



Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God to earth. But the people did not understand the truths of the kingdom. Jesus began to teach His listeners that the kingdom of God is very different from this world.



Day #1: Poor in Spirit

✦ Jesus began His famous Sermon on the Mount by saying: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* - Matthew 5:3

Perhaps the best way to understand this verse is by reading a story that Jesus told. This story was about two men who went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, a Jewish religious leader, who mistakenly thought he was close to God because he had an important job. He wore fancy robes and acted very religious; he tried to follow rules to be accepted by God. The other man was a tax collector. In Bible times, nobody liked tax collectors. They were Jews who helped the Romans. They often broke the rules in order to cheat people out of their money.

"The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people,' he said. 'I am not like robbers or those who do other evil things... I am not even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. And I give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood not very far away. He would not even look up to heaven. He beat his chest and said, 'God, have mercy on me. I am a sinner.'

"I tell you, the tax collector went home accepted by God. But not the Pharisee. Everyone who lifts himself up will be brought down. And anyone who is brought down will be lifted up." - Luke 18:11-14

The Pharisee thought that he was good enough to be near God. The tax collector realized that he was a helpless sinner, unworthy even look up toward God. The truth is that ALL have sinned (Romans 3:23). NO ONE is good enough to be near the perfect God! The

Day #1 continued:

Tax Collector had it right. He asked for mercy, and God was glad to pour out his mercy on this man who was poor in spirit.



There is nothing you can do to un-do your sin and be accepted by God. Only those who are "poor in spirit" - who realize that they have nothing to offer God - can accept what Jesus did for them on the cross and enter God's kingdom.

Day #2: Hunger & Thirst



Jesus also said: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

Hunger and thirst are feelings we can all understand. Have you ever been really, really thirsty? Just imagine a man walking through the desert. Everything around him is completely dry and dusty. There is no water anywhere. He feels like he is baking in the sun. His mouth is so dry that he can hardly swallow. All of his energy has been zapped by fighting the blazing hot sun. He is in a place with no water, so it is water that he craves. He would give anything for just a few drops of cool water. That is real thirst.

Jesus talks about those who hunger and thirst for **righteousness** - for what is right. We live in a world that is full of sin. Sin spoils everything! In this world, righteousness cannot be found. But Jesus announced good news to those who crave what is good and pure and right! Through His death and resurrection, Jesus would bring the kingdom of God to mankind.

In the kingdom of God, sin is completely taken away. Those who trust in Jesus will be FILLED with His righteousness (Philippians 1:11). Like gallons and gallons of clean cold water to a thirsty man, God pours righteousness into those who trust in His Son (Romans 5:17). This righteousness - or "rightness" - can only be found in the kingdom of God.



What are some things in this world that sin has spoiled? If you hate seeing the sin around you, if you hate it when things are unfair, if you long for heartbreak to end, come to the kingdom.

Drink a nice cool glass of water and remember that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are filled when they come to Jesus.

Day #3: Peacemakers

"Mom! He's looking at me again!"

"Dad! She touched my gameboy!"

"Oh, let me tell you what Sarah said about Sue..."

Have you heard these words? Have you said these words? We all live in families, and among other people, and we are called to live in peace with them.

 Jesus said: *Blessed are those who make peace. They will be called sons of God.* - Matthew 5:9

Peace is a kingdom concept because Jesus came to bring peace between God and each person. Each of us was an enemy of God (James 4:4). When we chose to sin, we gave up peace with God. But Jesus came to take away our sin and restore the relationship we had with God. Each person who accepts Jesus' free gift of forgiveness has peace with God.

So, we who are in God's kingdom should follow Jesus' example. We should make peace wherever we go. We will each be in situations where we can choose to bring peace. We can help two friends get along. We can answer gently, even when someone speaks harshly to us (Proverbs 15:1). We can give grace to someone else instead of demanding to be right.

 In what area do you need help to be a peacemaker? Maybe it is living with your siblings, or trying not to gossip. Maybe it is having the right words to say to two friends in conflict. No one has the power to live in peace on their own. Ask Jesus, the Prince of peace, to fill you with grace to bring peace into every situation (Isaiah 9:6).

Day #4: Kingdom First

 Jesus said: *I tell you, do not worry. Don't worry about your life and what you will eat or drink. And don't worry about your body and what you will wear. Isn't there more to life than eating? Aren't there more important things for the body than clothes?* - Matthew 6:25

Do you think people spend a lot of time worrying about what to wear and what to eat? There are entire television networks dedicated to what to wear, how to cook, and how to have a beautiful home. People spend hours watching shows about how to improve their looks and lifestyles. Jesus said that worrying about these things is not kingdom life at all. Jesus' topsy-turvy teaching said:

"So don't worry. Don't say, 'What will we eat?' Or, 'What will we drink?' Or, 'What will we wear?' People who are ungodly run after all of those things. Your

Day #4 continued:

*Father who is in heaven knows that you need them. **But put God's kingdom first.** Do what He wants you to do. Then all of those things will also be given to you."* - Matthew 6:31-33

 Find a flower, or an interesting leaf. Examine it. Look at the colors God has used. Look at how the fibers carry nutrients throughout the leaf or petals. Jesus said that God crafted each plant. He dresses each flower more beautifully than a king's robe. If God takes care of a flower that only lives for a short time, He will certainly take care of all the needs of His precious children! (Matthew 6:28-30)

What do you worry about? Do you spend time worrying about school, sports, what to wear, being popular? Jesus said not to worry about worldly things! Put His kingdom first, and He will take care of the rest! How can you put God's kingdom first? (Start each day talking with God, cut back on television or video games and spend time reading God's word, build friendships so that you can tell others about God's love.)

Day #5: Last, First

Imagine a long line of people who were all lined up according to how famous they were. Everyone in the world knew the first person in line. The next person was almost as famous. The front of the line was littered with presidents, kings, and movie stars. On and on the line went. Toward the end of the line, the people weren't famous at all. Would you say they were lined up according to how important these people were in this world?

Now imagine that everyone in the line was asked to stay right where they were, but each person had to turn and face the opposite direction! Now the least famous person was first in line!

Life in the kingdom of God is SO different than life in this world! When Jesus explained His kingdom, He said:

 *But many who are first will be last. And many who are last will be first.* - Matthew 19:30

Many of the things that we value in this world mean nothing in the kingdom of God. Things such as money, power, and good looks, hold no value in the kingdom. And the things that are unimportant to most people now are very valuable to our King. Jesus values heart-traits such as humility, putting others before yourself, and most of all, loving Him (Philippians 2:3, Matthew 22:36-40).

 Do you ever feel that you are not as important as someone else? Remember that Jesus came to teach a new way of thinking! Find out what is valued in God's kingdom, and seek to live a kingdom life!