



A SERVE DEVOTIONAL

*For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.
Psalm 100:5*

Text: *Matthew 5:3*

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Summary:

Blessed are the poor in spirit ... By definition, poverty has to do with scarcity. We usually think of poverty in terms of money or possessions, but poverty can also be social, economic, political and spiritual. Without resources or support to change their situation, people living in poverty are often helpless to find a way out. Jesus begins the beatitudes by highlighting poverty, turning expectations upside down like he does throughout his entire earthly ministry: the kingdom of heaven will be given to the poor, those whose neediness moves them to humbly receive.

Reflections from the First Church Family:

Read Matthew 5:3, and with those words in mind reflect on the following meditation.

Jesus was speaking to a Jewish audience who thought they knew all about the kingdom of heaven. After all, any such kingdom was supposed to belong to the children of Abraham.

But Jesus didn't say "Blessed are the children of Abraham, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." *Theirs* is the kingdom of heaven. In other words, the *broken people* will inherit God's kingdom. Billy Graham clarified this further when he said we could substitute the word "humble" for "poor." Blessed are the *humble*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That reminded me of a country song my husband Cal has been known to belt out, "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way." Hilarious, that man, but he's literally striking a chord I need to acknowledge. As Pastor Robert said in his sermons on "7 Serious Sins," the opposite of humility is pride.

And I spot pride in myself everywhere.

When I wag my finger and lecture someone (even if only in my head) on politics, masks, attitudes, or *whatever*, there it is again: PRIDE. It rears its ugly head, threatening to steal my joy, hurt relationships, and steal my peace. Pride interrupts, what should be a life of worship, with its "I know and you don't" stance. It's a sin standing cross-armed behind me, encouraging me to wield opinions like weapons.

But when I give up my presumed right to be an expert, to *know*, and lay it at the cross, I see how much my pride cost Jesus. The realization breaks my heart. In that broken place, Jesus roots out my pride and replaces it with humility and deep gratitude for his rescue. Only then can I begin to understand the kingdom of heaven.

Reflection Questions:

Reread Matthew 5:3, and spend time reflecting on these questions:

- What does this verse reveal about who God is?
- What are you hearing about who you are?
- How does this impact the way you live into God's story today?

Prayer:

Disturb us, O Lord

when we are too well-pleased with ourselves

when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little, because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord

when with the abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the water of life when, having fallen in love with time,

we have ceased to dream of eternity and in our efforts to build a new earth,

we have allowed our vision of Heaven to grow dim.

Stir us, O Lord

to dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas where storms show Thy mastery,

where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.

In the name of Him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes and invited the brave to follow.

Amen

-Archbishop Desmond Tutu