

## Destitution

### Mt 5:3 Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

The pauper, “penury” lives from paycheck to paycheck ...but still not begging.

**Penury** is found once in the New Testament [2 Corinthians 9:9 “He [God] has given to the poor”]. These are those who work hard for their living and are the best tippers.

**Poverty** [Mt 5:3] is beggary, destitute of riches. ..of this world's goods [Trench]. He lives on the “alms” of others.

## Real Christianity

There is no greater testimony or witness. Life has become a spiritual not material journey. God commissions us to have a heart that treasures heavenly things over what can be accumulated in this life. *Living our lives in the light of eternity.*

**Acts 3:6-8** Peter said, “I don’t have a nickel to my name, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!”

**Matthew 6:19** Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

## Consumerism- Postmodern Theology

Graham Ward, English theologian and Anglican priest who has been Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford since 2012, produced an anthology of Christian essays on Christianity’s survival in a postmodern world which included Stanley Hauerwas' essay on: The Christian Difference, or Surviving Postmodernism, who called it “a life and death struggle with the world.” adding, “I think it is a serious mistake not to take postmodernism seriously.”

With God out of the way, either dead or just uninvolved, happiness now is a matter of “toys”

## Commodification

“now everything is not only measurable and priced, it has an image.”

“...commodities [are] the possession of which represented happiness.”

In this new age, we are rightly labeled ‘consumers’ who are objectifying every aspect of life in an effort to secure a sense of wellbeing. We desire things in order to find happiness. We are addicted to ‘things’ that we imagine will define fulfillment, success, significance. This is the context by which we perceive what is moral, aesthetic and spiritual. But like all things that evolve, it is a never ending process, a search for utopia.

Ward reminds us , “Desire does not seek its fulfillment, for that would terminate the pleasure of desiring. Desire promotes the allure and attraction of an object that stands in for what it lacks, but its enjoyment lies in not having what it wants. The commodified object then becomes the cause of desire rather than the object of desire itself.”

There is a Greek word for this in our Bible: πλεονεξία, “greed” “primarily the having more, and then in a secondary and more usual sense, the desire after the having more, is the more active sin,” [Richard Trench]. Different from “avarice or a love of money, “Greed seeks rather to grasp what it has not; avarice, to retain, and, by accumulating, to multiply that which it already has.”

Greed “free in scattering, and squandering, as it was eager and unscrupulous in getting.” Unlike avarice which favors accumulating, treasuring, money. 1 Corinthians 5:10 “greedy ... swindlers”

Abraham Cowley was an English poet and essayist who lived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Said this best, There are 'two sorts of avarice; the one [this is our word, greed] is ... the rapacious appetite for gain; not for its own sake, but for the pleasure of refunding it immediately through all the channels of pride and luxury; the other [the love of money] is ... properly so called, ... a restless and insatiable desire of riches, not for any further end or use, but only to hoard and preserve, and perpetually increase .... The covetous [greedy] man of the first kind is like an ... ostrich, which devours ..., but it is with an intent to feed upon it, and, in effect, it makes a shift to digest and excern [excrete] it. The second is like the foolish chough [the North African bird of the crow family], which loves to steal money only to hide it.’

Both in **1 Corinthians 6:10** and **Ephesians 5:5** Paul resolutely warned that no covetous or greedy person shall have “any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” He saw this as a new form of idol worship as Jesus compared the love of money with a love for God and how one would love one or the other never both.

**Matthew 6:24** “One cannot serve God while treasuring earthly things! Matthew 6:19-24  
“**Treasures in Heaven.**”

**Matthew 6:25-34** is a lesson on needless [faithless?' worry.

**Matthew 10:9-10** [Sending out the 12 by 2's] “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you ... no bag for the journey .... for the worker is worth his keep.”

## **The World is A Global Marketplace**

As christians our sense of significance is not dependent on what we have but on God, who He is, in relation to us. This gives us the ability to rise above the marketplace, to live, as Paul said, “content whatever the circumstances.”

**Philippians 4:11** I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

We can rise above any need for ‘things’ which gives us a more objective view of where the world is at.

As a church, marketing the faith for the sake of cultural acceptance and numeric growth, or as a individual christian, living on a level of mundanity with no truthful witness of Christ’s love, is not a definition of faithfulness.

Nor can we speak of a world history without including the church. A history of the world is a history of the church but when the church lost its vision for the cross—or to the degree it consented to gentrify away its humble station as servants of God, “– as Robert Jenson puts it ‘the world lost its story.’ ...modernity and postmodernity are the result of mistakes in Christian practice and theology.” He continued:

“...Christians must challenge the postmodern narrative that simply forgets that Christianity had anything to do with the world. ... The attempt to make God knowable separate from how God has made himself known through scripture makes a world without God thinkable. God could not help but become another “thing.” Accordingly, Christians robbed the world of its story.”

**James 4:3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Our sight is fixed downward, like chickens in the barnyard, only on the moment, only on our immediate need. To follow Jesus we need to raise our sights higher.

**Psalm 37:23** The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;

### Summary

Poverty of spirit is, therefore, a total and absolute, unashamed and declared reliance and dependence on God alone! This attitude or character trait or principle of life is required for a calling or a ministry.

It will later in the Beatitudes show itself to be a giving spirit rather than a desire to accumulate blessings. Poor in spirit is a willingness to accept one's own need to meet another's first.

**2 Corinthians 8:2** In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity

The Poor in Spirit do not grow anxious about their "treasures on earth" [Matthew 6:19]. The poor in Spirit don't need to worry about provisions. God provides daily [Matthew 6:11].

Their hearts maintain a Kingdom consciousness [Matthew 6:33].

Poverty of spirit is a worldview, a way of seeing life through God's eyes. "Mourning" will take on a different meaning and value...