

JESUS

Session One - Introduction/Poor in Spirit

The way of life masterfully communicated in Jesus' first teaching remained the focus throughout his ministry. He graphically illustrated everything he taught us to do in the manner in which he lived. As we study his life, we learn by example how to live our lives.

Matthew 5:1-3 "Poor in spirit" is an idiomatic expression common in Jesus' day and not so much today. We have come to understand it means humble and humility – the realization of our inability to live successfully without the help of God and the willingness to allow Him to help.

A corresponding perspective is gained by acknowledging that the word "spirit" can mean life or self. The idiom would then emphasize poor in self or poor in living for self, and thus meaning is evident in the remainder of the sermon.

Matthew 16:24-25 – 24 ...Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Philippians 2:3-5 NIV Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Matthew 5:20 From the beginning, the Pharisees and scribes provide a striking contrast to the right way to live godly. Our righteousness [right living] must surpass theirs for they are the standard for exclusion from the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 9:9-13 They were judgmental, critical, undermining, and sowing seeds of skepticism with his disciples. By quoting Hosea 6:6, Jesus attacks their lack of genuine godly concern. They had no compassion for the needy and sinners. Outward religious activity – lighting the candles, adorning the church, dressing properly, religious adornments – overshadowed genuine inward godliness which is expressed outwardly in compassion.

Matthew 9:32-34 Instead of glorifying God and rejoicing with the healed one, they critically slandered Jesus.

Matthew 9:12:1-8 They ostensibly embraced the law of the Sabbath but entirely missed the overall concept of the Mosaic law, that of love for God and people. They wrongly condemned the innocent. Again, here is a reference to Hosea 6:6.

Sabbath Concern

What God intended as a delightful blessing they made into an insurmountable burden that cursed the people.

Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28 Eating grain on the Sabbath

Matthew 12:10-12; Mark 3:1-6 Healing the man with the withered hand

Luke 13: 10-17 Woman afflicted for 18 years by a demon

Luke 14:1-6 Man with dropsy

John 5:9-18 Bethesda man at the pool afflicted for 38 years

John 9:1-ff Blind man healed

John 7:19-24 Jesus' response to their superficial concern for Sabbath keeping

Matthew 15:1 Jesus was in Gennesaret (according to 14:34), the Galilee region. Their coming to him was not chance rather deliberate to watch him.

Mark 7:1-4 They developed their own religious activity exclusive of the Scriptures and judged others by that standard.

Matthew 15:3 Washing hands and things, although not required in the law was of itself not breaking the law. Demanding others to keep their traditions did break the law. Jesus took issue with something clearly contrary to the law

Matthew 15:6 The law of God required that a son should honor his parent and, among other things, provide for his wants when he was old and in distress. Yet, they said that it was more important for a man to dedicate his property to God than to provide for the wants of his parent. They manipulated the law to entice people to make financial oaths that contradicted the commands for the purpose of financial gain.

Matthew 15:9 Jesus sternly confronted them without sinning. He never retaliated in anger or bitterness rather boldly declared the truth without fear and provided opportunity for the truth to be realized.

Their dealings with Jesus and others were made to look or sound as though they held a deep-seated concern for godliness and righteousness, yet their real motives were far removed. Their motives were greed, control, self-importance, or jealousy. They successfully fooled most people but never Jesus for he always saw right through them. Jesus called them what they were – hypocrites. A hypocrite is somebody who pretends to have admirable principles, beliefs, or feelings but behaves otherwise. They reveled in self-importance that they usually displayed through exaggerated seriousness or stateliness in speech or manner. In a word they were “pompous.”

They were high up on the social ladder and ostentatious (that is extravagantly and consciously showy) fooling most people. Their mask to Jesus was like glass. He saw that they were counterfeits, pretenders, con artists, swindlers, frauds and considered them enemies of God.

The sad part about them was they thought they were right and he was wrong.

