

The Humility of the Wise

Matthew 5: 3.



“Blessed are the poor
in spirit, for theirs is
the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 5: 3.



I. Introduction

The sermon of Jesus reminds us that the true greatness of man comes from God. We are totally dependent of Himself. Therefore the right attitude is always marked with humility.



“Exposure to other cultures (whether through travel or through encounters in everyday life) is one way we can keep ourselves cognitively humble; such experiences invariably remind us that our own perspective on the world is limited, and only one among many. Learning new skills is another sure way to promote cognitive modesty: it's useful to feel yourself an inept beginner again, especially if you've gotten too used to being competent.”

Annie Murphy Paul



“What does poverty of spirit mean? It is my awareness that I cannot save myself, that I am basically defenseless, that neither money nor power will spare me from suffering and death, and that no matter what I achieve and acquire in this life, it will be far less than I wanted. Poverty of spirit is my awareness that I need God’s help and mercy more than I need anything else.”

Jim Forest, The Ladder of the Beatitudes



“Why does the Bible, and why does Jesus, tell us to care for the poor and the outsider? It is because we all need to stand in that position for our own conversion. We each need to stand under the mercy of God, the forgiveness of God, and the grace of God— to understand the very nature of reality. When we are too smug and content, then grace and mercy have no meaning— and God has no meaning. Forgiveness is not even desired. When we have pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps, religion is always corrupted because it doesn’t understand the mystery of how divine life is transferred, how people change, and how life flows. It has been said by others that religion is largely filled with people who are afraid of hell, and spirituality is for people who have gone through hell.”

Richard Rohr

“Humility, that low
sweet root,
From which all
heavenly virtues
shoot.”

Thomas More



“From the original meaning of the word humility (from the word “humus”—earth), it means that our first encounter with God is to come to the realization that God is God, and I am not! I am creature, not Creator. I am of the “earth.” ... Humility is the sign that we have moved into a “for” mentality— a life for God. It is what Jesus meant when he spoke of “denying ourselves”— which does not mean a cancellation of the self, but rather a consecration of the self. It’s what E. Stanley Jones meant when he said, “Your self in your own hands is a problem and a pain; your self in God’s hands is a power and a potential.” Humility is allowing God to have you in His hands.”

Steve Harper, *A Life of Humility*



“Can we surrender the mantle of trying to be, as someone has described us in our driven-ness, “General Manager of the Universe?” Many of us are so accustomed to trying to be good – doing what is right, covering everything on our to-do list – that we live our lives, even our spiritual lives, at a frantic pace. We cram every minute of every day with activity and achievement, measuring our worth by what we earn or what good deeds we have done. But this beatitude says that approach is all wrong. When we offer to God what we cannot be or do – our weaknesses – then the kingdom is ours. God says in this beatitude, “When you give up your illusions of control and power and acknowledge your absolute need for me, all that I have opens to you.”

Mary Lou Redding, *The Power of a Focused Heart*

“To see what meekness is,
you must look not at
meekness but at Christ.
Saying meekness is this or
that sends you to concepts
which are pale copies of
reality. Saying "Jesus is
meek" sends you to the
living reality of it.”
Peter Kreeft, Back to
Virtue



"The Kingdom of God can only be received by empty hands. Jesus warns against (a) worldly self-sufficiency: you trust yourself and your own resources and don't need God; (b) religious self-sufficiency: you trust your religious attitude and moral life and don't need Jesus." Michael H. Crosby, Spirituality of the Beatitudes: Matthew's Vision for the Church in an Unjust World



II. Context



The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus Christ to those who know very well the message of the Old Testament. He revisits the books of Moses (5) through five speeches, showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of all prophecies, and 'the way (TORAH), the truth, and the life.'



The Gospel of Matthew, Structure

Jesus: God With Us	1: 1 – 1: 25	Genealogy of Jesus, son of David and of Abraham
	2: 1 – 2: 23	Mystery of Incarnation
Part I	3: 1 – 7: 25	The Meaning of the Law The New Deuteronomy Narrative: (Ch. 3 – 4; Teaching: Ch. 5 – 7)
Part II	8: 1 – 10: 42	The Discipleship The New Numbers Narrative: (Ch. 8: 1 – 9:34; Teaching: Ch. 9:35 – 10:42)
Part III	11: 1 – 13: 52	God's kingdom The New Leviticus Narrative: (Ch. 11: 1 – 12: 50; Teaching: Ch. 13: 1 – 52)
Part IV	13:53 – 18:35	The Church The New Exodus Narrative: (Ch. 14: 1 – 17: 27; Teaching: Ch. 18: 1 – 35)
Part V	19: 1 – 25: 46	The Judgment The New Genesis Narrative: (Ch. 19 – 22; Teaching: Ch. 23 – 25)
Jesus: God with Us Obtained Victory For Us	26: 1 – 27: 66	Crucifixion
	28: 1 – 28: 20	Resurrection

