

Devotions with Matt

April 28, 2020

POOR IN SPIRIT

Christian missionary Hudson Taylor was scheduled to speak at a large church in Melbourne, Australia. The moderator of the service introduced him in eloquent and glowing terms. He told the large congregation all that Taylor had accomplished in China. He then presented him to the group as "Our Illustrious guest". Taylor stood quietly for a moment, and then opened his message by saying, "Dear friends, I am a little servant of our illustrious Master."

That's a taste of what Jesus means as He begins the Beatitudes (Blessings). Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit". That, to most ears, doesn't sound like a person who is blessed. Poverty is not a state that we seek. Poor in spirit seems lowly and downtrodden. We like blessings and spiritual richness. We pray to God to lift us up higher and higher so we are not poor in spirit. We want God to bless us out of the depths and into the heights.

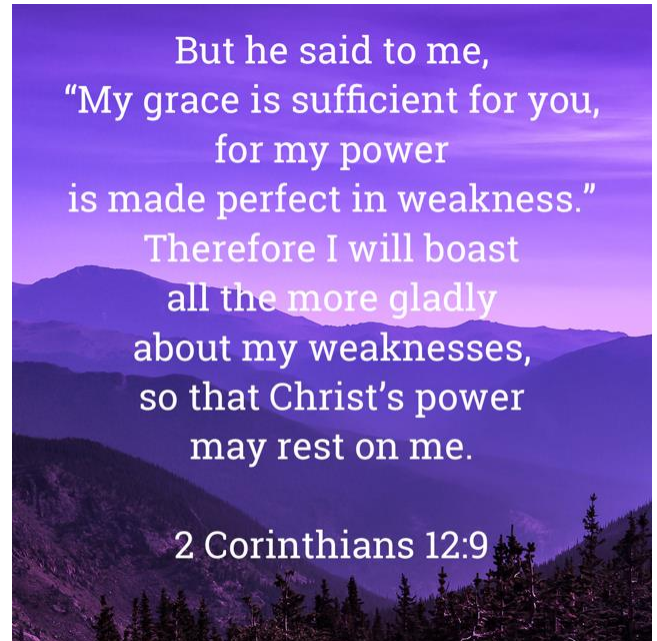
It's interesting that Jesus starts off the Beatitudes with "poor in spirit". There must be something significant about that state of being for Him to start there and say that we are blessed when we are. Something about being low allows us to be blessed by God. Jesus follows up His statement about being poor in spirit with "for theirs is the kingdom of God". His entire kingdom opens up for us when we are poor in spirit. Jesus is saying that humility is key. One must understand our need for God. One must understand our spiritual condition apart from God. We are broken, selfish and lost. One must accept that there is nothing we can do in our own power to change our condition. Poor in spirit means we understand our need for God. Without Him we are spiritually bankrupt.

The Bible is filled with those who understood their poor condition. John the Baptist said that he needed to decrease and Jesus needed to increase in his life. The Apostle Paul said that if he were to boast about anything he would boast about his weaknesses because God's power is made perfect in them. And, in one of my favorite parables, a Tax Collector goes into the Temple and stands far from the Alter. He knows his condition, he knows he's not worthy of drawing close to God, he knows he is helpless. So he stands far away and beats his chest and says, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." They were all poor in spirit and they all had the promise of God's kingdom.

The promise of God's kingdom is for men and women, rich and poor, the morally upright and the evil-doers. In other words it is available to us all. But, the one thing in common we all must come to realize is that we are poor in spirit. Without God there is no kingdom for us. We must bow down to enter. We must bow down to be lifted up. Eugene Peterson puts it this way in regards to the Beatitudes and being poor in spirit: "You are blessed when you are at the end of your rope." With less of us there is more of God in our lives. With true humility towards Christ, His kingdom is ours.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians 12:9

In Christ ~ Matt



But he said to me,
"My grace is sufficient for you,
for my power
is made perfect in weakness."
Therefore I will boast
all the more gladly
about my weaknesses,
so that Christ's power
may rest on me.

2 Corinthians 12:9