

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	12
<b>Blessed are the Poor in Spirit</b>	20
<b>Blessed are those who Mourn</b>	34
<b>Blessed are the Meek</b>	48
<b>Blessed are those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness</b>	62
<b>Blessed are the Merciful</b>	76
<b>Blessed are the Pure in Heart</b>	90
<b>Blessed are the Peacemakers</b>	104
<b>Blessed are those who are Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake</b>	118
<b>Conclusion</b>	132

# **The Beatitudes**

## **Matthew 5:3-12**

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

# Laud, O Sion

Laud, O Zion, your salvation,  
Laud with hymns of exultation,  
Christ, your king and shepherd true:

Bring him all the praise you know,  
He is more than you bestow.  
Never can you reach his due.

Special theme for glad thanksgiving  
Is the quick'ning and the living  
Bread today before you set:

From his hands of old partaken,  
As we know, by faith unshaken,  
Where the Twelve at supper met.

Full and clear ring out your chanting,  
Joy nor sweetest grace be wanting,  
From your heart let praises burst:

For today the feast is holden,  
When the institution olden  
Of that supper was rehearsed.

Here the new law's new oblation,  
By the new king's revelation,  
Ends the form of ancient rite:

Now the new the old effaces,  
Truth away the shadow chases,  
Light dispels the gloom of night.

What he did at supper seated,  
Christ ordained to be repeated,  
His memorial nêr to cease:

And his rule for guidance taking,  
Bread and wine we hallow, making  
Thus our sacrifice of peace.

This the truth each Christian learns,  
Bread into his flesh he turns,  
To his precious blood the wine:

Sight has fail'd, nor thought conceives,  
But a dauntless faith believes,  
Resting on a pow'r divine.

Here beneath these signs are hidden  
Priceless things to sense forbidden;  
Signs, not things are all we see:

Blood is poured and flesh is broken,  
Yet in either wondrous token  
Christ entire we know to be.

Whoso of this food partakes,  
Does not rend the Lord nor breaks;  
Christ is whole to all that taste:

Thousands are, as one, receivers,  
One, as thousands of believers,  
Eats of him who cannot waste.

Bad and good the feast are sharing,  
Of what divers dooms preparing,  
Endless death, or endless life.

Life to these, to those damnation,  
See how like participation  
Is with unlike issues rife.

When the sacrament is broken,  
Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,  
That each sever'd outward token doth  
the very whole contain.

Nought the precious gift divides,  
Breaking but the sign betides  
Jesus still the same abides, still  
unbroken does remain.

## *Commit to Memory:*

Laud, O Zion, your salvation,  
Laud with hymns of exultation,  
Christ, your king and shepherd true:  
Bring him all the praise you know,  
He is more than you bestow.  
Never can you reach his due.  
Special theme for glad thanksgiving  
Is the quick'ning and the living  
Bread today before you set:

*The First Beatitude*

**Blessed are  
the Poor in  
Spirit, for  
theirs is the  
kingdom of  
heaven**

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

## Jesus's Heart Hidden in the Old Testament

*A sharp hunger pain made an old woman double over. Taking a deep breath, she continued to knead a small portion of flour into dough. As she worked, she watched her son, pale and weak with hunger, through a small window. He staggered, carrying water to the holy man, Elijah, who had arrived that morning. The old woman carefully laid the small mound of dough on a board and slid it over the fire. Wiping her hands she looked inside the flour jar. Not a crumb remained. Panic tightened her chest, but she bit her lip and forcibly shook her head. The holy man had promised God would provide. She trusted him and she trusted that God would take care of her and her son (See 1 Kings 17:7-16).*

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The eight Beatitudes start with one that shocked Jesus's listeners, and continues to shock us today. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

How is it, we wonder, that poverty can make us happy? How can it be that not having the money and possessions that we desire, or even genuinely need, is good?

The story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath is a helpful place to start as we ponder this lesson. Fleeing from an evil king during a terrible drought, Elijah needed food. God directed him to a specific widow. However, the widow had basically nothing to offer him. She explained, "I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal [flour] in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die" (1 Kings 17:12). Regardless, Elijah told her to use the flour and oil to make him bread, promising that if she did, her jar and jug would, miraculously, never go empty.

And so, the widow obeyed. Despite her own hunger, and that of her son, she offered all they had to a stranger. And then, in response to her faith,

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

God did provide. Indeed, God miraculously provided more flour and oil until the drought and famine ended.

The widow is a wonderful example of what it means to be poor in spirit. The spirit of poverty enables us to freely give and receive all things because we trust God more than we trust ourselves and our possessions.

The widow had a plan; to enjoy her last scrap of food with her son and die. But when it was revealed to her that God had a different, better plan – a plan that required only her trust – she was able to say yes and obey.

Cultivating a spirit of poverty does not necessarily demand that we are materially poor, although God does have a special love for the poor. Being poor of spirit does, however, require that we have a different relationship with money and possessions. When we are rich, we can fail to place our confidence in God. Instead of trusting Him, we trust our bank account and the things we own.

Jesus knows that trusting in mere things will leave us miserable, and He wants us to be happy. Therefore, owning nothing is better than being wealthy, if being wealthy would keep us from trusting God. Going hungry is better, if a full belly keeps us from looking to God when we are in need. The spirit of poverty helps us to receive what God wants to give us, and He wants to give us Himself, His very heart, in the Eucharist. Poverty allows us to give God everything that we have in return.

## *Discuss*

Imagine that you are the widow in the story with Elijah. Would you have trusted like she did?

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

## Jesus, the Perfect Example

*Joseph held a small leather pouch in the palm of his hand and carefully removed two coins. Nearby another man hoisted a gleaming white lamb up onto his shoulders. Joseph wished he could purchase a year old lamb for his family and make the full offering to God, but he was just a poor carpenter. Smiling meekly at a merchant behind the table, Joseph handed him the coins. Without a word, the merchant dropped the coins into his own pouch and handed Joseph a cage with two small turtle doves.*

*Turning, Joseph spotted his wife, Mary. In her arms she held a large blanket. Visible just above its folds of the blanket were the chubby cheeks of a baby boy. Mary gazed down at the baby and rubbed his dark, curly hair. The child cooed and stretched out a hand. Adjusting his grip on the cage of turtle doves, Joseph breathed in deep wonder. Despite their poverty, they were rich beyond measure.*

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It wasn't an accident that Jesus, the Lord of the Universe, was born in a barn to poor, seemingly unimportant parents. If God had willed it, there would have been room for Him somewhere more dignified that night in Bethlehem. But that was not God's plan. Instead, God used Jesus's birth to remind us of what will make us truly happy. God does not care if we are rich or poor. Instead He cares how much we love and trust Him.

The Holy Family, with Jesus at their center, was remarkably poor in spirit. Yes, they were materially poor, but even more than this, they lived out a spirit of poverty by totally trusting God and allowing Him to tend to their needs.

Mary said yes in trust to becoming the Mother of God. Joseph accepted Mary as his wife and agreed to serve as the earthly father of the Messiah, the long awaited Savior foretold throughout the Old Testament. Mary and Joseph also trusted God as they traveled to Bethlehem at the end of Mary's pregnancy, then to Egypt to escape Herod, and throughout many quiet unseen moments as Jesus grew from a child into a man. In each situation,



*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*



## *The Holy Family*