Five Speeches in the Gospel of Matthew and Five Books of Moses

The Meaning of the Law

The Torah Revisited

The Book of DEUTERONOMY

The New Meaning of the Law

The Spirit of the Law re-explained

The New DEUTERONOMY

Matthew
Ch. 5 – 7

Organization, Leadership

Moses sends 12 spies to explore the land

The Book of Numbers

Discipleship, Leadership

Jesus sends 12 disciples to transform the land

The New Numbers

Matthew
Ch. 10

The Great Controversy (GC)

The worship, the Atonement, GC (ch.16)

The Book of Leviticus

The Great Controversy (GC)

The Parable of the Tares and GC (36-52)

The New Leviticus

Matthew
Ch. 13

The Birth of God's People

Children of Israel coming out of Egypt

The Book of Exodus

The Church, new people of God

Children entering God's kingdom

The New Exodus

Matthew
Ch. 18

Creation, our Origins

Garden of Eden, God's plan for this Planet

The Book of Genesis

New Kingdom, Our Destiny

New Garden of Eden, God's plan for this Planet

The New Genesis

Matthew
Ch. 23-25

Five Speeches in the Gospel of Matthew

Speech #1 (Chapters 5 – 7)

The New Meaning of the Law (DEUTERONOMY)

Jesus' explanation of the Spirit of the Law, underlining the beauty of God's Revelation on Sinai

Speech #2 (Chapter 10)

The New Concept of Discipleship (NUMBERS)

The role of twelve disciples, their authority, and their mission. The new way of conceiving leadership.

Speech #3 (Chapter 13)

The New Vision of God's Kingdom (LEVITICUS)

God's plans for the triumph of His concept of love in the context of the Great Controversy

Speech #4 (Chapter 18)

The New Call to Come Out and to be Part of God's people (Exodus)

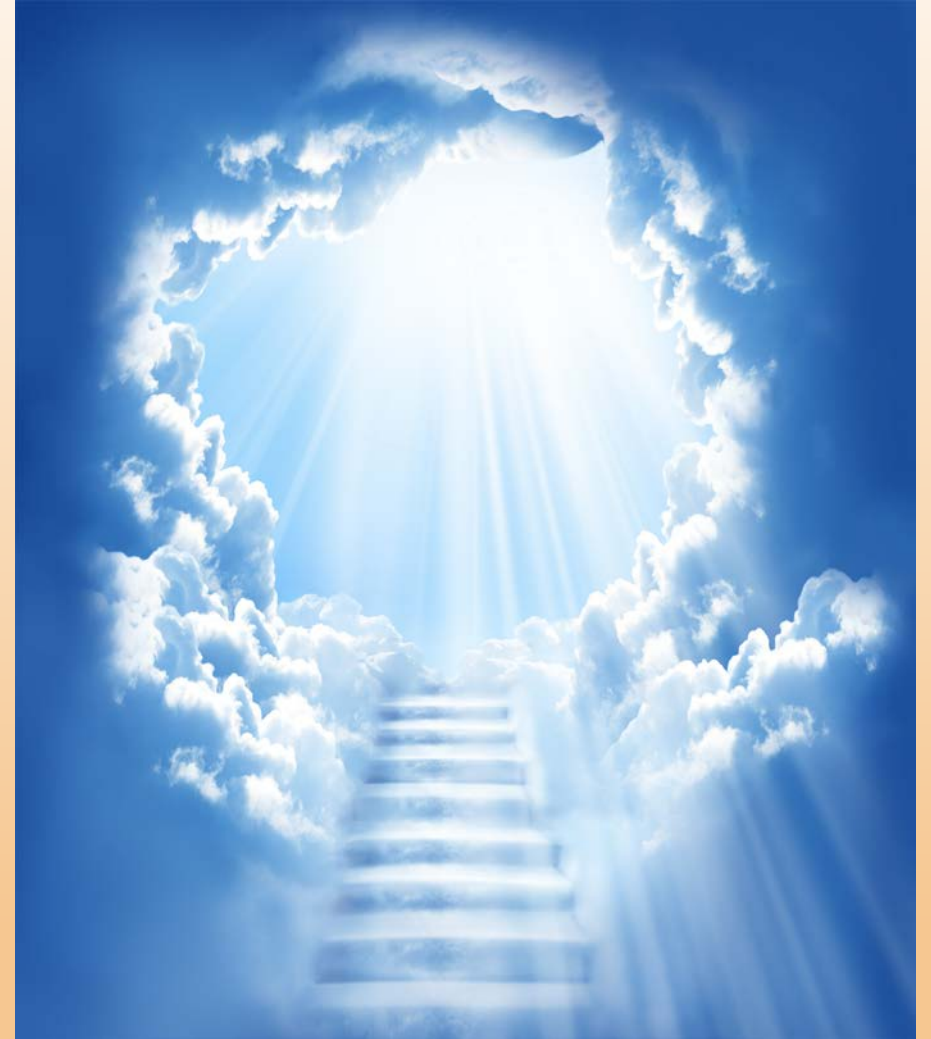
God's church (Ecclesia in Greek, which means "called out or forth").

