**Beatitudes reflection Week 1 – Blessed are the poor in spirit**

Matthew 5

Welcome to the first of our reflections on the Beatitudes. Each week, over the next eight weeks we’ll be considering one of the eight Beatitudes that Jesus spoke as part of the sermon on the Mount. And it’s great that we can do this as three churches and those who join us online as one community of faith. So, we turn to our first Beatitude, ‘*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’* Matt 5:3

Well the immediate question that jumps out to us is this – hang on a minute, shouldn’t we be aiming to be spiritually rich, not poor in spirit?

I think that’s not what this Beatitude is driving at, however. Think it’s about our state of heart. Now, as you can see or hear if you’re listening to the podcast, I’m recording this from the garden of the vicarage. Consider garden behind me. It might look like a pile of earth, but It’s also a blank canvas. So we see it’s lack but we also see it’s potential.

if you’re listening on the podcast, hear the noise of the construction site – the diggers digging, the people labouring. This area is a work in progress, it’s ‘under construction’, but one day, it’ll be fully completed - a place of growth, peace and retreat. A place to be closer to nature and the wonder of God’s creation. And that’s part of what I think Jesus is intending in our first Beatitude – getting closer to the kingdom of heaven which is also full of the wonder of God, a place of peace, hope and growth.

To be poor in spirit means you realise you’re not perfect. You don’t have an over-inflated opinion of your own spiritually, but rather recognise your reliance on God himself. Like this garden you recognise you are a work in progress, not perfect, but under construction. Remember the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector? Both enter the temple to worship, one stands proud of his spiritual standing, the other beats his hands on his chest and cries out, ‘have mercy on me, Lord, a sinner’. And Jesus said it was the second who returned home made right with God. Why? Because he was poor in spirit.

That’s also why this beatitude tells us what the poor in spirit inherit – the kingdom of heaven, for it is to such as these that God’s kingdom belongs. And we can be secure in the knowledge that God is faithful as we grow in faith and love. As St Paul wrote to the Philippians 1:6 ‘*We can be confident of this: He that began a good work in us will bring it to completion’.*

Let’s pray. Loving heavenly father, that you that you love us so much you are constantly at work to change us day by day into your likeness. Lord we are reminded in this first Beatitude of our need of you and your grace, so change us from the inside out and knit us together as one community of faith, so that we may share your love with those around us, wherever we are. In Jesus name, Amen.