

Influence Ministries

THE END OF ME

LESSON 1

TITLE: BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

In the best-known sermon that Jesus ever preached, called 'The Sermon on the Mount,' Jesus is going to talk to us about what it means to live out the kingdom of heaven in this world.

It's called The Sermon on the Mount because of where He preached it. It was preached in the mountains just above the Sea of Galilee.

The reason why that's significant is that in those days revolutionaries would often lay low in these mountains as a way to avoid arrest and still be able to spread their revolutionary message.

This idea that Jesus was revolutionary and he was going to usher in a revolution of a completely different kind as he brings the Kingdom of Heaven to this world and in his sermon he is bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to the kingdom of this world if he's going to show us that much of what we have been taught in this world when it comes to happiness and fulfillment is in direct opposition to what the Kingdom of Heaven has to say about such things.

We think what will make us the most fulfilled and happy is pursuing our own desires and pleasures.

It just seems to make sense that if Me gets what Me wants then Me is going to be happy. But if you've gone down that Me path very long, you know that it doesn't work very well.

So as Jesus begins His sermon on the mount, He begins with The Beatitudes. And in The Beatitudes, He takes everything we thought we knew about happiness and just turns it upside down.

The first Beatitude goes like this, "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus says there is a blessing that comes when you reach the end of yourself.

That's what it means to be poor in spirit. You reach a place where you realize you're broke, you don't have what it takes, you don't have strength, you don't have the answers. You need help and that's where God's blessing meets you.

Jesus says there's a blessing for the broken. He blesses those who are poor in spirit. An example of what it looks like to be poor in spirit is found in Luke, Chapter 7.

Jesus is eating at the home of a religious leader named Simon. Simon doesn't have much use for Jesus because Simon is rich in spirit.

At least he thinks he's got his life together, people respect him. He doesn't welcome Jesus with much hospitality.

He doesn't kiss the hand of Jesus, which would have been traditional hospitality, or have the feet of Jesus washed.

He doesn't anoint the head of Jesus with a few drops of oil which sounds a little bit unusual to us, but it was an especially hospitable gesture back then.

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In the middle of this meal, there is a woman. It says in Luke 7 that she is a known sinner. It's a polite way of saying she's a prostitute.

She comes in and crashes the party, and she falls at the feet of Jesus. She is undone by the love and acceptance that Jesus had demonstrated towards her.

As the tears run down her cheek, they fall off, they hit the feet of Jesus and she notices from the streaks that the feet of Jesus hadn't been washed. So, she begins to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears.

She can't ask Simon for a towel, so she lets down her hair and she begins to dry his feet with her hair. And then she does something remarkable.

She had a little perfume bottle that she kept around her neck. She used it as part of her occupation, using a drop at a time, one man at a time.

And now she just pours it out on the feet of Jesus. It's a beautiful expression of love, surrender. And at the end of the story there's something remarkable that takes place.

It shocked the people in attendance. Jesus rebukes the Pharisee, this religious leader, and he blesses the prostitute. Wow.

Because, blessed are those who are poor in spirit. And in our culture, when we see something that is broken, then we have a tendency to 'be done,' to throw it away. But in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus puts a premium on the broken.

The truth is, we are all broken. Simon, the religious leader, didn't think he was broken, but he was broken. In fact, he was SO broken that he spent his entire childhood memorizing the Old Testament.

He had more than 300 prophecies of the Messiah committed to memory. Now the Messiah is sitting at his own table and Simon doesn't even realize it. That's how broken he is.

But you and I, we're the same way. We are broken. We're not 'gently used' like the clothing requested by Good Will, we are ripped, torn, ragged.

The good news is that God makes the broken whole. He takes the overlooked and undervalued, the left out and the written off, the damaged, the destroyed, then He does what only He can do.

So, when you come to the end of yourself and you realize just how broken you are, you'll find that there's a blessing that waits for you there. Because God loves to make the broken beautiful.