'.

More stuff, bigger stuff, better stuff.

And many people end up buying lots and lots of stuff.

And the piles of garbage, mounds of garbage, and islands of garbage continue to build up...

And our environment continues to suffer from all of this garbage.

It's part of a consumer culture.

Ours seems to be a culture of 'more'.

Spend more, get more, and throw away more... and work harder for more.

Does all of this stuff make people happy?

Does it fulfill people?

If it does – and TV advertisements promise it hundreds of times each day – why so much depression in our country? Why so much anxiety and anger? Strange!

But then Stuff won't bring us happiness.

In his State of the Union Speech after Sept 11, 2001 President Bush made these prophetic remarks:

*...after America was attacked it was as if our entire country looked into a mirror and saw our better selves. We were reminded that we are citizens, with obligations to each other, to our country and to history. We began to think less of the goods we can accumulate, and more about the good we can do...*

*In the sacrifice of soldiers, the fierce brotherhood of firefighters and the bravery and generosity of ordinary citizens, we have glimpsed what a new culture of responsibility could look like. We want to be a nation that server goals larger than self.*

It's not about what we can get from the table...

it's about what we can bring to the table.

Blessed are the poor of spirit... where does that fit in.

Perhaps Jesus calls us to a simpler lifestyle.

Do we really need all of that stuff?

Is life about acquiring stuff, accumulating stuff, having closets and drawers and garages full of stuff which we seldom use?

*Blessed are the poor of spirit... say it with me...*

*Blessed are the poor of spirit...*

*Blessed are the poor of spirit.*

### **III A Story**

I had a friend in New York who made a lot of money, loads of money.

And he worked hard for it.

But he still drove the same old car for years,  
and still lived in the same blue-collar neighborhood where he and his wife  
raised their kids.

People at work asked him why he didn't get a new car?

A Lexus, or a BMW, or even a Jaguar.

He could afford to.

He simply said that his present car worked well enuf.

It got him to where he wanted to go.

Other friends wondered why he didn't move out into the suburbs into a  
bigger, richer house – he could afford it.

Why, he said... he didn't need it.

And besides, he was happy in his neighborhood, in his parish, and in this  
home. He didn't **need** more.

He was happy with his simple lifestyle.

Not that all of the other things were bad,  
but that's not what life is about.

The end or goal of life is not to accumulate.

President Bush said it too. That won't make us happy.

Perhaps that's part of what "blessed are the poor of spirit" means.

*Poor of spirit...*

*Say it with me... Blessed are the poor of spirit.*

*Let it sink in... Blessed are the poor of spirit.*

#### **IV Needs and Wants**

I might add one more level of meaning to this Beatitude.

The poor of spirit realize that stuff won't fulfill them,  
stuff won't really make them happy.

Our *needs* are different from our *wants*.

What do we really *need* versus what do we *want*?

"Wants" are interminable, never ending...

with TV advertisements forever multiplying them!

Don't get overcome by your wants,

or you'll end up being consumed by what you consume.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit...*

*say it with me... Blessed are the poor in spirit.*

*Is it sinking in yet?*

#### **V Jesus**

Jesus himself lived this beatitude.

Think about Jesus with me for a moment.

He wasn't rich, a nobleman, a member of the ruling class –  
not that any of these are bad in themselves.

But in fact, Jesus was a working class guy,  
who lived a very simple lifestyle.

And when he said that the poor of spirit are blessed,  
perhaps he also saw that our human hearts are restless,  
and will in fact never be entirely happy all of the time,  
this side of heaven.

No matter what we do to make ourselves happy –

we certainly can't purchase it,  
regardless of what the TV advertisements say –  
we'll never be happy once and for all this side of the grave.

Our hearts can only be filled by God.  
We can't do it ourselves, by ourselves.  
And others or another person can't ultimately make us totally happy.  
Many a marriage has wrecked on the shoals of that myth.  
Ultimately only God can make us happy and fulfilled.

Ultimately we are poor of spirit – but we are still blessed,  
Jesus says – life is still worth living and striving and loving,  
for God's kingdom is promised us...  
and God wants us to begin being a part of the Kingdom even in this world.  
God loves us and wants to be a part of our lives...  
We are precious to God.  
This is what the poor of spirit recognize.

*Blessed are the poor of spirit...  
say it with me... Blessed are the poor of spirit...  
let it sink in...blessed are the poor of spirit.*

## **Conclusion**

A Prayer

Help us Lord Jesus to be poor of spirit... to lead simple lifestyles,  
not with hundreds of unanswered wants,  
but with what we need.  
Help us to recognize our need for you to fill our hearts  
and let us know how precious we are to you.

And help us to see the truth of what President Bush said in his State of the Union Address in 2002... after Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> ... let us begin

*... to think less of the goods we can accumulate,  
and more about the good we can do.*

Jesus, you said it... Blessed are the poor of spirit.

As we continue with this Eucharist come into our hearts Lord Jesus,  
Shepherd Jesus, Brother Jesus...

enrich us and strengthen us with what we truly need...

the assurance that we are special, beloved and cherished by loving God.

Help us Jesus to now walk in your footsteps in our everyday lives.

*... to think less of the goods we can accumulate,  
and more about the good we can do.*

Amen.