Speech #5 (Chapter 23-25)

The New Presentation of the God's Kingdom (Genesis)

After a long conflict, Jesus presents a place where we can live with God forever.

III. The eternal kingdom of God available only to those who are humble



The Sermon on the Mount begins with humility (5: 3), and will close with wisdom (7: 24 – 27). This is the description of the road for all those who follow Jesus.



1. The Happiness

"Blessed are the poor in spirit"



"All seasons are
beautiful for the
person who carries
happiness within."
Horace Friess



“Three grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.”

Joseph Addison



"A continuously happy life produces extremely unhappy consequences. In nature we see that there are not always pleasant springs and fruitful summers, and sometimes autumn is rainy and winter cold and snowy... All of this is beneficial so that man might learn through prudence, patience and humility. For the most part, in times of plenty he forgets himself, but in times of various sorrows he becomes more attentive to his salvation."

Ambrose of Optina



"Some cause
happiness wherever
they go; others
whenever they go."
Oscar Wilde
(1854-1900)



2. Poor in Spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit"



This is not only the call for Christians to fight for social justice. It is more to help them to understand that they are dependent of God.

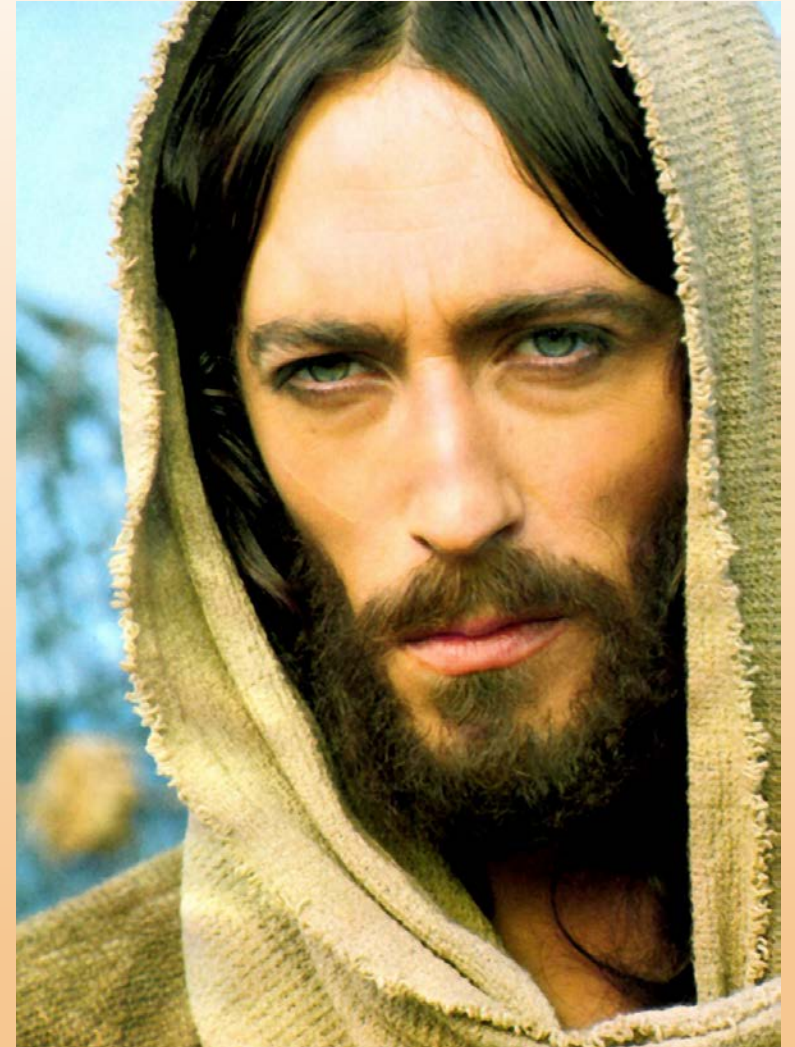
“In these strange times the glass through which we see darkly has become so warped by artificial light that we now often perceive an inversion of Christ’s moral truths. Disordered society has attempted to transform the Beatitudes into moral platitudes. The modern tendency is to project them as calls to social reform, an external concern with lifting the poor and seeking a worldly peace.”

