

*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 be shown 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 because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. – Matt. 5:3-10*

“... for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.” As we move toward the close of our study of the Kingdom of God/heaven, we have to look at these famous statements of Jesus, called the Beatitudes. These are statements Jesus made at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, and they are His opening salvo against the structure of this world. Jesus’ teachings all fought against the natural assumptions and values of human society, and these Beatitudes were how He began that fight. He was baptized, tempted in the wilderness, called disciples, healed the sick, and then taught... this.

You may notice that there are two parts to these statements: “Blessed are...” and “for they...” The “Blessed are...” statements are a list of a particular type of person, while the “for they...” statements are really just different descriptions of the Kingdom of God. Let’s look at both sets.

“Blessed are...” the poor in Spirit (or just “the poor” in Luke), those who mourn, are meek, hunger for righteousness/justice (it’s the same word in Greek), are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers and persecuted for their righteousness/justice. Who are these people? They are the poor, the oppressed, the downtrodden, but still faithful to God. Jesus was raised by Mary, a woman of the Anawim, the Pious Poor. This group within Judaism were famous for their poverty and faithfulness to God, for their lack of resources and their abundance of faith. These Anawim were poor and meek, but also merciful, pure, peacemakers and hungry for justice. And these are the people Jesus calls “blessed”.

In fact, Jesus called them more than just blessed. He called them the ones who will be part of the Kingdom of God, inheriting the earth, finding comfort and fulfillment and mercy, and finally the ones who will see God. All of these descriptors are ultimately a description of what it means to be part of the Kingdom of God. The Anawim, the Pious Poor, will receive the Kingdom of God.

If you are a member of the pious poor today, then the message here is one of hope and joy. “Yes, life is hard when you’re poor and faithful and desperate for justice, but ultimately you are blessed and are part of the Kingdom of heaven!” If you are not, then the question we naturally ask is, “But what about me?” Is this list exclusive to the Anawim and those like them today? Or is this just a statement to them, but not ONLY to them? Can we be rich and still be part of the Kingdom?

What have we learned about the Kingdom so far? The Kingdom is the key to Jesus’ teachings, and is defined as wherever God rules as King in someone’s life. It welcomes absolutely everyone (the judging will come later by God, not us) and is worth more than all the rest of your life and world put together. So rather than worrying about your bank account (or lack thereof) as a ticket into the Kingdom, doesn’t it make more sense to worry about what we do with our bank account? Rather than worrying about whether we’re part of the Kingdom, shouldn’t we worry about where we’re living out the Kingdom every day? Rather than worrying about whether you are Poor enough, shouldn’t we worry about whether we are Pious enough? The Kingdom is not a reward we win for a pious life. It is the life we live now and into eternity when God rules as our King and Sovereign.

Questions to ponder:

Do the “Blessed are...” statements describe you? What does this mean?

Are you working toward the Kingdom of God, or hoping to win it as a prize or reward?

Do the Beatitudes bring you peace or worry? Why?