Matthew 22:41-46 A good student of the Old Testament would understand that the Messiah is lord over all, even his father David. Joseph provides an example as he was lord over his father Jacob. They pretended to be experts of the Scriptures but really understood very little. They spent more time in their religious traditions and the oral law than in understanding the truth contained in the Scriptures.

Matthew 23:1-3 They were self-appointed, not God-ordained.

“Chair of Moses” is a figurative expression for the teaching authority of those responsible for interpreting and applying the laws of Moses. We are safe in concluding Jesus’ instruction to obey was regarding Scriptures and not traditions.

Matthew 23:4 Herein is the core of their existence. The human desire for recognition, acceptance, approval, and validation motivate outer behavior to impress others. Young children still unskilled in masking their inner feelings reveal this human desire when they insist upon their parent’s attention while they do some extraordinary superpower feat such as standing on one foot or a somersault. This desire or need seems to increase when we become teenagers and are noticeably redirected towards others outside the family. The peculiar effort extended by teens to impress others that they do not care what people think about them reveals the powerfulness of this driving force.

Maturity for most tones down and often hides the nagging desire to mold how others view us, but it does not change us. The Pharisees reveled in how others thought of them while Jesus cared not at all. Rather, his sole concern was pleasing God. His godly service with pure and sincere heart manifests in glory to God diverted from self.

Matthew 23:5 They misunderstood God’s Word on the subject, missed the concept, and embraced the technique.

Numbers 15:37-41 Tassels were to remind Israelites to keep the law. The longer the tassel, the greater importance the wearer attached to the law.

Phylacteries were small leather-covered boxes containing Scripture passages. The four passages were written small on very fine paper, and the boxes were worn on wrist or forehead.

Exodus 13:9 & 16 Keep it before you, a sign on your hand and forehead.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 The Shema: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" Make the commandments a sign on your hand and forehead.

Deuteronomy 11:13-21 A warning to heed the commandment and put reminders on hand and forehead

Matthew 23:6-12 These are the thoughts and actions of those lost in self-interest, self-image, self-aggrandizement cloaked by their religious counterfeit positions. They used God and godly things for selfish interest.

Jesus communicates in this section the converse of his sermons of the mount and the plain.

Matthew 23:13 They keep themselves and others out of the Kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 23:14 Not in oldest Greek manuscripts

Matthew 23:15 They proselyte people for hell.

Matthew 23:16-22 Lead people to make oaths (Jesus banded oaths) and to hold wrong focus and priorities

Matthew 23:23 and 24 They major in minors and neglected the most important. They dealt unjustly, without mercy, and without authenticity.

Matthew 23:25 and 26 Their concern was for the outward and not the inward as are most humans. We change how we look, what we wear, where we live, where we work, friends ... but real change must happen from the inside out.

Matthew 23:27 and 28 They held outward concern, not inward.

Matthew 23:29-33 Jesus saw them for who they really were.

John 11: 47 & 48 True motives exposed

Matthew 5:3 The humble are free to forget themselves because they are secure. They accept the fact that they are small, vulnerable, and not ultimately in control and know Yahweh is immense, omnipotent, and completely in control. The humble are in touch with reality.

The poor in spirit deny self and take up the cross and follow Jesus. They do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than self. They look not only to their own interests but also to the interests of others. The only possible way to carry out the instruction given in the Sermon on the Mount is to be poor in spirit (self-interest).

Matthew 5:21 & 22 The way to avoid murder, anger, slander is no self.

Matthew 5:23-26 The way to resolve contentious situations with enemies is no self.

Matthew 5:27 -32 To avoid adultery and remain faithful to your spouse – no self

Matthew 5:38-42 Resist not evil – no self

Matthew 5:43-48 To love your enemies – no self

Matthew 6:1-18 To be genuine with your good deeds, prayers, and fasting without trying to impress others, we must die to self – no you.

Matthew 6:19-24 To stay single minded – no self

Matthew 6:25- 34 To avoid living for the world and selfishness while seeking God's Kingdom, first we of necessary must die to self.

