

The Disparity Gospel: Blessed are the Cursed

Text: Matthew 5:1-12

Warming Up

Questions:

1. Which part of Holy Week turned out to be the most meaningful for you?
2. What is one way you have experienced God's blessing this past week?

Digging In

Read **Matthew 5:1-12**.

Questions:

1. Who does our culture tell us are the most blessed among us?
2. What are the signs of blessing in our culture?

Read **Matthew 5:1-3**.

Being "poor in spirit" is not something that God wants for us, like it is a prerequisite for receiving the blessing of God. In Jesus' day, to be "poor in spirit" meant you were *cursed*. It meant you were spiritually bankrupt. Jesus says that the spiritually bankrupt are *already* blessed with the Kingdom of Heaven.

Questions:

1. Who do we consider "spiritually bankrupt" today?
2. What does it tell us about God that he gives his kingdom even to the spiritually bankrupt?
3. In light of this blessing, how should we treat the spiritually bankrupt?

Read **Luke 6:20**.

In Luke's accounting of the Beatitudes, it is the "poor" who receive the Kingdom of God. Well, which is it? The "poor" or the "poor in spirit", as Matthew has it? The answer is "yes". Everything was seen as spiritual in the time of Jesus. If someone was poor in relationships, or poor in financial resources, or of poor health, it was *assumed* they were "poor in spirit". Poverty and spiritual poverty were one in the same. Notice how Jesus, his disciples, and the religious community of their day approached and reacted to someone who was "poor" in sight, and so in spirit:

Read **John 9:1-34**.

Questions:

1. What assumptions are the disciples making about why a person is blind in their world?
2. What does Jesus reveal about how God sees the man born blind?
3. What is the religious establishment's response to this man after he is healed by Jesus?
4. Why do you think it is hard for some in the religious community to see blessing in the lives of those who are considered "poor in spirit"?

Sending Out

God's original calling on his people was connected to God promising to bless Abraham in the very first book of the Bible. This is the first mention of "blessing" that we have. When Jesus uses the language of blessing, his hearers would have connected it with this story in Genesis.

Read **Genesis 12:1-3**.

Questions:

1. *Who gets blessed in this passage?*
2. *What is the role of Abraham and his descendants (God's historic people) in the blessing of the nations?*
3. *Why might it be hard for those who consider themselves to be "poor in spirit" to feel that they could be a blessing to others?*
4. *Why might it be important for the poor in spirit to know that they **can be** a blessing to others?*
5. *In what ways have you felt that you were poor in spirit?*
6. *What has it done for your spirit to discover you've been a blessing to others?*

Closing

Take a moment in silence to come before God and ask the question, "*What word or phrase or idea or moment does God want me to remember from this morning and carry with me this week?*"

Close with prayer.