Steven Jonathan Rummelsburg



"Salvation requires a spirit that is broken, powerless, and in desperation for help. You cannot live for Christ if you think you don't need Him. That soul that longs for God each day is truly blessed because God will honor that desire."

Kristy Mapp

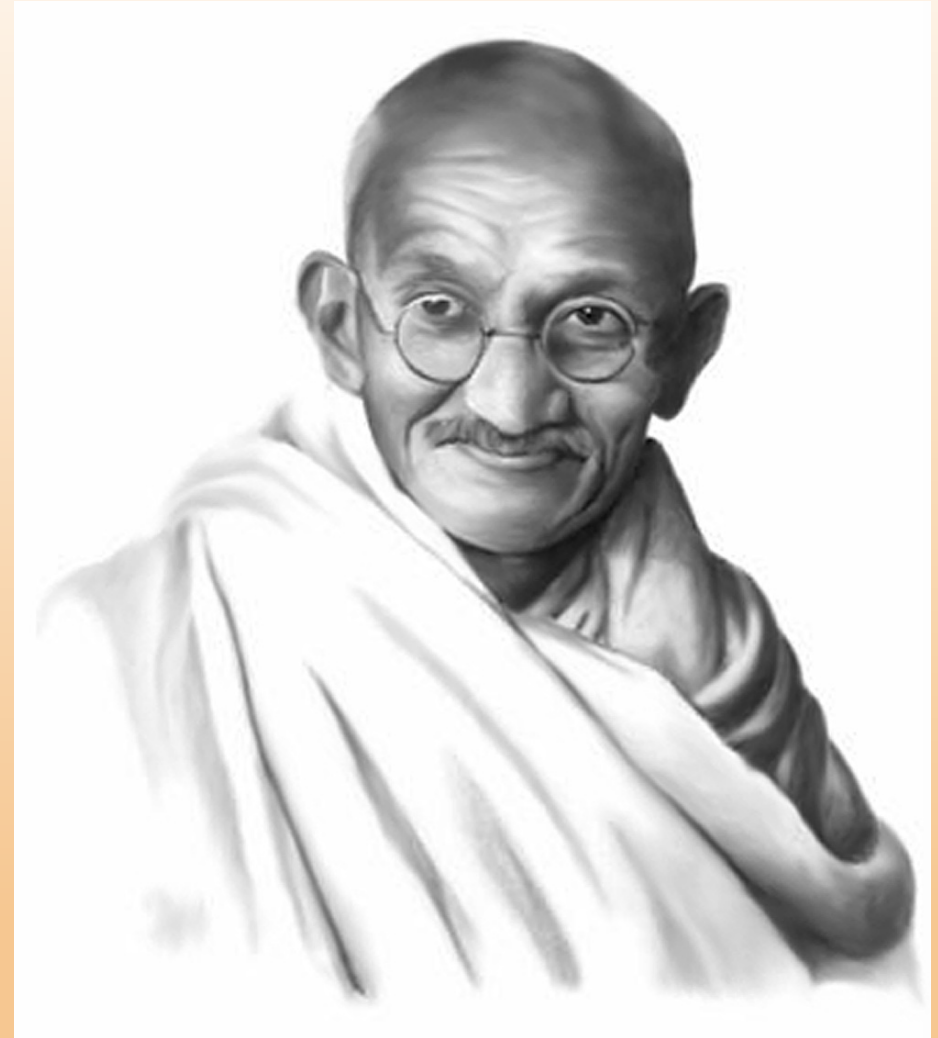


“True humility does not know that it is humble. If it did, it would be proud from the contemplation of so fine a virtue.”
Martin Luther



