

BLESSED IN JESUS?

In Luke 4 Jesus Christ announced He was anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to captives, recovering of sight to the blind. He had come to set at liberty those oppressed, and to proclaim the age of the Lord's favor. Then He dramatically declared "*today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*" God's promised Deliverer was here!

In Luke 6:17-26 Christ Jesus does the very things He had been called to do. A great multitude from all over the country came to hear Him and to be healed. His words and works, by divine ability and authority, pointed to the spiritual release that was their greatest need: salvation.

Jesus proclaimed a message of repentance and faith, turning away from whatever people had been trusting in. They must turn to God, believing in Jesus, as the Christ, Lord and Savior. Believers would enter God's kingdom, as they came under His rule and reign.

POOR IN SPIRIT - Then Jesus delivered a series of beatitudes to His disciples, saying, "*blessed are you...*" First He said, "*blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God*" (Luke 6:20). We looked last time at several aspects of being poor. Matthew 5:3 records Jesus saying "*blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

Poor in spirit speaks not of material poverty but of spiritual need. It recognizes dependence upon God, and inability to change one's own condition. These acknowledge they need saving, and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. To these belongs the kingdom of heaven, now.

"The poor in spirit are humble, deeply convinced of their sinfulness in God's sight, not wise or holy in their own eyes; they do not imagine that they need nothing," writes JC Ryle.

DEPENDENT ONES - God's kingdom had come, in the person of Jesus Christ, to be received by all who believe in Him as the promised Christ, Lord and Savior. "This trust is an emptying of any claim we (falsely) believe to have on God. It is repentance and a recognition that we are utterly dependent on divine grace, and undeserving of His favor," writes RC Sproul.

Blessed are those, Jesus says, who acknowledge their need and depend only upon God. These are not banking on their Israelite heritage as God's chosen people. These are not attempting to earn salvation by keeping religious rules and regulations. These are not lifting up themselves in spiritual pride. Rather, they are truly realizing their humble state before God.

These are those who are blessed by God. These are those who respond to Christ's good news of the gospel of the kingdom, to follow Him as His disciple. The moment one trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that person has been born again from above by the Spirit. New spiritual life begins as a current possession that can never be taken. You are in God's kingdom.

BLESSED IN JESUS - Jesus' beatitudes blow away shallow talk of discipleship, writes RK Hughes. Jesus Christ calls for true commitment. First, you must BECOME His disciple, trusting in Him to become like Him. A disciple is a learner, a follower. A disciple has put all his trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, believing in Him as the promised redeemer.

These are those responding to the Good News, and who are blessed. They receive the liberty Jesus promises. They are being set free by the Deliverer, in the age of Messiah, just as He says.

Second, you must BE His disciple. You learn from Him and His words. You follow Him and His ways. You are trusting in Him to become like Him, because He is Lord and Savior. Jesus said, "*if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them*" (John 13:7). By the Holy Spirit.

ARE YOU BLESSED? - One who is blessed in Jesus, a disciple, trusts Him and obeys Him. This one acknowledges complete dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, first to enter His kingdom, and then to live in His kingdom. A disciple lives under the reign and rule of God in His kingdom. All this is by God's gracious grace, blessing you. Undeserved, unearned.

Simply receiving by faith what Jesus Christ offers. Turn from sin to Him. Turn from the world's darkness to Jesus' light. Be blessed by His gracious grace! It's all by the work of the Holy Spirit within. And even if you are poor, hungry, weeping, hated, Jesus says you shall be rich, full, laugh, and be rewarded, which we'll explore in Luke 6:20-26. Meantime, trust and obey Him! □