

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Mt 5:4; Is 57:15; Is 11:2

I. “Poor” Defined: without, lacking

- A. Possessions, properly viewed by disciples
 - 1. Content with current holdings
 - 2. Detached from ultimate worth
- B. Pretensions, personal status

II. “Poor” Understood as Humility (cf. Is. 57:15)

- A. “Humus” points to soil, thus “down-to-earth”
- B. Unpretentious—not given to posing, e.g. A. Lincoln, U.S. Grant, Robert E. Lee
- C. Self-Effacing—Ike’s leadership in WWII, *At Ease: Stories I Tell My Friends*
- D. Mother Teresa’s list

III. “Poor” linked with “Fear of the Lord” (Gift of the Spirit, Is 11:2).

- A. Definition: Heb *yirat*, Gk *phobos*, L. *timidatus*—all mean “fear” or “timidity”
- B. Not a servile/harmful (vicious variety)
 - 1. Fear of, avoidance of, punishment (evil of such fear proceeds from self-love)
 - 2. Prompting cowardice—such as Peter denying Christ,
 - 3. Preventing good, just, loving acts
 - a. Defending innocents—both physically & verbally; just war manifests *agape love*, whereas doctrinaire pacifism frequently shrouds servile fear (e.g. “better red than dead”)
 - b. Helping needy—as did Jesus with prostitutes & tax-gatherers; fear of public opinion, financial setback, etc. illustrates servile fear; C.S. Lewis stressed “security” temptations
- C. Nor a human frailty/weakness (“all too human”)—excusable and often inescapable, though reprehensible at times
 - 1. Feeling faint, weak, incapable of action (physical)
 - 2. Avoiding pain, disease, death, loneliness (emotional)
 - 3. Protecting dignity, reputation (spiritual)
- D. But a filial/heavenly power (proper fear, AWE at/of LORD)
 - 1. Earthly Attitude: Respect for position, accomplishment, authority, elders,
 - a. Re father (e.g. house builder—sought & followed his advice)
 - b. Re athletes (e.g. Michael Johnson)
 - c. Re scholars (e.g. Victor Frankl)
 - d. Re artists (e.g. Alexandr Solzhnitsyn)
 - e. Re saints (e.g. Mother Teresa, Billy Graham)
 - 2. Heavenly Attitude: Reverential AWED
 - a. Attention: Focus on (respect=look again), think about, listen to LORD—His Sacramental Presence & Word ever important
 - 1. When epiphanies (e.g. Moses at burning bush) occur, give heed
 - 2. When Father (and His prophets) speak, “listen up”
 - a. Fear of offending, displeasing through inattention, disobedience
 - b. Thus many warnings, prohibitions, connect with fear of being apart from Him
 - 3. When godless (Satan) speak, disregard
 - b. Wonder (open my eyes) at “beauty of the Lord” and His handiwork
 - 1. Rejoice in His Creative powers (W. Chambers “experienced two of the most important things men ever know—the wonder of life and the wonder of the universe.”)
 - 2. Marvel at One “greater than” greatest, the “Holy Mystery”
 - 3. Poets’ perceptions—e.g. Browning, Hopkins
 - c. Ecstasy: out-of-oneself openness, entering into His Presence, surrendering to His Will
 - d. Docility—willingness to be molded, as clay in Potter’s hands

IV. Enter the “Kingdom”—“righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17)

“These are the few ways we can practice humility:

To speak as little as possible of one's self.

To mind one's own business.

Not to want to manage other people's affairs.

To avoid curiosity.

To accept contradictions and correction cheerfully.

To pass over the mistakes of others.

To accept insults and injuries.

To accept being slighted, forgotten and disliked.

To be kind and gentle even under provocation.

Never to stand on one's dignity.

To choose always the hardest.”

— **Mother Teresa**

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Prayer of an Anonymous Abbess:

Lord, thou knowest better than myself that I am growing older and will soon be old. Keep me from becoming too talkative, and especially from the unfortunate habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and at every opportunity.

Release me from the idea that I must straighten out other peoples' affairs. With my immense treasure of experience and wisdom, it seems a pity not to let everybody partake of it. But thou knowest, Lord, that in the end I will need a few friends.

Keep me from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.

Grant me the patience to listen to the complaints of others; help me to endure them with charity. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains -- they increase with the increasing years and my inclination to recount them is also increasing.

I will not ask thee for improved memory, only for a little more humility and less self-assurance when my own memory doesn't agree with that of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.

Keep me reasonably gentle. I do not have the ambition to become a saint -- it is so hard to live with some of them -- but a harsh old person is one of the devil's masterpieces.

Make me sympathetic without being sentimental, helpful but not bossy. Let me discover merits where I had not expected them, and talents in people whom I had not thought to possess any. And, Lord, give me the grace to tell them so.

Amen”