

**Lutheran Vespers, Sometime during 1947-1948**  
**Recording #3**  
**KVNU, 610, Logan, Utah**  
**Rev. Harold Brauer, speaker**

Oh, God who despiseth the proud and giveth grace to the humble, we pray Thee to give us the grace of humility, the feeling that we are not what we ought to be, so that we will look to Thee for strength and to thy Son, Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation. To this end bless our meditation in this quarter hour for Thy Son's sake, Amen.

Dear listening friends. Christians are blessed people. This does not mean that everyone who claims to be a Christian experiences these blessings. But it does mean that every true believer in Christ is given the power and ability to be as his God and Savior wants him to be, at least to some degree. And to the degree with which the child of God walks in the Savior's foot steps, to that degree does he experience the blessedness which Jesus spoke of in those statements in his Sermon on the Mount, which are called the Beatitudes.

Today we take up a study of the first of those statements which reads as recorded in Matthew chapter 5 verse three: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Our first question is what does Jesus mean when he speaks about the poor in spirit and why is their's the kingdom of heaven. Jesus did not say: "Blessed are the poor." For he knows that poverty can make people very unhappy. No, Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," meaning the opposite of the proud in spirit. He was talking about humility. Blessed is the humble man is what his words meant. Blessed is the humble man for his shall be the kingdom of heaven. Such a person shall be assured here already that he shall finally enter the heaven to come.

The words of Jesus were no doubt prompted by some of the people who followed him. In those crowds were proud people. They were ready to blame all their personal and national ills to everybody else, never once thinking that they might have been contributing factors to these evils as well.

In our world today, there are many good citizens who can find much fault with this world, but very little with themselves. These think they are better than most of the people in one way or another. In other words, they are proud. Some may be proud about their supposed goodness. Now we may be good people. Still, we must not think of ourselves as good.

A mother had two sons, one a very respected member of the community, the other a gambler and drinker who was once put into prison. She was very happy about the good boy, but confessed she really loved the other one more. The good boy seldom came to visit her, never called her on the phone. But the other boy would come back, sobbing at his mother's knee and he would say: "Oh I'm so sorry mother, I am no good at all. But I

love you mother and I need you.” She thought that perhaps this boy was the better of the two.

Jesus said something like this about the Pharisee who thanked God that he was so good, while the publican stood afar off smiting his breast and asking for mercy. He went home justified rather than the Pharisee, said Jesus.

Jesus said it is not goodness at all that counts, but how humble we are before God. Let us tell the world that we go to church, not because we are so good but because we are such sinners, who are so much in need of God and forgiveness. Let us tell the people who glory in their perfections saying that they are good enough without the church that something is wrong, since goodness is not enough. Jesus said I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The first step to God then is not goodness, but humility. A recognition of the fact that in God's sight, we are not what we ought to be, but that we are sinners.

Sometimes people are proud not because of their goodness, but because of their money. They look upon the possession of much of this world's goods as a reason for feeling superior to other people, because they regard every bit of it as an evidence of their superior earning power or business abilities. Others may be proud about their family tree or ancestors. Still others are proud of their superior knowledge and others may be proud about their beauty. In none of these cases are these people willing to give the credit for their goodness or riches or ancestry or beauty to God. They believe that He had little or nothing to do with their possession of these things. But such are not poor in spirit. Such are not humbled before God and are therefore not included among the blessed. The Bible warns that pride goeth before the fall. There is nothing more unlovely than when a man makes a show of himself and appears to be proud.

When they asked Jesus who would be the greatest in the kingdom, he called a little child, and set it in the midst of them. We must be as a child to enter the kingdom of God. So Jesus places this beatitude first among all in the Sermon on the Mount.

First, you must be humble and poor in spirit, if any spiritual blessings are to come to you. But humility is not so easily acquired. Try to make yourself humble and when you think you have attained a certain humility, you will still be proud, proud of being humble. No, you cannot make yourself humble. Only God can make a person humble and he does that by placing us into the searchlight of his holy law. There we see that we are not so much as we thought we were. There, our sins and shortcomings are brought to view.

A man is humble when he recognizes that he is a sinner in God's sight, when he thinks of himself as one of the many for whom a Savior and Redeemer was necessary. A person is humble when he sees in Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary his substitute, without whom he would be under God's wrath forever.

Men may write these beatitudes into the code of the United Nations, but unless the rank-

and-file of the people approach Calvary's cross where they can begin to live these great truths, they will not make for peace and brotherhood. Let us pray for that today.

For a man like the Emperor of Japan who has renounced the fables of his divine origin that he may now be brought to see the riches and beauty and salvation in Christ, as some of our leading statesmen and military men have professed in our day. Let our labor leaders, as some are now doing, invite churchmen into their counsels to speak of the Word of God and let management take clergymen into their conferences. But unless our Christian people participating in these discussions will speak up for Jesus as the Savior today, there will be no progress toward that mutual understanding, which is essential if industry is not to drive us into economic chaos.

Let us put up all our wall mottos that say "God Bless Our Home." But there will be no blessedness unless the members of the family learn from him who was meek and lowly, who came not to be ministered unto, but to give his life a ransom for many.

We know that pride is a stumbling block with many today. We know how hard it is for some thinking people to believe in Christianity. In their pride, they maintain that Christianity is the most unreasonable religion of all on the earth. They get a little education and forget that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, dangerous because we become impressed with our wisdom. It is not strange that among the scientists, astronomers are said to have about the highest percentage of believers. Scientists must keep an open mind. They make their discoveries because they believe anything is possible. Many of us, however, always want to be shown and we limit even God in the realm of possibility. If we are going to keep on depending on the things we can see and prove, we will just keep on shooting each other down. We must probe more deeply for the things that make for peace and brotherhood and understanding on earth. Those things are found in God's Word. It teaches humility above all things.

Such a feeling of humility comes most plausibly when we let the word of God convince us how little we are in God's eyes, when we let God's law show us our helplessness regarding our efforts to stand as justified before God and when we let the Gospel of God's grace show us that our only hope of heaven lies in accepting the salvation which Jesus Christ had procured for us. And once we get this view, all room or reason for proud boasting will be gone.

As the Word of God states it: "By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." A humble Christian glories not in his own goodness and power, but in the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God in Christ. Such a humble Christian has the kingdom of God already here. As long as he lives, he has the assurance that when he leaves this world, he will enter into the bliss of heaven.

So, friends, let us permit the Word of God to make us humble before our maker. And by his grace he will exalt us by giving us the confidence that in his love and grace, the door of everlasting life is open to us. Let us see ourselves as we really are in God's sight. Then

we shall be humbled. Let us in humility believe that God gives us the kingdom of heaven in Christ, and we shall be contented and happy. For this is the word of Jesus: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Happy are they, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven here and hereafter."

Let us pray. Gracious God and Father, we pray Thee take us into the tour of Thy Word and teach us humility before Thee, so that we may already in this life experience the blessed assurance of Thy kingdom, and may finally inherit the everlasting kingdom of heaven which thou hast promised to us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. In his name we ask it. Amen.