

## BE GENEROUS - READING

*“He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:2, 3.*

As something strange and new, these words fall upon the ears of the wondering multitude. Such teaching is contrary to all they have ever heard from priest or rabbi. They see in it nothing to flatter their pride or to feed their ambitious hopes. But there is about this new Teacher a power that holds them spellbound. The sweetness of divine love flows from His very presence as the fragrance from a flower. His words fall like “rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.” Psalm 72:6. All feel instinctively that here is One who reads the secrets of the soul, yet who comes near to them with tender compassion. Their hearts open to Him, and, as they listen, the Holy Spirit unfolds to them something of the meaning of that lesson which humanity in all ages so needs to learn.

In the days of Christ the religious leaders of the people felt that they were rich in spiritual treasure. The prayer of the Pharisee, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as the rest of men” (Luke 18:11, R.V.), expressed the feeling of his class and, to a great degree, of the whole nation. But in the throng that surrounded Jesus there were some who had a sense of their spiritual poverty. When in the miraculous [Page 7] draft of fishes the divine power of Christ was revealed, Peter fell at the Saviour's feet, exclaiming, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8); so in the multitude gathered upon the mount there were souls who, in the presence of His purity, felt that they were “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17); and they longed for “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Titus 2:11). In these souls, Christ's words of greeting awakened hope; they saw that their lives were under the benediction of God.

Jesus had presented the cup of blessing to those who felt that they were “rich, and increased with goods” (Revelation 3:17), and had need of nothing, and they had turned with scorn from the gracious gift. He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ. Pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of such a person. Those who are rich and honorable in their own eyes do not ask in faith, and receive the blessing of God. They feel that they are full, therefore they go away empty. Those who know that they cannot possibly save themselves, or of themselves do any righteous action, are the ones who appreciate the help that Christ can bestow. They are the poor in spirit, whom He declares to be blessed.

Whom Christ pardons, He first makes penitent, and it is the office of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin. Those whose hearts have been moved by the [Page 8] convicting Spirit of God see that there is nothing good in themselves. They see that all they have ever done is mingled with self and sin. Like the poor publican, they stand afar off, not daring to lift up so much as their eyes to heaven, and cry, “God, be merciful to me the sinner.” Luke 18:13, R.V., margin. And they are blessed. There is forgiveness for the penitent; for Christ is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. God's promise is: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like

crimson, they shall be as wool.” “A new heart also will I give you. . . . And I will put My Spirit within you.” Isaiah 1:18; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

Of the poor in spirit Jesus says, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This kingdom is not, as Christ's hearers had hoped, a temporal and earthly dominion. Christ was opening to men the spiritual kingdom of His love, His grace, His righteousness. The ensign of the Messiah's reign is distinguished by the likeness of the Son of man. His subjects are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs. Though not yet fully accomplished, the work is begun in them which will make them “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Colossians 1:12.

All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus. He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden.” Matthew 11:28. He bids you exchange your poverty for the riches of His grace. We [Page 9] are not worthy of God's love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy, and is abundantly able to save all who shall come unto Him. Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness. He presents us to the Father clothed in the white raiment of His own character. He pleads before God in our behalf, saying: I have taken the sinner's place. Look not upon this wayward child, but look on Me. Does Satan plead loudly against our souls, accusing of sin, and claiming us as his prey, the blood of Christ pleads with greater power.

“Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. . . . In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” Isaiah 45:24, 25.<sup>1</sup>

## BE GENEROUS – STUDY GUIDE

1a. Have you ever given someone a gift that you felt they should treasure, only to have them treat it cavalierly?

1b. What was the gift and how did the recipient reject it? How did that make you feel?

2a. Have you ever given a gift to someone who was homeless or down on their luck?

2b. What was the gift and how did the person receive it? How did that make you feel?

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 6-9.

3. What is absent from Christ's teaching on the beatitudes? {MB 6.1}
  
4. What does the author point out as the difference between the religious leaders and the throng? {MB 6.2}
  
5. Describe the heart that has no room for Jesus. {MB 7.1}
6. On the other hand, who really appreciates what Christ can bestow? {MB 7.1}
  
7. True or false: Those who have the Holy Spirit are made aware of how good their deeds for Christ are. Explain. {MB 7.2}
  
8. "This kingdom is \_\_\_\_\_, as Christ's hearers had hoped, a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ dominion. Christ was opening to men the \_\_\_\_\_ kingdom of His \_\_\_\_\_, His \_\_\_\_\_, His \_\_\_\_\_." {MB 8.1}
  
9. What does the author assure us is the inheritance of the poor in spirit, the meek and the persecuted for righteousness sake? {MB 8.1}

**Thought Question:** The author uses three words "weak, helpless and despairing" to describe our spiritual poverty. However, she encourages us not be discouraged by this. Can you think of an instance where your weakness became strength, failure became a success or despair became joy?