Matthew 6:7:1-12 To avoid judging and treat people right – no self

Matthew 6:13-28 To enter the Kingdom in the future, we must be "poor in spirit" today.

The Acceptable Year of the Lord

The life and earthly ministry of Jesus Christ

Walter J. Cummins

- To search the Scriptures and to say what the Scriptures say without embellishing them with other opinions and misleading terms, it is necessary to consider the exact words that are written in each verse and to consider those words and their context. It would not be considered proper to misquote, to misrepresent, or to misuse material from any other author. Likewise, it would not be proper to use a verse from the Scriptures for a purpose other than that for which God, the Author, intended it to be used, as indicated by the exact words used in each verse and by its context. Therefore, in considering a record from the Scriptures, we should read and look carefully at the words in each verse and at the context, and we may even need to read the entire book in which that record was written to grasp its complete context.
- In addition to the context, it is necessary to consider other passages in the Scriptures that deal with the same subject or incident. Recognizing that God's words would be without any errors, discrepancies, or deficiencies as they were originally revealed to holy men of God, we would expect to find that passages in the Scriptures dealing with the same subject may augment and complement each other but they would not contradict each other. One record may give certain details regarding a subject or an event, while another record dealing with the same subject or event may supply added details. For example, the four Gospels may record information regarding an identical event with complimentary details regarding what occurred. One record may also state something literally while another record dealing with the same subject or event may state the same thing as a figure of speech. However, such divinely inspired differences in records about the same subject or event are complimentary and not contradictory. Considering passages in the Scriptures dealing with the same subject or event as well as the context of each of those passages may help us to learn more about that subject or event.
- Of equal importance is the consideration of other passages dealing with similar subjects or events that are not exactly the same. Similar subjects or events that are not exactly the same have irreconcilable differences. For example, some events recorded in the four Gospels may be similar to each other, but they are not the same identical event because they occurred at different times, at different places, or with different circumstances, as stated in the records themselves. Likewise, similar subjects from different passages of the Scriptures may not refer to the exact same subject because

they were written at different times, at different places, to different people, about different people, about different situations, and for different reasons. Recognizing that those differences are by divine design, we should consider the exact words in each passage that indicate differences in time, place, sequence, people, and circumstances.

- Another consideration is an author's privilege to tie related subjects together outside of their chronological order. God, as the Author of His Word, has the same privilege, and thus not all events recorded in the Scriptures may be in chronological order. This characteristic is especially note worthy in the four Gospels where some events are not recorded in chronological order. Sequencing of concurrent and consecutive events that are recorded outside their chronological order requires the careful consideration of the times, locations, and other information given in the records.
- There are also forms of expressions in the Scriptures that may appear to be unusual. Since the Scriptures were written thousands of years ago in other languages in other cultures, it is necessary to become acquainted with the vocabulary used in the Scriptures and the peculiarities of the Bible languages. The Scriptures would have been written in the language and the vocabulary of the holy men of God who were moved by God to write exactly what He told them to write, as noted previously. Terms in the Scriptures were sometimes used to refer to something different from the same terms as they had been used in other writings. The context and other occurrences of those terms in the Scriptures may help us to understand how those terms are used in the Scriptures.
- Other peculiarities of the Bible languages include figures of speech and customs that were used in the lands and times of the Bible. Figures of speech were often used in those languages to state the information in an unusual or non literal sense in order to draw the reader's attention to what was being said. Customs of the land and times of the Bible were also used to draw upon those things that the original writers and readers were familiar with and that vividly portrayed the Word of God to them. Considering such forms of expressions that are used in the Scriptures is necessary to learning what the Scriptures say.
- There are, of course, variations among the many translations of the Bible, and it may be necessary to consult the manuscripts, printed text, and translations of the Scriptures, as well as concordances, lexicons, dictionaries, and other resources. However, it is especially important to consider all resources in light of the biblical record, its context, and other passages dealing with the same subject in order to understand what God originally revealed to the holy men of God.