

Courting Shadows

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

Much of our time is spent in the pursuit of blessings. We certainly don't desire curses. Jesus here, at the beginning of his famous Sermon on the Mount (and in Luke 6 when Jesus tells them, “Blessed are the poor.”), corrects our ideas of the constitution of blessings and curses, revealing to us what we tend to think of as blessings. Although Jesus tells us in Matthew that the poor in spirit are blessed and in Luke that the poor are blessed, many act as if this isn't true. In fact, we often have the mindset of Blessed are the rich. The rich don't have anxiety over bills and debt, we tell ourselves. They can do what they want, when they want, we say. While they may not have anxiety over debt, who's to say they don't have anxiety? Don't we have anxieties? And don't 3rd world countries think of us as rich? If we chase after the false blessing of riches, then we'll never catch it. It's not a blessing we can treasure in our heart. We can't hold the blessings of riches anymore than a noodle strainer can hold water. In fact, we're cursed, because we've wasted time in pursuit of the ever elusive dragon. Matthew Henry wrote of this, “Blessedness is the thing which men pretend to pursue ... but most mistake the end, and form a wrong notion of happiness ... they choose their own delusions, and court a shadow.” When we follow our own idea of blessings, we're losing water, chasing dragons and courting shadows.

Jesus, then, helps us by telling us true blessings. He tells us that the poor in spirit are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of God. According to us, if we gain everything, then we're blessed. According to Jesus, if we lose everything, then we're blessed with something far greater than if we gained the world. According to us, those who win a fight are blessed because they can be proud for being strong. According to Jesus, peacemakers are blessed. According to us, blessed are the loud and confident. According to Jesus, blessed are the meek.

God doesn't ask us not to receive blessings. In fact, it's clear that God wants to bless us. The problems come when we seek out the blessings of God rather than God himself; when we tell God how to bless us, rather than letting him bless us his way. When we desire God, then we understand that we've received the greatest blessing of all: Grace.

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