

THE KINGDOM REVEALED

A DEVOTIONAL STUDY ON
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

ALLEN SATTERLEE

wesleyan
PUBLISHING HOUSE
wphstore.com
Indianapolis, Indiana



CREST BOOKS

Copyright © 2018 by The Salvation Army National Corporation
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN: 978-1-63257-270-7
ISBN (e-book): 978-1-63257-271-4

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

CONTENTS



Introduction	5
1. Little Is Much (Matt. 5:3)	9
2. Mourning Light (Matt. 5:4)	15
3. Humble Conquerors (Matt. 5:5)	21
4. Craving Holiness (Matt. 5:6)	25
5. Passion for Compassion (Matt. 5:7)	29
6. Pure and Clear (Matt. 5:8)	35
7. Children of the Prince of Peace (Matt. 5:9)	41
8. The Cost of Taking a Stand (Matt. 5:10–12)	47
9. Savory (Matt. 5:13–16)	53
10. Radiant (Matt. 5:14–16)	59
11. Purpose Fulfilled (Matt. 5:17–20)	65
12. The Price of Rage (Matt. 5:21–26)	71
13. Cleaving to One (Matt. 5:27–32)	77

14. Vulgarizing the Sacred (Matt. 5:33–37)	83
15. Second Mile Grace (Matt. 5:38–42)	89
16. Love without Limits (Matt. 5:43–47)	95
17. Perfect in the Father’s Eyes (Matt. 5:48)	101
18. Only for the Father’s Eyes (Matt. 6:1–8)	107
19. The Model Prayer: Adoration (Matt. 6:9–10)	113
20. The Model Prayer: Petition (Matt. 6:11–13)	119
21. The Model Prayer: Path of Forgiveness (Matt. 6:14–15)	125
22. Not So Fast (Matt. 6:16–18)	131
23. Treasure of the Heart (Matt. 6:19–24)	137
24. First Thing (Matt. 6:25–34)	143
25. Eye of the Hypocrite (Matt. 7:1–6)	149
26. Persistence in Prayer (Matt. 7:7–12)	155
27. Route to Righteousness (Matt. 7:13–14)	161
28. Fruit Inspection (Matt. 7:15–20)	167
29. Empty Confession (Matt. 7:21–23)	173
30. Sandy or Solid (Matt. 7:24–29)	179
Notes	185

INTRODUCTION



Over the centuries, the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5–7) has been one of the most preached, taught, studied, and dissected passages of Scripture. You can find numerous views on it. Some feel that the sermon simply presents an ideal, but because its demands are so high, it is an ideal impossible to live. Others believe that the sermon describes life in God’s kingdom following Christ’s return. The early church, both in the Western and Eastern traditions, interpreted the Sermon on the Mount as a description of how to live the Christian life in the present.

In this study, we agree with the early church, viewing the Sermon on the Mount as a comprehensive description of how to live the Christian life—a life of holiness—today.

If the Sermon on the Mount did not have application in the present life, then Jesus set before us teachings that will

only cause frustration. Just as the Jewish nation struggled to obey the law given through Moses, we would struggle even more to follow Christ's teachings, becoming trapped in a cycle of occasional obedience and frequent failure. In light of the gospel of grace and the assurance of God's loving care, the Sermon on the Mount would seem a cruel joke.

But that is not what it is. Just as the Law described what living up to God's standards looks like, the Sermon on the Mount shows us the character of the Christian life, the holy life. Oswald Chambers wrote, "The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is having His way with us."¹

When we read this Scripture passage and carefully consider what it says, we can feel quite overwhelmed. We find ourselves constantly doing a mental check: *Do I act this way? When have I treated others like this? When God looks in my heart, what does He see?* Any sincere Christian wants his life and heart in sync with the Lord so that he can properly be salt and light to the world.

But unlike the people in the Old Testament days, we are not left to our own strength and wisdom. "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matt. 7:11). God will not frustrate our holy desires but provide the means to achieve them. When the Holy Spirit is free to move within

INTRODUCTION

a heart that is fully yielded to Him, He gently reveals when we move away from humility, when we are tempted to retaliate. He helps us turn the other cheek and sets our ambitions on the things of God for His glory.

As you read this book, know that each verse applies to you in your present-day walk with the Lord. If you feel that you have fallen short, seek the Lord before you do anything else. God wants you to be whole and complete in Him. He stands ready to take you where you are, to lead you where you need to go.

1

LITTLE IS MUCH

MATTHEW 5:3



Captain Michael was the leader of a Salvation Army district that was growing rapidly in Papua New Guinea. One day a fellow officer said to him, “Captain B says that, as your second-in-command, he is your assistant.”

Captain Michael replied, “Why would he want to be that? I am nothing, less than nothing. So, if he says he is my assistant, it means he is less than I am. How could that be?”

The captain’s response fell in line with the deep, unconscious humility that seemed to characterize our Papua New Guinea officers. Jesus might have described this leader as “poor in spirit,” meaning that he sought no glory for himself, realized his weakness, and knew that everything he accomplished was through the grace and strength of the Lord.