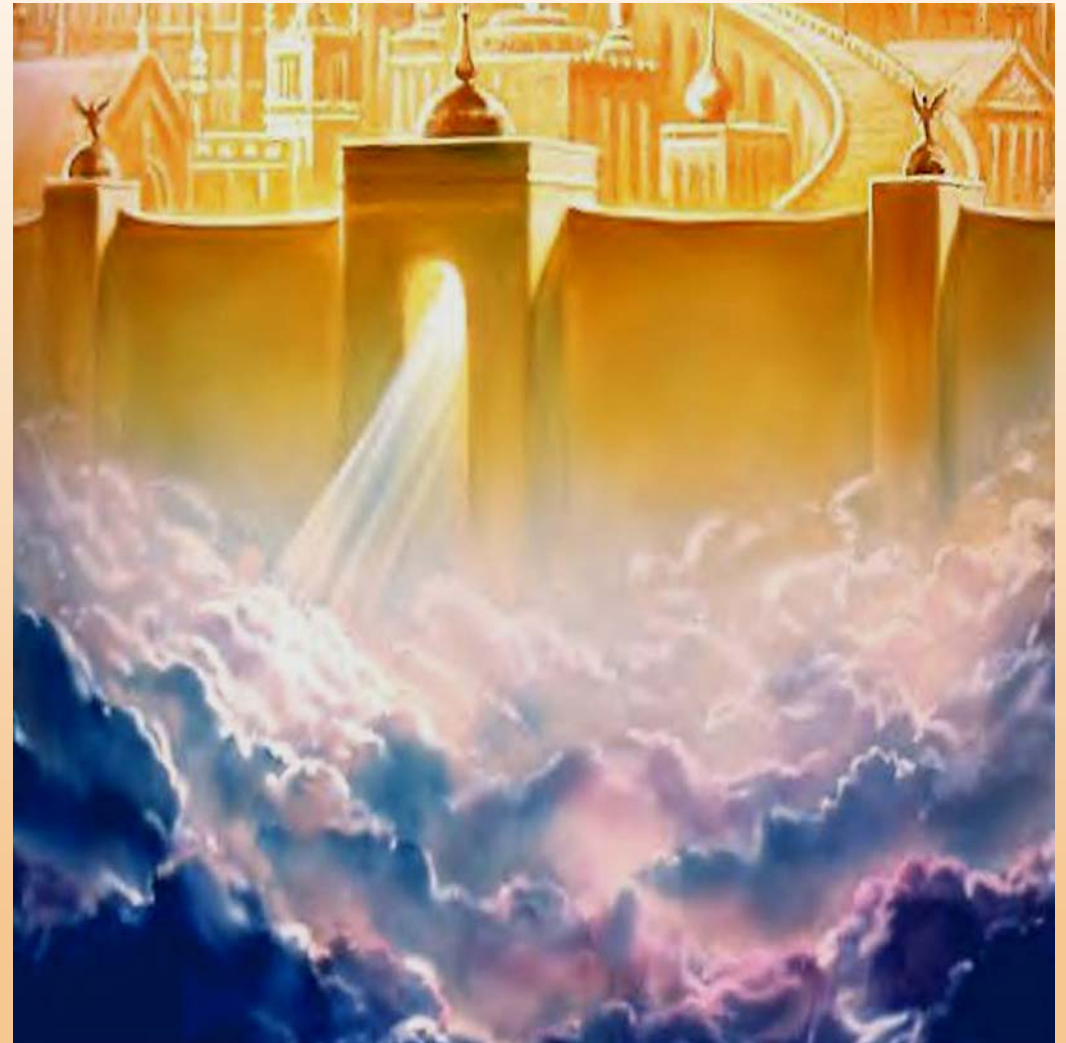
"I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps."

Gandhi



3. God's Kingdom

"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."



“We must make the invisible
kingdom visible in our
midst.”

John Calvin



"Before we can pray,
"Lord, Thy Kingdom
come," we must be
willing to pray,
"My Kingdom go."
Alan Redpath



The prayer 'thy kingdom come'
surpasses . . . all other
possibilities of human revolt
against disorder."
Karl Barth, Christian Life, 261.



V. Conclusion



“It is impossible for any created good to constitute man’s happiness. For happiness is that perfect good which entirely satisfies one’s desire; otherwise it would not be the ultimate end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e., of man’s desire, is what is universally good; just as the object of the intellect is what is universally true. Hence it is evident that nothing can satisfy man’s will, except what is universally good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone, because every creature has only participated goodness. Therefore, God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of the Psalms (102:5): “Who alone satisfies your desire with good things.” Therefore, God alone constitutes man’s happiness.”
Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Part 2. Q.1. Article 8.

"The Lord has presented before me the work that is to be done in our cities. The believers in these cities are to work for God in the neighborhood of their homes. They are to labor quietly and in humility, carrying with them wherever they go the atmosphere of heaven."
Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9. p. 128



The Humility of the Wise

Matthew 5: 3.