Perhaps being “poor in spirit” was key to that officer’s growth. But doesn’t this attitude seem to clash with today’s standards? For example, in applying for a job, you are expected to present your résumé. You outline your work experience, education, skills, honors or awards, and present yourself as someone who is a strong candidate for the job. That is the way things work in this world. But the kingdom works with totally different criteria.

In Matthew 5:3, Jesus laid down a shocking, counter-cultural, counterintuitive guideline for what it means to be in the kingdom. Because being poor in spirit is so against our natural inclinations, it takes some wrestling to grasp what it means.

To be poor in spirit is to realize that you can do absolutely nothing that commands God’s acceptance. All our clothes are tattered and filthy. All our works are smoke and ashes. We are more than bankrupt, because we carry a debt that all our wages for a thousand years can never reduce. If we presented our résumé to God, it would appear like a three-year-old’s scribblings next to a Rembrandt. If we sang Him our songs, they would sound like horrid screeching compared to Mozart’s symphonies.

We dare not plead our case because we are unquestionably guilty in God’s sight and the sight of any who know us. It matters not where others stand before God because we cannot see beyond our own wretched unworthiness.

Like a man at the end of his strength who is being drawn out to sea by the currents, we cannot effect our own rescue. That is what we mean by total depravity and that is precisely where we are before the grace of God reaches us.

Strangely, sin is so self-deceiving that it is unnatural for us to see our condition on our own. We try to justify why we are deserving, why our happiness matters so much in the great scheme of things, why we should receive the award or the recognition. We quickly turn away from moments of self-reckoning and tell ourselves that we're doing just fine.

The Holy Spirit not only reveals to us who God is but also shows us who we are and why we so desperately need Him. And as miserable as that moment of revelation might be, it is of utmost importance. Entrance to the kingdom comes through this door and no other.

Being poor in spirit is surprisingly liberating. As the great writer and missionary, E. Stanley Jones said, "In the bath of renunciation he (the penitent) has washed his soul clean from a thousand clamoring, conflicting desires. Asking for nothing, if anything comes to him, it is all sheer gain."¹

When considering what it means to be poor in spirit, it is important to realize that Jesus was not referring to material poverty. There are people who are desperately poor, but who know nothing of humility. And there are very wealthy people who are fully aware of their utter need of grace and are truly

humble. Poverty in itself is not virtuous. If it were, we would be wrong to help the poor because in doing so we would rob them of their blessing.

Despite this, a person who is materially poor is more likely to be aware of his own limitations and of what he lacks more quickly than someone who is well off. Jesus summed up this fact up neatly when He said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:24).

Poorness in spirit is not only needed to enter the kingdom of God but must be a continuing attitude in the Christian walk. Nothing is more insufferable than a self-righteous believer. As we grow in maturity and holiness, we find not that we are more self-assured, but that we become more aware of the awfulness of sin and of how vulnerable we are to the dangers in the world. We should grow as abhorrent of sin in our own lives as of sin in the unredeemed world. Salvation does not place us in a position of “holier than thou” judgment, but of genuine grief that anyone lives without Christ, either knowingly offending Him or living without regard to Him. We remain poor in spirit not only because of what we were, but also because of what we’d be capable of, were it not for Christ. We know that we could be in the place of the vilest criminal were it not for God’s grace.

The poor in spirit are blessed, “for theirs is the kingdom of God.” What does that mean?

We have only glimpses of what eternity will look like. Just as Peter cried out when he realized he could not save himself, we cry out, “Lord, save me!” (Matt. 14:30). We seek to walk obediently before Him, ever on guard against anything that might distract us from full allegiance to our Lord. Like Paul we aim “that in everything He might have the supremacy” (Col. 1:18).

In this way, we chase the eternal kingdom of God; but to know exactly what it is, we need to be citizens of the kingdom. The kingdom’s glory—the very presence of our Savior—is almost too wonderful to imagine. But God promises that to us.

However, the kingdom of God is also ours in the present moment. We live, work, laugh, cry, struggle, and triumph in a fallen world. But we possess and are possessed by the kingdom of God. It informs our actions, it sets our laws, and it provides its secret rewards and nurtures us in the moment-by-moment. It is both now and coming. Hallelujah!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does being poor in spirit differ from having an inferiority complex?
2. Why is it difficult to remain poor in spirit? What can help us?

3. Is poverty of spirit realistic in a competitive world?
When should we be able to speak of our qualifications or
advocate for ourselves?

NOTES



INTRODUCTION

1. Oswald Chambers, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1995), 13.

DEVOTION 1

1. E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Mount: A Working Philosophy of Life* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1931), 57.

DEVOTION 3

1. Clifton Fadiman and André Bernard, eds., *Bartlett's Book of Anecdotes* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 1985), 98.

2. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 68.

DEVOTION 4

1. James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2006), 40.

2. Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 27.